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The Impact Of Collaborative Strategic Reading On Students' Comprehension Of Secondary Social Studies Texts

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THE IMPACT OF COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC READING ON
STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION OF SECONDARY SOCIAL
STUDIES TEXTS

by

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Zack Mathews, for being proud of me, loving me, and folding the majority of our laundry for months while I was in the thick of writing and revising. I so appreciate your encouragement and sense of humor throughout this entire process. You are my Superman.

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ABSTRACT

This action research study evaluates the impact of the literacy intervention, Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), on students' comprehension of social studies texts in secondary classrooms at a high school in East Tennessee, and their perceptions of the intervention as an activity for learning. The identified problem of practice this study sought to explore is whether explicit, collaborative literacy instruction would impact students' comprehension of grade-level appropriate social studies texts, and to evaluate students' responses to such literacy instruction. Pre- and post-tests assessing students' comprehension of informational articles pertaining to eras of United States history, and semi-structured interviews with students, provided the data for this concurrent mixed-methods action research study. The study found that while CSR does not have a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension, the sample group's comprehension scores increased slightly and students shared mostly positive perceptions of CSR. The resulting Action Plan includes an increase in the use and evaluation of collaborative literacy instructional strategies for a better understanding of the impact on students' reading comprehension, professional learning for teaching literacy in content areas other than English/Language Arts/Reading (ELAR), and further exploration of the impact of students' interest and motivation on expressed reading abilities.

Keywords: collaborative strategic reading, social studies, secondary, reading comprehension, action research, content area literacy, curriculum narrowing, standardized assessment

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Advanced Placement
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CSR	Collaborative Strategic Reading
CBM	Content-based measure
DBQs	Document-based questions
ELA	English/Language Arts
ELAR	English/Language Arts/Reading
EOCs	End-of-course Exams
ERIC	Educational Resources Information Center
ESSA	<i>Every Student Succeeds Act</i>
NCLB	<i>No Child Left Behind</i>
PoP	Problem of Practice
RTPS	Rocky Top Public Schools
TAS	Tennessee Academic Standards
TCAP	Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Literacy skills became increasingly important in an era of accountability and focus on post-secondary preparedness in American public education. As a result, a greater emphasis on teaching content area reading and cross-curricular literacy skill emerged, as evidenced within academic standards for learning and teacher performance evaluation rubrics across the nation. However, many secondary social studies teachers are either poorly equipped, unsure of, or reluctant to take responsibility for teaching reading in social studies (Cuban, 1993; Gilles, Wang, Smith & Johnson, 2013; Hall, 2005; McNamara, 2008; Wesley, 2011). Additionally, the challenges of teaching social studies curriculum in time where mathematics and reading instruction dominate, left little time for any additional instruction beyond the content specifically detailed in the academic standards (Hall, 2005; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). The era of accountability narrowed the reach and delivery of social studies curriculum to “just the facts,” which created a void in the instructional time dedicated to the development of social studies skills (Hall, 2005; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). This study will explore how teaching students in small groups to utilize Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) in a

high school social studies course will impact their acquisition of literacy skills in social studies content area reading.

Accountability in Public Education

In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* examined the widespread public perception that American public school graduates were unable to compete with their foreign counterparts in the development of skills that would be essential to keeping the American economy strong (Gardner, Larsen, Baker, Campbell, & Crosby, 1983). Written in the shadow of the Cold War, the report called for large-scale educational reform in order to adequately prepare a new generation of Americans, predominantly educated in public schools, to face the challenges of an increasingly competitive global economy (Gardner et al., 1983; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011). The findings of the report would lay the foundation for a push toward a national curriculum, which suggested that the focus should be on the “Five New Basics” of English, mathematics, science, social studies, and computer science, as well as the adoption of rigorous and measurable standards (Gardner et al., 1983; Spring, 2014). Educational essentialism, in which core content areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies dominate instructional time so that students can learn the traditional basics thoroughly, best describes the approach described within the report (Gardner et al., 1983; Spring, 2014). The *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) of 2002 reinvigorated the charge for rigorous and measurable standards, as evidenced by an increase in standardized testing and educator accountability for students’ academic progress, particularly in the areas of mathematics and reading (Eisner, 2015; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008).

With the advent of the NCLB in 2002, the landscape of public education in the United States changed to accommodate a greater emphasis on standardized

assessment as a measure to hold educators accountable for student learning and achievement (Eisner, 2015; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008). NCLB is an educational policy update to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that increased the role of the federal government in holding schools accountable for the academic progress of all students (Eisner, 2015; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008). States were required to test students' proficiency in reading and math in grades three through eight, and again in high school. States could determine their own standards for proficiency, and which tests to use to assess students' progress. Schools were held accountable for meeting state achievement goals through a measurement called "adequate yearly progress" (AYP). Those states that did not comply with NCLB requirements risked losing federal Title I funding. Additionally, those schools facing sanctions for failure to meet adequate yearly progress risked state intervention, potential loss of Title I monies to provide tutoring and school choice options to students, and possible loss of students better performing schools within the same district. While NCLB has since been replaced by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in 2015, NCLB is significant in that it markedly increased the role of the federal government in monitoring academic progress of all students in public education in the United States (Eisner, 2015; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008).

Public Education and Accountability in Tennessee

One such accountability measure is that schools must set and meet goals for improvement in student performance, for all student populations, on annual standardized assessments of reading and mathematics (Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008). In Tennessee, teachers and school stakeholders are encouraged to focus on preparing students to pass the TNReady tests, which are part of the Tennessee

Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). These assessments are administered and scored annually by the state's authority on public education (*TNReady*, 2017). This authoritative body is the Tennessee Department of Education, which develops policies, academic standards, and assessments for Tennessee public schools. High school students in the Tennessee public school system are required to take and pass end-of-course (EOC) TNReady exams in English I, II, and III, Algebra I, II, and Geometry, or Integrated Math I, II, and III, Biology and Chemistry, and U.S. History / Geography (*TNReady*, 2017). As a result, instruction in Tennessee's public schools is increasingly aligned to the goal of meeting the standard for student achievement in tested subject areas, as determined by each school's performance on TNReady exams and EOCs (*TNReady*, 2017). Additionally, the state set a goal that at least 60 percent of 3rd grade students attending public schools in Tennessee demonstrate proficiency in reading by 2014 (*READ20*, 2017). As of 2016's TNReady performance data, only 46 percent of 3rd grade students demonstrated proficiency in reading (*READ20*, 2017). More now than ever before, improving literacy for all public school students is a priority in the state of Tennessee.

Impact on curriculum and instruction. Education is significantly impacted when teaching and learning practices are influenced by the pressure to achieve an acceptable outcome in each assessed core subject based on the results of a single end-of-course standardized assessment (Eisner, 2015; Newberg-Long, 2010; Passe, 2006; Winstead, 2011). The curriculum, or what is being taught, is dictated to teachers, students, and the public through the state of Tennessee's Department of Education, which develops and maintains the state's curriculum standards, the Tennessee Academic Standards (TAS). The TAS legally obligate

educators to focus the curriculum in their courses to address the content assessed on the TNReady exams, often not leaving any additional class time for inquiry and exploration beyond the required TAS. As a result, teachers are forced to incorporate an essentialist curricular pedagogy, or focus on the traditional “basics” of education, consisting mainly of mathematics, English, science, and history, into their classrooms to alleviate the pressure to “cover” the required content prior to the TNReady exam (Cuban, 1993; Tanner, 2008). Instructional practices also become more teacher-centered, driven by lectures and individual reading assignments, and integrated in existing reading and language arts instruction in response to the pressure to teach the required TAS prior to each course’s summative assessment (Allan, 2010; Cuban, 1993; Duplass, 2007; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). Thus, students miss out on the development of critical skills such as content area literacy, collaboration with peers through problem- and project-based learning, and critical thinking skills (Britt & Howe, 2014; Clowes, 2011; Gilles et al., 2013; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Nolan, 2014; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Winstead, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the participant-researcher will focus on the content area literacy skills of students in a high school social studies class.

Impact on teaching and learning content area literacy. Often, social studies teachers are focused primarily on content instruction during class time in an effort to communicate the content to be assessed on the EOC exams, and the responsibility for content reading and comprehension is placed on the student (Allan, 2010; Boardman, Klingner, Buckley, Annamma, & Lasser, 2015; Cuban,

1993; Hall, 2005; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). However, most students lack the reading and critical thinking skills necessary to understand, critique and use knowledge from content area texts (Boardman et al., 2015; Duplass, 2007; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Jackson, 2010). The transition from basic, elementary texts to the more complex demands of content area reading in secondary schools is not a smooth one for students (Duplass, 2007; Jackson, 2010; McNamara, 2008; Nixon-Green, 2012; Nolan, 2014; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006). In order to improve the literacy skills of students in content area classrooms, a greater emphasis must be placed on developing higher level reading and thinking strategies in all content area courses so students can gain access to difficult content area texts (Boardman et al., 2015; Duplass, 2007; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Jackson, 2010). However, teachers report feeling underprepared to provide reading instruction due to pressure to choose between lecture-based content instruction that could appear on standardized testing at the end of the year, or to implement literacy instruction; because, doing both concurrently does not seem possible (Allan, 2010; Boardman et al., 2015; Cuban, 1993; Hall, 2005; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). As the demand for accountability and rigor in education increase, so too must the access to instructional strategies to support teachers in improving content area literacy and critical thinking skills in secondary students (Boardman et al., 2015; Gilles et al., 2013; Hall, 2005; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for the present Action Research study involves a high school social studies class at Smokey Mountain High School in Rocky Top Public Schools (RTPS), a school district in East Tennessee. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to use a pseudonym to further protect the confidentiality of the study's participants. This study aims to determine whether utilizing collaborative strategic reading (CSR) as an instructional intervention will impact the student-participants' comprehension of grade-level social studies texts, and their attitudes towards and perceptions of the intervention.

Currently, many secondary social studies teachers, administrators, and social studies curriculum coordinators express concern regarding the ways in which students often struggle to comprehend complex, grade-level appropriate social studies texts, and thus fail to demonstrate the ability to think critically about the reading. This is evidenced by generally poor responses to document-based questions (DBQs), comprised of a selection of historical or socially scientific documents students must read, analyze, and formulate or select a response to demonstrate understanding. Students also fall short of grade-level expectations on formative and summative assessments of their reading comprehension and analysis of such texts (*READ20*, 2017). Pedagogically, improving the social studies content reading skills of students will involve a progressive, inquiry-based instructional strategy where students collaborate to analyze complex social studies texts to make meaning for themselves (Britt & Howe, 2014; Clowes, 2011; Gilles et al., 2013; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Nolan, 2014; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Winstead, 2011).

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) is an intervention in which students work collaboratively to make meaning, engage in critical analysis, and build literacy skills to facilitate comprehension of grade-level social studies texts (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2001).

Problem of Practice Reflection

In the teacher-researcher's instructional practice as a secondary social studies teacher between the years of 2010 and 2016, it appeared that both teachers and students held the belief that social studies courses did not need to include reading instruction, which was reserved exclusively for English and language arts courses. This belief was evident when teachers bemoaned students' inability to read and comprehend, and thereby analyze, historical documents and texts. When students were presented with a task involving reading a document and responding with a written analysis, it was obvious they too shared the same perception as teachers: reading and writing were not supposed to be part of a social studies curriculum, so they did not need to authentically engage with the texts presented to them.

Meanwhile, district curriculum and instructional leaders and decision makers urged teachers to be intentional about integrating other subjects within their own, as cross-curricular connections between subject matter was thought to be more meaningful and relevant for students. Every year during professional learning opportunities, collaboration and team meetings, and in department meetings, educators with a vested interest in secondary social studies curriculum and instruction discussed possible solutions to the problem of students' low comprehension levels and inability to demonstrate a thorough analysis of

historical documents and texts. While teachers were presented with graphic organizers, acronyms, and frameworks to aid students in writing analyses of historical documents, little to no discussion of direct instruction techniques to improve content area literacy skills of students was had.

The teacher-researcher first became aware of the widespread concern about student literacy as a weakness contributing to a lack of success in secondary social studies courses while sitting in on a meeting between elementary instructional coaches and middle school social studies teachers to discuss how elementary students could be better prepared for the transition to middle school. These meetings between elementary, middle, and high school educators are informally known as vertical teaming or feeder pattern meetings in Rocky Top Public Schools. Vertical teaming meetings are held routinely between several different grade levels of teachers, all of who teach in the same content area. The purpose of these meetings is to attempt alignment of curriculum, including essential content knowledge and skills in a particular content area, across several grade levels vertically. The goal of curricular alignment is to ensure the expectations for student growth are consistent, curriculum and instruction are appropriately scaffolded, and the instruction of content area skills needed to be successful at each level of study are clearly communicated.

The elementary instructional coaches asked the middle school social studies teachers what they would like the elementary teachers to work on with the students to improve the transition to middle school. The teachers spoke about the high rate of student failures in social studies as compared to other core subjects, and shared concerns about the level of content literacy present in students transitioning to middle school. The instructional coaches agreed with

the need to improve social studies skills for elementary students, especially in regards to literacy, and discussed the challenges of limited instructional time as a potential cause of students' overall lack of preparedness to read and comprehend grade-level appropriate social studies texts.

Study Rationale

Social studies instruction holds an important formative and conceptual place in the classroom. Not only does social studies serve as a conduit for developing critical, analytical, evaluative, and reflective thought, it also contains important lessons that contribute to an understanding of national history, the requirements and responsibilities of citizenship, world cultures and relations, economics and government, and many more facets of life throughout the course of human history (Allan, 2010; Boardman et al., 2015; Ciullo, 2015; Cuban, 1993; Hall, 2005; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). However, Rocky Top Public Schools found in informally surveying elementary teachers' lesson plans that a majority do not actually include social studies instruction in the daily instructional time on a regular, predictable basis; but, instead, choose to focus class time primarily on reading and mathematics. Restricting or removing time altogether for social studies instruction in the elementary classroom to allow more instructional time in more frequently assessed content areas could impact students' development of critical content area reading skills they will need to be successful in secondary social studies courses (Duplass, 2007; Jackson, 2010; McNamara, 2008; Nixon-Green, 2012; Nolan, 2014; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006). Students struggle with the transition from elementary texts to those used in secondary social studies courses because they have not developed the

literacy and critical thinking skills necessary for the level of rigor of these courses (Duplass, 2007; Jackson, 2010; McNamara, 2008; Nixon-Green, 2012; Nolan, 2014; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006). Then, secondary social studies teachers appear to share the belief that literacy instruction is unnecessary, requires too much of the already overburdened instructional time, or they are ill-equipped to teach it, in the social studies classroom (Duplass, 2007; Jackson, 2010; McNamara, 2008; Nixon-Green, 2012; Nolan, 2014; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006).

Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of this action research study is to evaluate the impact of integrating CSR into the instruction of a secondary social studies classroom on students' reading comprehension. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), a reading comprehension instructional model that combines explicit strategy instruction with student-led discussion about text, will be used in the classroom to create a collegial, student-centered environment in which literacy skills are being actively and overtly taught within the framework of the required content (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2001). After learning the CSR structures, learning will be student-led and collaborative within a small-group setting facilitated by the teacher-researcher.

Research Questions

This action research study seeks to describe the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension of social studies texts in an era of high-stakes state accountability where teachers' pedagogical practices are limited by perceived pressure to choose between spending instructional time on teacher-centered coverage of content, or on using class time

for student-centered instructional strategies to improve content area literacy skills. CSR makes it possible for teachers to overtly teach reading within the framework of the state-mandated content, while also placing an emphasis on student-facilitated collaborative learning (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Marzano et al., 2001). The research questions are as follows:

1. *What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?*

Theoretical Rationale

RTPS social studies teachers must serve two vastly different masters within one classroom: preparing students for success on end-of-course exams aligned to an essentialist curricular pedagogy as mandated by the state of Tennessee, and providing instruction which is engaging, student-centered, and rooted in inquiry and curiosity. Such a disparity in theoretical underpinnings of expected instructional outcomes could impact the overall quality of instruction and student learning, especially in regards to developing content area literacy and critical thinking skills. Teachers are forced to choose between passively delivering content that is directly and precisely tied to essentialist state standards, and using course standards as a framework for teaching collaboration, inquiry, problem-solving and critical thinking skills to prepare students for the twenty-first century workforce.

Essentialism in state curriculum standards. Despite the expectation of district instructional leaders for social studies curriculum to be student-centered, connected to relevant global social issues of the past and present, and designed

to develop skills for critical thought and analysis, the way in which such learning is assessed in Tennessee is closely aligned to the essentialist theory of curriculum (Blanford, 2011; Gutek, 1997). Outlined by William Chandler Bagley in 1938 in response to evidence that students in the United States were academically falling behind their peers in other countries, essentialism demands a focus on the core content areas of mathematics, reading, writing, science, and history state standards and teacher-and-subject-centered approaches to teaching and learning (Blanford, 2011; Gutek, 1997). It is clear the state of Tennessee takes an essentialist stance on assessment and accountability in determining curriculum for public schools as evidenced by the content assessed by the state through mandatory end-of-course (EOC) TNReady exams, while Rocky Top Public Schools' instructional and curricular leadership expects teachers to also guide learning in such a way that encourages inquiry, critical thinking, and facilitates student-centered exploration, using the state-mandated standards as a framework for instructional content.

Sociocultural and constructivist theory. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) has roots in sociocultural theory and constructivist theory, as it includes explicit instruction, scaffolding, peer-mediated learning and supports for student subgroups (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2001). In order to allow students to read and think independently and accurately, explicit instruction is necessary. Students learn the CSR process, when to use it, and why it is important to build reading comprehension skill, thus overtly contributing to their skillset in reading and writing (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2001). CSR incorporates principles of sociocultural

theory of curriculum in that the teacher is able to account for individual differences and the need for differentiation through collaboration in mixed ability groups (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2001). In CSR groupings, students think and write independently, thus allowing for individual assessment of growth, but rely on one another to provide feedback, create meaning, and reinforcement of skills and thinking in a reflection of constructivism in learning. This is advantageous for struggling readers, English-Language Learners (ELLs), and other subgroups because of the natural supports provided by a mixed-ability peer group (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012).

Research Design

Teachers are capable of studying the impact of an essentialist-based focus on mathematics and reading instruction on secondary social studies student outcomes firsthand (Allan, 2010; Boardman et al., 2015; Cuban, 1993; Hall, 2005; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). Action research allows teachers, or school community stakeholders, to conduct a systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process for the purpose of better understanding and improving their quality and effectiveness in practice (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). Through action research, teachers are able to improve professional practice and resulting student outcomes (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). Action research creates a bridge between theory and practice, in which the flow of information moves in two ways between educational researchers and teachers and encourages a more dynamic and responsive approach to the

business of teaching and learning (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). In the attempt to understand how student performance in the teacher-researcher's secondary social studies department is impacted by a narrowed curriculum driven to fulfill demands of the accountability movement in public education, action research is the best-suited tool. Such a study would allow for the scope of the problem to be more clearly defined by the practitioners who experience it firsthand with students, and for tentative solutions, based on observations, collection of data, and evaluation, to be identified (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

The teacher-researcher would like to determine whether a statistically significant difference in comprehension of a grade-level equivalent social studies text exists when a classroom of student-participants is given tools to improve their content area literacy in social studies through CSR. In order to observe and analyze student outcomes, the teacher-researcher plans to utilize a concurrent mixed-methods study design to thoroughly explore the impact of CSR on student comprehension of grade-level appropriate social studies texts, and students' perceptions of CSR as an instructional strategy (Coe, Waring, Hedges, & Arthur, 2017; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The concurrent mixed-methods design will consist of a quantitative analysis of students' reading comprehension, pre- and post-intervention, as well as a qualitative thematic analysis of students' perceptions and attitudes towards the effectiveness of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as a content area reading comprehension intervention.

The teacher-researcher's rationale in selecting the concurrent mixed-methods design because it affords a rich, holistic analysis of both quantitative

and qualitative data the teacher-researcher can utilize to thoroughly evaluate the impact of CSR on students' reading comprehension, as well as their perceptions of CSR. The concurrent mixed-methods design expands the scope of the data collected, thereby increasing the information the teacher-researcher can access, the comparative analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, the evaluation of implications and findings, and reflection for more accurate and holistic conclusions as to the effect of CSR (Coe et al., 2017).

The teacher-researcher will assess students to determine their pre-intervention comprehension level, as quantified by students' reading comprehension scores on a ReadWorks content-based measure (CBM), before beginning intervention instruction (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). Next, the teacher-researcher will use direct instruction to teach the students how to utilize the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention. After students have learned and practiced utilizing CSR, the teacher-researcher will again assess students' reading comprehension post-intervention using a content-based measure (CBM) of reading comprehension from the ReadWorks database. Passages and correlated reading comprehension question sets within the ReadWorks database are content-based, but curriculum independent, which means that passages can be relative to the social studies content area without requiring prior instruction or knowledge of the topic in order to comprehend the text. ReadWorks passages are also further categorized by Lexile score to assist in accurately placing the passages within the appropriate grade level readability and complexity of the text. The Lexile Framework is a tool used to quantify the difficulty of a text according to grade level readability and complexity (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Vaughn, Swanson,

Roberts, Wanzek, Stillman-Spisak, Solis & Simmons, 2013). Lexile measures for texts are based on word frequency (semantic difficulty) and sentence length (syntactic complexity) (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Use of Lexile scaled content area passages and comprehension question sets through ReadWorks allows the assessment of students' comprehension of a social studies text to be free of teacher-researcher bias, to be curriculum independent, and to be appropriately matched to students' grade level expectations for reading comprehension (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Finally, the teacher-researcher will conduct a semi-structured interview protocol with student-participants to determine their perception of the impact of CSR as an intervention to impact literacy skill development in social studies courses.

Summary

Developing social studies content literacy and critical analysis skills of social studies texts are essential for students to succeed in social studies at the middle level and beyond. Furthermore, Rocky Top Public Schools' social studies curriculum makers are tasked with creating a learning experience that is both correlated with and in greater depth than the essentialist focus of the State of Tennessee's academic standards guiding student learning outcomes, and the accompanying assessments that attempt to quantify student learning outcomes and thereby teacher effectiveness. Teachers are asked to go beyond the state's minimum accountability standards as measured and reported through the TNReady assessment program in tested content areas, and create an experience in which learning is student-centered, critical inquiry-based, and authentic in its connection to the national and global discourse for social studies. As such, teachers in content area courses with the exception of English and language arts-

related courses are too overburdened attempting to balance the essentialist pedagogy of the state of Tennessee with the twenty-first century learner, inquiry-based pedagogy expected by district instructional leadership to focus on building students' literacy and reading comprehension skills within content area courses. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) is a method of literacy instruction that brings balance to the demands of the content and creates space for collaboration, inquiry, and critical thinking among students. The teacher-researcher expects the findings of the study to identify questions for further study in content area literacy instructional strategies, and to inform instructional practice for building content literacy skills into instruction in secondary social studies classroom in Rocky Top Public Schools.

The following chapters contained in this manuscript represent critical phases of this action research study. Chapter Two of this study is a comprehensive literature review and synthesis of the current body of knowledge on reading instruction in secondary social studies courses. Chapter Three details the research methodology and protocols utilized in this action research study. Chapter Four is an analysis of the data collected throughout the course of the study, and Chapter Five is a reflection on the findings, implications, and possible questions for future study.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Accountability Movement: the widespread trend in education to assign specific responsibility to achieve predetermined measurable goals, a standardized instrument to measure progress toward the goals over a given time period, and consequences for reaching success or failure (Gardner et al., 1983).

Collaborative Strategic Reading: a research-based instructional practice in teaching reading comprehension to students to enhance content area learning. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) teaches students reading comprehension while working in small cooperative groups (Boardman et al., 2015; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012).

Curriculum Narrowing: an extreme focus of instructional time on content that is subject to assessment through state-mandated standardized assessments, which results in a narrowed curriculum that excludes or seriously limits non-tested content (Newberg-Long, 2010).

Lexile Framework: a tool used to quantify the difficulty of a text according to grade level readability and complexity. Lexile measures for texts are based on word frequency (semantic difficulty) and sentence length (syntactic complexity) (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Vaughn, Swanson, Roberts, Wanzek, Stillman-Spisak, Solis & Simmons, 2013).

Measurement Fatigue: an expression used to describe the barrage of standardized testing, metrics, and attempt to quantify the intangible experience of education, resulting from the accountability movement (Wachter, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature is vital in understanding the full scope of the problem at hand. A comprehensive literature review summarizes the state of knowledge on a well-defined problem, for the purpose of developing a critical view of the current body of work in the field, so subsequent studies can further expand and develop the acquired knowledge on the problem and its potential solutions. A thorough review of the literature will critically analyze whether previous authors have accurately reported their findings, and whether present conclusions in the field of study are supported by data (APA, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Koshy, 2006). Questions can be raised in order to further the body of knowledge on the problem of practice beyond what has already been discussed in the literature (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Koshy, 2006). Conducting a thorough literature review allows a researcher to look for themes to emerge across multiple studies, as well as contradictions in findings for further examination. A strong literature review, then, provides a solid foundation for conducting meaningful, relevant action research (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Koshy, 2006).

Literature Review Methodology

The teacher-researcher began to explore literature in social studies education because a passion and interest in research lay within the field of education in which the teacher-researcher formerly taught. Before exploring the

process of identifying a problem of practice (PoP), the teacher-researcher first utilized many education research databases provided by the University of South Carolina's library for students, such as the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), to review current literature about social studies curriculum and instruction. Since the teacher-researcher began the review of the body of knowledge within the field with a very broad lens, many of the initial resources gathered focused on the current state of social studies education (Levy & Ellis, 2006). Early on, a theme emerged: social studies curriculum and instruction, and by extension the educational experiences of students, is negatively impacted by the accountability movement and standardized testing.

As professional experiences, professional relationships, and review of the literature developed, the scope of understanding of how the accountability movement in public education created problems of practice for educators narrowed to the changes in the scope of secondary social studies curriculum and instruction, experiences of teachers and students in social studies courses, current issues in social studies curriculum and instruction, teaching literacy skills in social studies, and potential literacy interventions that would be compatible for integration in a social studies course.

The teacher-researcher identified a problem of practice that centered on the lack of content area literacy instruction in secondary social studies, on which relevant literature and previous studies to explore were located with ease. The teacher-researcher utilized the *Mendeley* desktop program to file and track research, and keep a brief annotated bibliography of sources. The teacher-researcher reviewed each piece individually to determine applicability to the identified problem of practice and action research study, and against other pieces

to find contradictions or commonalities (Anderson & Kerr, 2014; Koshy, 2006; Levy & Ellis, 2006).

From this analysis, several themes emerged across the body of literature reviewed: 1) the accountability movement, which brought about an increase in prevalence of high-stakes, standardized assessments and state-mandated academic standards, changed *how* and *what* is learned in American public schools, 2) student learning in social studies suffers as a result, and 3) teachers and schools can employ student-centered interventions, such as Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), to equip students with the reading and collaborative inquiry skills they need to successfully comprehend social studies content and prepare them to become knowledgeable citizens after graduation, the historical context of teaching and learning in secondary social studies, and an exploration of the associated theoretical framework. These themes will be reviewed in greater detail later in the literature review.

Historical Context

It is difficult to imagine an educational landscape in which standardized testing is not ever-present. As a result of the emergence of the accountability movement in American education in the early 1970s, the answer to a debate over who should control public schools, the concept of standardized testing was intended to keep control of schools in the hands of the “educational experts” (Cuban, 1993; Eisner, 2015; Gardner et al., 1983; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008). Testing, or measurement of learning and behavioral objectives, was restored to the educational process (Spring, 2014). Due to the challenges of racial and economic school segregation throughout the twentieth century, most of which still persist in schools today, Horace Mann’s vision for schools as a means to

achieving equal opportunity has been stifled by the intense scrutiny of standardized testing data (Spring, 2014).

One response to the push for accountability in education on the part of the federal government is NCLB legislation passed in 2002 (Blanford, 2011; May, 2005; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008). As previously discussed, NCLB had an impact on education in terms of the increased emphasis on standardized testing to measure student learning. Once standardized testing returned to the classroom, unforeseen consequences to the business of teaching and learning became evident, and continue to create new challenges for educators, students, and school stakeholders today (Blanford, 2011; Britt & Howe, 2004; Duplass, 2007; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; May, 2005; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). NCLB emphasized a focus on ELA and mathematics, and in response, teachers and administrators have provided increased instructional time and resources in those subjects (Blanford, 2011; Ciullo, 2015; Winstead, 2011). As a result, teachers have adopted the mentality that what is assessed is what is valued (Duplass, 2007; Gilles et al., 2013; Hall, 2005; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Nixon-Green, 2012; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Wachter, 2016; Winstead, 2011). Since the standards for ELA and mathematics are exhaustive and difficult to cover in the course of the school year, non-tested subjects tend to fall to the wayside in favor of providing the additional instructional time to the tested subjects (Ciullo, 2015; Winstead, 2011). Teachers expressed that curricular decisions are a top-down effort, and the diversity of learners is not well served by such a system (Ciullo, 2015; Winstead, 2011). Also, teachers, parents, and

community stakeholders express concern about the limitation of social studies instructional time as it can have serious consequences on the ability of the school to contribute to the development of thoughtful citizens (Duplass, 2007; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2013; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011).

The biggest question concerning social studies education remains: what is to come? Most recently, the push for a development of common national curriculum has led to the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which adds an additional layer of change in curriculum and assessment to an already complex educational landscape (Britt & Howe, 2014). Regarding the potential relationship between CCSS and social studies education, Britt and Howe (2014) indicate that integrated curriculum building on natural connections between ELA and social studies could be best for the future of the content. Such a relationship, written into CCSS standards, would ensure the inclusion of social studies education as a dynamic part of the CCSS ELA curriculum (Britt & Howe, 2014). Opportunities for further research on the topic, including the effectiveness of an integrated curriculum for improving student performance in social studies abound in the current body of knowledge (Britt & Howe, 2014; Gilles et al., 2013; McNamara, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2013; Wesley, 2011). One thing is for certain: the future of social studies education, and by connection, the development of engaged future citizens, depends on the dedication and ability of educators to engage in action research to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of potential improvements in curriculum and in instructional practice for the betterment of student learning, and of the social studies content.

Theoretical Framework

RTPS social studies teachers must serve two vastly different masters within one classroom: preparing students for success on end-of-course exams aligned to an essentialist curricular pedagogy as mandated by the state of Tennessee, and providing instruction which is engaging, student-centered, and rooted in inquiry and curiosity. Such a disparity in theoretical underpinnings of expected instructional outcomes could impact the overall quality of instruction and student learning, especially in regards to developing content area literacy and critical thinking skills. Teachers are forced to choose between passively delivering content that is directly and precisely tied to essentialist state standards, and using course standards as a framework for teaching collaboration, inquiry, problem-solving and critical thinking skills to prepare students for the twenty-first century workforce.

Essentialism. Despite the expectation of district instructional leaders for social studies curriculum to be student-centered, connected to relevant global social issues of the past and present, and designed to develop skills for critical thought and analysis, the way in which such learning is assessed in Tennessee is closely aligned to the essentialist theory of curriculum (Blanford, 2011; Gutek, 1997). Outlined by William Chandler Bagley in 1938 in response to evidence that students in the United States were academically falling behind their peers in other countries, essentialism demands a focus on the core content areas of mathematics, reading, writing, science, and history state standards and teacher-and-subject-centered approaches to teaching and learning (Blanford, 2011; Duplass, 2007; Gutek, 1997). It is clear the state of Tennessee takes an essentialist stance on assessment and accountability in determining curriculum for public

schools as evidenced by the content assessed by the state through mandatory end-of-course (EOC) TNReady exams, while Rocky Top Public Schools' instructional leadership and curriculum makers expect teachers to guide learning in such a way that encourages inquiry, critical thinking, and facilitates student-centered exploration, using the state-mandated standards as a framework for instructional content.

Sociocultural and constructivist theory. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) has roots in sociocultural theory and constructivist theory, as it includes explicit instruction, scaffolding, peer-mediated learning and supports for student subgroups (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Marzano et al., 2001). In order to allow students to read and think independently and accurately, explicit instruction is necessary. Students learn the CSR process, when to use it, and why it is important to build reading comprehension skills, thus overtly contributing to their skillset in reading and writing (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Marzano et al., 2001). CSR incorporates principles of sociocultural theory of curriculum in that the teacher is able to account for individual differences and the need for differentiation through collaboration in mixed ability groups (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2001). In CSR groupings, students think and write independently, thus allowing for individual assessment of growth, but rely on one another to provide feedback, create meaning, and reinforcement of skills and thinking in a reflection of constructivism in learning. This is advantageous for struggling readers, English-Language Learners (ELLs), and other subgroups because of the natural supports provided by a mixed-ability peer group

(Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012;).

Theoretical context within the literature. Even when elementary social studies is assessed with a culminating exam in the fifth grade, the scope and number of the K-5 benchmarks made it nearly impossible to provide in-depth coverage of the necessary content for students to be successful, given the time constraints on social studies resulting from NCLB's emphasis on literacy and mathematics (Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Newberg-Long, 2010). The solutions provided by Olwell & Raphael's study (2006) are decidedly of the essentialist orientation to curriculum design, in that the authors suggest a reconstruction of social studies curriculum designed to impart the key elements "we believe every student, low or high income, will need to be successful," followed by assessment and reflection of student achievement on the designated key benchmarks (Olwell & Raphael, 2006). Duplass (2007) concurs with an essentialist perspective of elementary social studies education, but asserts the need for a national curriculum providing meaningful scope, sequence and direction for textbook publishers, school districts, teachers, and the community at large (Blanford, 2011; Duplass, 2007; Gutek, 1997). Collaborative strategic reading as a content area reading comprehension intervention is constructivist in nature, because the strategy itself relies on the students' ability to create meaning within the text through their own experiences, prior knowledge, collaborative group discussion, questioning, or prior-reading predictions (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Marzano et al., 2001). A constructivist strategy within the essentialist environment created through an onslaught of high-stakes assessment is necessary for students to be able to create meaning and relevance within a

curriculum that focuses on the original “basics” of English-language arts and mathematics, leaving little time for students to explore content areas in which they have interests or strengths (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Marzano et al., 2001).

Themes Within the Literature

In conducting a review of the literature concerning the state of social studies education and content area reading interventions, several key themes emerged: 1) the accountability movement, which brought about an increase in prevalence of high-stakes, standardized assessments and state-mandated academic standards, changed *how* and *what* is learned in American public schools, 2) student learning in social studies suffers as a result, and 3) teachers and schools can employ interventions, such as Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), to equip students with the social studies skills they need to successfully comprehend social studies content and prepare them to become knowledgeable citizens after graduation.

The accountability movement and the landscape of education. The push for accountability in education has created consequential ripples in what is taught, what is learned, and how learning is measured (Gardner et al., 1983; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011). The accountability movement, spurred on by the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, changed how and what is learned in American public schools (Gardner et al., 1983; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011). Assessment, while necessary and valuable in directing curriculum and the business of teaching, cannot begin to fully quantify what it means to receive an education. Elliot W. Eisner (2015) wrote, “The function of schooling is not to enable students to do better in school. The

function of schooling is to enable students to do better in life” (p. 281).

Essentially, the true nature of education has become obscured by conformity to the quest for accountability, fulfilled by a barrage of standardized tests (Gardner et al., 1983; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011). As a result, curriculum has become more and more aligned to what is tested, leaving little room for the non-tested content areas that are arguably still of vital importance to giving every child the opportunity to earn a well-rounded education (Gardner et al., 1983; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011).

Currently, American education is experiencing what New York Times author Robert M. Wachter called “measurement fatigue” (Wachter, 2016). Essentially, a “good” education is comprised of many intangible components that are difficult, if not impossible, to quantify with a standardized assessment. In-depth inquiry, discussion, problem solving, and other subjective skills are relegated to limited instructional time as a result, in favor of learning that can be objectively quantified (Winstead, 2011). While most state accountability measures do attempt to assess campus climate and non-tested elements of school life in addition to academic performance, the child’s test scores cannot necessarily reflect non-tested elements of personal growth. Thus, in order to perform well on easily quantifiable measures of student learning, teachers and instructional leaders may make decisions in which the intangible pieces of a holistically enriched educational experience fall by the wayside (Gardner et al., 1983; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011). After all, time is a scarce, limited resource that must be allocated with at least some regard to priority. When school and district personnel make decisions about curriculum and instruction that are influenced by pressure to measure up to state standards

for student achievement on standardized tests, time and resources are likely to be allocated toward pursuits that will most directly, effectively, and quickly improve student scores on the subject areas in which their students must test (Gardner et al., 1983; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011).

Furthermore, no current research proves a relationship exists between accountability pressure and student gains (May, 2005). May (2005) stated that the underlying assumption of the accountability movement in education is that student results on high-stakes assessments are a function of curriculum and instruction as delivered by teachers, as well as of what students have an opportunity to learn (Gardner et al., 1983; May, 2005; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011). However, educational outcomes are subject to a more complex set of factors than teacher input and student output (May, 2005). May noted the failure to contend with the environmental variables existing outside of the learning environment that can affect students in poverty, such as homelessness, abuse, neglect, high mobility rate, low education level of the parent(s), unemployment of the parent(s), and lack of exposure to educational experiences as compared to more affluent peers (May, 2005). May argued that high-stakes testing serves no particular educational purpose other than to validate, justify, and maintain the status quo (Gardner et al., 1983; May, 2005; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011). The accountability movement limits not only the curriculum, but also the potential of students who are at a disadvantage due to their socioeconomic means under the current structure of assessment in public education (Gardner et al., 1983; May, 2005; Newberg-Long, 2010; Spring, 2014; Winstead, 2011).

The ramifications of NCLB legislation have spread beyond the classroom. Teacher education is also impacted, which has an even greater effect as new educators enter the classroom (Duplass, 2007; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; May, 2005; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2013; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). Elementary teachers have not been taught the nature and purpose of social studies, instead spending greater quantities of their teacher education learning pedagogy and methodology necessary for the successful teaching of ELA and mathematics (Tanner, 2008). Tanner (2008) places the responsibility of properly educating pre-service and in-service teachers on district leadership and curriculum directors in the form of meaningful professional development. Such development opportunities should achieve the following goals: conveying effective methods of social studies education, the relationship of social studies to students' lives, and existing areas in the elementary curriculum that can be enhanced via social studies instruction (Duplass, 2007; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2013; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011).

Curriculum narrowing. The practice of limiting curricular elements of education that are not directly assessed by a standardized assessment is known as "curriculum narrowing," in which instructional time for tested subjects is increased at the expense of other subjects (Newberg-Long, 2010). An essentialist curricular pedagogy in which the focus is on "back to the basics" core subject areas of mathematics, reading, writing, science, and U.S. History, is advanced by the demands for accountability in education. As a result, such a focus narrows the scope of the curriculum in such a way that the standards drive teaching and

learning, rather than students' needs, interests, choice, experiences, and thinking. Teaching students to think, to collaborate, to be curious, to problem-solve, and to be creative falls by the wayside, because the development of such skills are not easily assessed and quantified. However, students still must learn these skills, and if they do not, their holistic learning experience will be limited by accountability and multiple-choice questions (Newberg-Long, 2010; Winstead, 2011).

A phenomenological study conducted regarding the narrowing of curriculum as a result of the age of accountability found that teachers experienced a great deal of stress in satisfying instructional expectations (Newberg-Long, 2010). Newberg-Long's study (2010) found that the bulk of instructional time was focused on tested subjects of ELA, mathematics, and science, while social studies, P.E. and music were marginalized (Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006). Due to the pressure to achieve certain results on state tests, teachers noted that social studies seemed to have lost importance in schools, which Newberg-Long (2010) identified as the greatest negative impact of curriculum narrowing. In the discussion of research findings, Newberg-Long noted that integrated social studies was offered as a viable solution to the issue of curriculum narrowing and decreased teacher autonomy in lesson plans, instead of a scripted curriculum focusing only on tested subjects (McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010). However, the research findings make it evident that the evaluation of the success of social studies as an integrated curriculum is needed. No such evaluation was conducted as a part of this study; integrated curriculum was simply offered as a means of potentially solving the issue of a fading social

studies curriculum and teacher dissatisfaction with scripted curricula (Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006).

McNamara's study (2008) on the experience of elementary teachers utilizing the integrated curriculum approach to teaching social studies, in which social studies in elementary school is taught in an interdisciplinary base in conjunction with state-assessed core subject of reading. McNamara found even though successfully integrating social studies education with other core subjects is a complex process, teachers can be successful when they act collaboratively, and feel empowered and supported professionally as curriculum makers (McNamara, 2008). However, McNamara's research findings supported the general consensus that the pressure from standardized tests in English, language arts, and mathematics often caused social studies to be compromised (McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Winstead, 2011). Students are then unprepared for the rigor of secondary social studies courses and teachers are unprepared to remediate resulting skill and knowledge deficiencies, such as content area literacy skills.

The impact of mandated academic standards and assessments on student learning opportunities in social studies courses. Social studies education, in elementary and middle school, is essential because it provides a base for development of citizenship, learning about rights, freedoms and laws, and discourse about relevant civic and social issues (Duplass, 2007; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2013; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). It is accessible to "English language learners and immigrant children;" but without social studies education in schools, those who do not have access to social, political,

and cultural exploration opportunities at home are at a decisive disadvantage to their peers who do have access (Winstead, 2011). Social studies is a meaningful base from which teachers can build knowledge, critical thinking skills, citizenship, inquiry, discovery, and problem solving skills (Winstead, 2011). Four themes emerged from Winstead's study (2011) on teacher perceptions of the challenges and their experiences teaching elementary social studies within the era of accountability in American education: (1) social studies is relevant and helps students make real-world connections; (2) assessed subjects dominate instructional teaching periods; (3) focus on assessed subjects deprives students of time for social, civic, and critical discussions; and, (4) there is a lack of professional support for social studies education.

Social studies courses have become inundated by mandatory academic standards implemented by each state, which focus more on "just the facts" of the course content that will be assessed than skills like thinking, comprehending, analyzing, and creating (Vogler & Virtue, 2007). Unfortunately for social studies courses, which are infrequently assessed by state educational accountability authorities with the exception of the United States history course, a greater emphasis is placed upon achieving measurable results in tested subjects; most frequently reading, writing, science and mathematics, and showing progress in those scores from year to year to avoid being marked a low-performing school by the state government (McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). Earning such a designation, and continuing to underperform, can lead to eventual closure if specific gains are not made from year to year (Winstead, 2011). Thus, a significant amount of instructional time, money, and effort is focused on reaching the school's state-determined level of

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and lost from other important components of curriculum and instruction, including a focus on topics of student interest within the curriculum, acquisition of foundational content knowledge, development of academic and historical vocabulary, character building lessons and activities, and building skills to promote students' preparedness for post-secondary education and career training (Ciullo, 2015; Newberg-Long, 2010; Winstead, 2011).

Ciullo (2015) noted that students with learning disabilities are uniquely affected by the diminished social studies instructional time due to the greater emphasis placed on reading and mathematics instruction (Duplass, 2007; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Tanner, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2013; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). The National Assessment of Education Progress in History found that students with disabilities have difficulties in social studies, which suggests a need for even greater support for these students (Ciullo, 2015). Upon high school graduation, 85 percent of students with disabilities scored "below basic" in social studies content knowledge (Ciullo, 2015). The learning outcomes for these students are impacted in that they are not able to fully build the foundational content knowledge needed to equip students for the secondary social studies curriculum (Ciullo, 2015). Ciullo noted the "time crunch" teachers face, created by high-stakes testing, new initiatives and demands, and more is a reality that school and curriculum leaders must work within to best support student learning (Ciullo, 2015; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010). Evidence-based strategies can be utilized under three optimal conditions in order to help students with learning disorders develop knowledge of historical content, gain important comprehension skills, and maximize available instructional time: a) infusing

social studies content within English-language arts (ELA) in co-taught classrooms, b) consultation, or c) direct delivery (Ciullo, 2015; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010).

Efforts to make improvements in social studies education have not fared well, in part due to the demands for accountability of U.S. public schools imparted by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, and due to specifications of certain grants given to low-income schools, which require that social studies not be taught during literacy instruction (Olwell & Raphael, 2006). The Center on Education Policy (CEP) and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that, as a result of NCLB implementation, seventy-one percent of districts nationwide reported an increasing in instructional time for reading, writing, and math, which were subject to state-mandated assessment protocols. Increased instructional time for test subjects occurred at expense of other core subjects, most commonly social studies and science classes (Newberg-Long, 2010). Integrated social studies, in which the content is tied to ELA instruction, can encounter barriers in the delivery and structure of the subject (Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006). In Olwell & Raphael's study (2006) of elementary social studies education in Michigan, reforms were implemented to address low performance in social studies, but students in working-class and low-income schools were most likely to be left out due to confusion about implementation or lack of alignment with reform efforts on the part of the districts.

Interventions in social studies education. Teachers have found ways to cope with a loss of instructional time for subjects not tested in elementary school (McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Ciullo, 2015). In Tennessee elementary schools, the focus is on assessing student proficiency primarily in reading and

mathematics. Therefore, in order to attempt to give students a foundation for success in subjects like social studies that will be tested in later grades, teachers have to get creative as “curriculum makers,” integrating social studies and the arts with the tested subjects to fit their students’ needs and interests (Ciullo, 2015; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010). McNamara’s case study (2008) on elementary teachers’ integration of social studies into English/Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics determined that teachers felt this practice was successful. However, teacher experiences and student success in social studies courses tell a different story about integrated social studies curriculum as an answer to the “time to do it all” problem elementary teachers face (May, 2005; McNamara, 2008).

In a causal-comparative research study conducted to explore the relationship between time allocation and scheduling for social studies and student achievement in middle-level social studies in South Carolina, no statistically significant evidence was found to support the existence of a relationship between the two variables (Allan, 2010). However, the study found that the principals’ perceptions and attitudes towards social studies affected the scheduling method they chose, which could ultimately have a greater effect over a longer period of time on student performance (Allan, 2010). In Allan’s study (2010), the data indicated a need for a study to explore a larger window of time in student performance, as to determine whether instructional time and learning might actually have a relationship. Allan’s (2010) findings support the need for research tracking student performance in social studies across elementary and secondary schools, as the long-term potential for impact of curriculum narrowing and limited instructional time in social studies is present.

Improving academic performance in social studies might not be connected to instructional methods, narrowing curriculum, or instructional time allotted to social studies. In a case study conducted at one urban California middle school, nine teachers, one administrator and one curriculum facilitator were studied in regards to the factors associated with increasing student achievement (Nixon-Green, 2012). Nixon-Green found three major themes associated with successfully increasing student achievement: a culture of support for students, the setting of high academic expectations, and the establishment of school-wide systems and structures (Nixon-Green, 2012). Social studies teachers at the elementary and middle levels could work in conjunction with one another and district and school leadership to create curriculum and instruction plans that are built on these three themes, and are common across both the elementary and middle school to which students will transition (Nixon-Green, 2012).

In terms of measures to continue closing the achievement gap, a mixed-methods correlational study conducted on the effect of research-based instructional methods on student performance indicated that in schools utilizing such methods, subgroup student populations, such as ethnic minorities, English-language learners, and economically disadvantaged significantly outperformed the state (Wesley, 2011). Wesley concluded that certain research-based practices are related to increased student achievement (Wesley, 2011).

In relation to improving student performance in social studies in Rocky Top Public Schools, it is possible that teachers from both the elementary and middle school levels could frequently meet to analyze students' social studies performance data, and allow their evaluation of the data to inform their decisions regarding instructional practice and curriculum design (Allan, 2010;

Nixon-Green, 2012; Wesley, 2011). Such research-based practices, as detailed in Wesley's study (2011), have the potential to significantly improve the performance of student subgroup populations, and contribute to the narrowing of the achievement gap in social studies education.

In Virgin's 2014 study, "essential questions" were evaluated for how well they were able to increase students' abilities to connect learning between units and to personal experiences outside of the classroom (Virgin, 2014). "Essential questions" are part of a framework for curriculum and instruction called "Understanding by Design," in which teachers create essential questions that will provoke thought through consideration of the big ideas and core processes within the content standards (Virgin, 2014). The study on essential questions and the "Understanding by Design" framework is a piece of a larger movement in education toward student-centered approaches to curriculum and instruction, and away from teacher-centered (Virgin, 2014). Virgin asserted social studies as a discipline lends itself uniquely to exploring student-centered approaches and interventions due to its relevance as the study of culture, society, and the communication of ideas (Virgin, 2014). Virgin's mixed-methods study determined that revisiting previous essential questions throughout the school year greatly increased students' abilities to connect learning between units, but only slightly increased their abilities to connect learning to personal experiences for outside the classroom (Virgin, 2014). Virgin's study findings are encouraging to educators looking to employ student-centered, student-driven instructional strategies and interventions in a social studies course.

A study aimed at improving middle-school students' knowledge and comprehension in social studies explored the impact of utilizing reading

comprehension strategies such as comprehension canopy, essential words, knowledge acquisition, and the use of team-based learning (Vaughn, Swanson, Roberts, Wanzek, Stillman-Spisak, Solis, & Simmons, 2013). The researchers found that students in the treatment condition outperformed those in the comparison condition on the measure of vocabulary and knowledge acquisition at all time points (Vaughn, et al., 2013). However, there were no statistically significant differences for reading comprehension (Vaughn et al., 2013). The researchers used a randomized control trial, intervention, and outcome measures in 85 eighth grade social studies classes with 19 teachers, and administered pre- and post-tests, as well as two follow-up measures four and eight weeks following the treatment (Vaughn et al., 2013). While no statistically significant evidence supports that the reading comprehension interventions employed by teachers impacted students' reading comprehension, vocabulary and knowledge acquisition improved for students in the treatment condition (Vaughn et al., 2013).

Collaborative strategic reading as an intervention for building literacy skills and social studies knowledge. The department of education for the state of Tennessee tasked public schools with improving students' proficiency in reading, which need not be an isolated responsibility for teachers of English-language arts courses. Reading comprehension is a skill necessary for success across all content areas, and after high school graduation as an adult. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) is an instructional intervention strategy designed to improve reading comprehension that can be implemented in the social studies classroom (Boardman, Klinger, Buckley, Annamma, & Lasser, 2015; Klinger & Vaughn, 1999; Hitchcock, Dimino, Kurki, Wilkins, Gersten, 2011).

Teachers utilize CSR in the classroom through scaffolding instruction of four comprehension strategies (previewing, identifying “clicks” and “clunks,” getting the “gist,” and wrap-up) that the students will learn to apply to texts while working in small cooperative learning groups (Boardman et al., 2015; Hitchcock et al., 2011; Klinger & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012). CSR is student-centered intervention in which students can access complex texts, gain independence, and build collaborative and literacy skills within a content area course (Hitchcock et al., 2011; Klinger & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Vaughn, et al., 2013).

The CSR intervention consists of four distinct stages students will eventually move through independently, as a small group: 1) preview, 2) identify clicks and clunks, 3) get the gist, and 4) wrap up (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). In the first phase, students preview the text before reading, and look at key words, headings, pictures, and charts in a short period of time (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). The teacher should ask questions that will encourage students to make predictions about the text, and share what they learned through previewing (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). In the next phase, students read through the text and identify “clunks,” or words, concepts, and ideas that are hard to understand and disruptive to reading comprehension (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). Students identify clunks as they read, and use “fix-up” strategies to figure them out (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). Fix-up strategies can vary based on student and teacher preference, but are designed to facilitate comprehension of the identified difficult words, concepts, and ideas (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). In the third phase, students identify the most important, or main, ideas in the text as they read (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). Students learn to communicate the main ideas of

every paragraph in the text in their own words. Finally, students engage in the wrap-up phase, and identify the most important ideas and concepts from the entire selection they just read (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). In this phase, students work together to generate their own higher-order questions to facilitate understanding of the main ideas presented in the text (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). Teachers may ask students to keep CSR logs, which help students track their previewing (before reading), clicks and clunks and the gist (during reading), and wrap up (after reading) (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). Students use the CSR strategy in cooperative groups, in which each student is assigned a distinct role that corresponds to each of the four phases of CSR (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999). In order for students to work independently in cooperative groups, the teacher uses modeling and scaffolded instruction to gradually release students from guided, teacher-led CSR to complete the process independently in student-led groups (Klinger & Vaughn, 1999).

In Hitchcock, Dimino, Kurki, Wilkins, and Gersten's study (2011), the researchers utilized randomized controlled trials to examine the effect of CSR on student reading comprehension in grade 5 social studies classrooms within a linguistically diverse school (Hitchcock et al., 2011). Over the course of one school year, the researchers studied whether the students receiving CSR instruction would have higher average reading comprehension posttest scores on the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) than students in control classrooms (Hitchcock et al., 2011). The study found that CSR did not have a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension levels; however, the fidelity of the study may have been compromised, as only 21.6 percent of teachers were implementing all of the CSR

strategies with full procedural fidelity (Hitchcock, et al., 2011). A similar study was conducted with middle school social studies students, and examined the effectiveness of CSR over eight weeks with a focus on 15 students who were low-achieving readers (Beyers, Lembke, & Curs, 2013). The results of this study indicated that no significant difference existed between groups in weekly change in performance scores (Beyers et al., 2013).

While none of the studies found a statistically significant impact on reading comprehension existed after implementing CSR, the outcomes laid the foundation for further study of CSR in a secondary setting, and in a content-specific manner (Beyers et al., 2013; Hitchcock et al., 2011; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). CSR protocol contains elements of an effective reading comprehension intervention that draws on students' creativity and cultural schemas, is a constructive process, positions reading as a writing exercise, is both interactive and transactive, and allows students to integrate new information gleaned from the reading with pre-existing prior knowledge (Wilson, 2009). Additionally, CSR is a student-centered intervention, in which students are the primary leaders and benefactors of the learning. As such, teacher knowledge of theoretical pedagogy or research to support overt, explicit reading instruction becomes less crucial to the success of the intervention, effectively removing a previously identified barrier to teaching reading skills in content areas other than ELA (Tanner, 2008).

In an experimental study in middle school science and social studies classes in a large urban district, researchers Boardman, Klinger, Buckley, Annamma, & Lasser (2015) compared CSR instruction with a "business as usual" comparison condition. Researchers and school personnel collaborated to provide teachers with ongoing professional learning and classroom support to implement

CSR within their respective social studies or science classrooms. The degree of implementation of CSR instruction varied across classrooms, but students were observed utilizing CSR strategies while working together in small groups (Boardman et al., 2015). Researchers found statistically significant evidence through multi-level analyses that students who received CSR instruction outperformed their peers in the comparison condition on standardized reading comprehension assessments, and concluded that CSR is an effective instructional strategy to improve students' reading comprehension (Boardman et al., 2015).

This study connects CSR to content-area instruction and reading, specifically in social studies, with a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension. As the identified problem of practice and research questions guiding this action research study pertain to reading comprehension in the social studies content area, Boardman, Klinger, Buckley, Annamma, and Lasser's study (2015) provides research-based support for utilizing CSR as an intervention, as well as for guidance in implementation. The teacher-researcher will be working with student-participants in high school, however, so slight procedural and instructional adjustments may need to be made in order to find relevance and applicability in the high school social studies classroom.

Connection to the Problem of Practice

The problems from an "endangered" social studies program do not stop with elementary school (Passe, 2006). According to Passe's study (2006), "high-stakes competency tests have influenced the quality of social studies education at the secondary level by shifting teachers' emphasis from higher-level concepts to lower levels such as recall and comprehension." Where states do not test social studies at the elementary level, social studies curriculum is disappearing from

the school day entirely (Ciullo, 2015; Passe, 2006). The same appears to be true in Rocky Top Public Schools (RTPS). Secondary teachers in RTPS commonly note that they receive students from the elementary and middle school levels who have not suitably developed a solid foundational mastery of social studies concepts and skills necessary for success (Ciullo, 2015; Winstead, 2011). Secondary teachers must then attend to basic elementary social studies topics and skills; thus, delaying the discovery of grade-level equivalent deeper knowledge and skills that will likely plague students through graduation (Ciullo, 2015; Passe, 2006; Winstead, 2011). As a result, students are not prepared to meet or exceed standards on end-of-course (EOC) social studies assessments; nor are they prepared for secondary and collegiate social science courses, or the responsibilities of citizenship beyond high school (Ciullo, 2015; Passe 2006; Winstead, 2011).

Summary

Social studies instruction, in an era of accountability in education in which heavy emphasis is placed on mastery of mathematics and ELA, is facing limitation due to the narrowing of curriculum and instructional time allotted to content area studies. Especially in grade levels in which social studies is not assessed by state-mandated standardized tests, instructional time is significantly diminished (Britt & Howe, 2014; Duplass, 2007; Eisner, 2015; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; McNamara, 2008; Newberg-Long, 2010; Olwell & Raphael, 2006; Passe, 2006; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008; Vogler & Virtue, 2007; Winstead, 2011). Instructional time is focused on mathematics, ELA, and science, which are assessed at the elementary level. When teachers do allocate time to teaching social studies per state standards, much time is spent covering the content as

opposed to building skills, such as reading, comprehension, and analysis skills with social studies texts. As students progress to secondary grade levels, social studies teachers are either pressed for instructional time, feel unprepared, or lack confidence in their ability to teach literacy skills necessary for students to grow and progress in their ability to read, think about, and respond to social studies texts. Secondary social studies teachers need a solution for building students' literacy skills that is curriculum independent and can be utilized with any topic, can be easily learned and taught to students and teachers alike, provides a framework for supporting reading comprehension, and is also an engaging learning activity.

The purpose and focus of the action research study is to understand what impact explicit instruction of content area literacy skills might have on students' reading comprehension of social studies texts. After reviewing literature on the impact of the era of accountability on social studies curriculum and instruction, teaching reading and the lack thereof in social studies courses, and exploring the existing body of research on Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), a reading comprehension intervention framework recommended by a colleague, the teacher-researcher decided to implement CSR and evaluate its impact on students' reading comprehension of grade-level appropriate social studies texts and students' perceptions of CSR as a learning activity.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

As an educator, action research is a powerful tool that can be used to inform and improve professional practice. In this action research study, the teacher-researcher will seek to understand the identified problem of practice in which middle level social studies students demonstrate poor social studies literacy and critical analysis skills. The research questions shaping the focus of the study are:

1. *What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?*

The purpose of the study is to understand whether implementing CSR in a high school social studies class impacts critical analysis of social studies texts and literacy skill development, and how students perceive CSR as a learning activity. The teacher-researcher primarily utilized Mertler's (2014) action research cycle to guide my study planning initially, but the development of the study evolved under the guiding principles of action research from Stringer (2007), Herr and Anderson (2014), and Koshy (2006) used to refine the methodology contained herein (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Action Research

Action research, to the traditional researcher, violates the understanding of what is valid in the process of acceptable scientific research (Mertler, 2014). It involves stakeholders acting in his or her own community in two roles simultaneously throughout the course of the study: researcher and participant (Stringer, 2014). Traditional researchers balk at this notion due to concerns with potential for researcher bias, validity of measurements and results, and generalizability associated with the characteristically small and relatively homogenous sample, among others (Herr & Anderson, 2014). However, some principles of action research, which would be considered objectionable by traditional researchers, contribute to the validity and need for action research within the field of education. Action research allows teachers to become the expert problem-solvers in their own classroom, integrating their professional practice with the ability to gain a greater understanding of the unique problems of practice faced in individual classrooms, schools and districts (Mertler, 2014). When this authentic cycle of research, implementation and reflection occurs in a classroom, the educational experiences of the teacher-researcher, student participants, and school community stakeholders stand a much greater chance to be improved than if teachers were not empowered to engage in any form of research (Stringer, 2014). Therefore, generalizability is not a major concern for action researchers, as the findings are intended to apply to the classroom in which research is conducted, not necessarily to a larger population. Traditional research seeks to explain and understand questions on a macro-level, with high degree of generalizability of the findings as a hallmark of the validity and success of a study. However, action research is important at a micro-level, in which

many individual teachers engage in research to better the professionalism of themselves and potentially that of their school community (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2014).

The Role of Action Research in Addressing the Problem of Practice

Action research, conducted by educators within the field of public education, can be considered a means of teacher-controlled accountability; keeping schools responsive to the expectations of the public but guided by the experts within. Action research led by teachers creates an opportunity to redefine success for all students, and those in particular whom still suffer from the effects of racial and economic segregation on funding and labeling of schools as “successful” or “failing” (Spring, 2014). Utilizing action research led by classroom teachers as a means of assessment of learning allows for creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, self-discovery, subjective skill development and authentic inquiry to return to education, as well as an authentic insight as to how to improve students’ literacy skills through social studies courses (Anderson & Kerr, 2014; Koshy, 2006; Levy & Ellis, 2006). Undoubtedly, any successful intervention will be one in which students should be encouraged “to formulate their own purposes and to design ways to achieve them... to work cooperatively to address problems that they believe to be important... participate in the assessment of their own work” (Eisner, 2015). Educators engaging in action research as a means of assessment of learning are equipped to assess those skills and personal growth experiences mentioned by Eisner (2015) that are too subjective for standardized tests, but arguably more important in the development of citizens than whether a student can memorize core content

knowledge, and regurgitate it on one singular high-stakes objective test (Eisner, 2015; Spring, 2014; Tanner, 2008).

Action Research Study Design

The discussion contained herein explored the action research design, the role of the researcher in this study, the setting in which the study was conducted, the sample, the participants, the data collection methods, the data collection instruments utilized, and the analysis and reflection that occurred when the data was gathered.

Action research design. This action research study is a concurrent mixed-methods research design (Coe et al., 2017; Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). A concurrent mixed-methods research study can be described as an analysis of a collection of qualitative data, such as interviews with school stakeholders, coupled with an analysis of a collection of quantitative data, to further explain any relationships discovered in the exploration of the identified problem of practice (Coe et al., 2017; Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). A concurrent mixed-methods design was favorable for this particular study because collecting qualitative and quantitative data and concurrently triangulating both allowed the teacher-researcher to develop a more holistic understanding of the impact of the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention on the identified problem of including literacy instruction in secondary social studies content area courses (Coe et al., 2017; Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The qualitative data gathered was focused on gathering participants' thoughts about and perceptions of the intervention, rather than from the teacher-researcher's

impressions alone after an analysis of quantitative student performance data (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

ReadWorks, a content area literacy database online containing various reading passages, vocabulary sets, and accompanying comprehension question sets, were utilized as pre- and post-test instrument to assess student-participants' levels of social studies reading comprehension. The teacher-researcher selected texts that are relative to the topics student-participants learn about in their current social studies course, curriculum independent, and appropriate for the student-participants' grade level based on the Lexile Index measure of the text (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Then, the teacher-researcher engaged in semi-structured interviews with student-participants to determine their perceptions and attitudes towards the effectiveness of using CSR to improve reading comprehension of social studies texts (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). Finally, the teacher-researcher analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data collected, and reflect on the importance and meaning of the results of the study. This action research study serves to further inform professional practice as it relates to the integration of social studies curriculum into the educational experiences of students, and the overt teaching of reading, comprehension, and literacy skills in content areas other than English-Language Arts.

Role of the action researcher. Action research is unique in that the researcher and the educator are one and the same (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The process is a collaborative endeavor, in which committed stakeholders in a social community engage in inquiry or investigation into specific problems to better understand and devise

solutions for them (Herr & Anderson, 2014). In traditional research, the researcher is removed from the study because his or her involvement in the study could lead to experimenter bias, which is a threat to the validity of the study itself (Stringer, 2014). As a former curriculum writer for secondary social studies, former social studies teacher, current instructional leader providing support to a high school social studies department, and practitioner in the action research study, the teacher-researcher in this study was deeply integrated in the formation and delivery of curriculum, and engaged in a continuous cycle of reflection upon the effectiveness and impact of the social studies content we create for all grade levels. The teacher-researcher worked with two social studies classes at Smokey Mountain High School (pseudonym) to implement CSR in classroom instruction, and took on the role of teacher-researcher throughout the course of the study.

Setting. This study took place at Smokey Mountain High School (pseudonym) in Rocky Top Public Schools (pseudonym) district located in East Tennessee. The teacher-researcher was an assistant principal serving predominantly eleventh grade students, parents, and their teachers, and provided support to both the social studies and English departments at the school. Participants in the study were students at Smokey Mountain High School, all of whom were enrolled in the U.S. History and Geography or Advanced Placement U.S. History social studies courses. The study began during the second quarter of the school year, which was over halfway through each course's content, so the duration of instruction in the course would not be a factor in limiting students' comprehension of the passage they will read. The passages and related comprehension questions for each passage were all hosted

on the ReadWorks online database, and were curriculum independent, which means that students do not have to have received direct instruction on the topic of the passage prior to reading the passage in order to be able to accurately read and comprehend the contents contained therein.

Population. The school district of which Smokey Mountain High School was a part, Rocky Top Public Schools, was comprised of eighty-seven schools serving a total enrollment of 55,160 students, of whom 77.7 percent were white, 2.2 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, 5.4 percent were Hispanic, 14.6 percent were African American, and .2 percent Native American/Alaskan, according to the most recent demographic data obtained from the state of Tennessee's Department of Education's "Report Card" (2012) for Rocky Top Public Schools. According to the same "Report Card" data, 3.5 percent of students within the district were identified as "Limited English Proficient," 12.9 percent received Special Education services, and 47.3 percent were economically disadvantaged. 60.7 percent of high school students in the district scored "Proficient" or "Advanced" on the TNReady English II state assessment. The district's American College Testing Program (ACT) score was a composite average of 20.6, compared to the Tennessee state average of 19.2. The four-year graduation rate was 90.3 percent, and the average rate of daily attendance was 92.6 percent.

Sample. The sample of student-participants in this action research study are students enrolled either in tenth or eleventh grade at Smokey Mountain High School. These students are enrolled in either U.S. History and Geography or Advanced Placement U.S. History classes during the 2017 – 2018 school year, which were the two options available to students to fulfill the United States History course requirement in order to graduate from Rocky Top Public Schools

in the state of Tennessee. Since United States History was a required course, and students at Smokey Mountain High School were randomly assigned to social studies teachers by an electronic, web-based student information management system, there was reasonable assurance that the sample was naturally randomized.

Characteristics of the sample. The school's population demographic differs slightly from the district, according to the school "Report Card" data from the state of Tennessee. Of the 1,066 students served at the school, 86.2 percent were identified as white, 10.8 percent were African American, four-tenths of a percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, two and a half percent were Hispanic, and one-tenth of a percent were Native American/Alaskan. Students classified as economically disadvantaged accounted for 61 percent of the student body. The percentage of students receiving Special Education services was not provided, but was estimated by the teacher-researcher and other knowledgeable school personnel at Smokey Mountain High School to be near 30 percent of the total student body, based on the number of students receiving Special Education services in each grade level. The average rate of daily attendance was 90.8 percent, and the graduation rate was 88.7 percent. The average composite ACT score was 18.4. For the purpose of this study, the sample was closely representative of the school population, as the social studies course was required for every student to graduate and students were randomly assigned at Smokey Mountain High School.

Participants. In this study, the group of student-participants were high school students in either tenth or eleventh grade who were enrolled in U.S. History and Geography or Advanced Placement U.S. History courses for the

2017 – 2018 school year. The teacher-researcher worked with students from two teachers' classes that had approximately 25 students in each. The sample size of student-participants is 24, as several students declined to participate in the study. As the administrator for a grade level required to take at least one social studies course, and the administrator providing oversight and support to the curriculum and instructional workings of the social studies department, the teacher-researcher was able to access teachers and students to participate in the study with relative ease. Additionally, teachers in the social studies department indicated they were willing to participate in the study because of the reading comprehension challenges they have observed in their students.

Data collection. Before beginning data collection, the teacher-researcher finalized a study design, data collection methodology, and instruments that would allow for collection of data to best answer the research questions:

1. *What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?*

The teacher-researcher determined that a concurrent mixed-methods study design consisting of both a quantitative and qualitative research element would be most appropriate to reflect on students' reading comprehension and thoughts and perceptions of CSR as an instructional strategy, respectively (Coe et al., 2017; Mertler, 2014). For the quantitative component of the study, the teacher-researcher utilized a single-group pre- and post-test design to measure the impact of the CSR intervention on students' reading comprehension of texts used as part of the learning in the social studies course (Beyers et al., 2013; Koshy,

2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The teacher-researcher wanted the qualitative component of the study to offer insight into student perceptions of content area reading in the social studies class and the impact of CSR on their reading comprehension of social studies texts to thoroughly explore the second research question of the study. To this aim, the teacher-researcher chose to conduct a semi-structured interview (Appendix F), after the post-test was given, with approximately five students who were selected at random. The teacher-researcher's intent was to determine student-participants' attitudes toward and perceptions of whether CSR helped them better understanding reading in social studies class (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). To randomly select students to participate in the semi-structured interview, the teacher-researcher entered all student-participants' names into an online randomizer tool, and set the function of the tool to select five names at random. In this case, each name held equal value, and was selected without regard to any characteristic or qualifier other than its inclusion in the group of student-participant names entered. The teacher-researcher then interviewed the five randomly student-participants.

Data collection instruments. The teacher-researcher used a single-group pre-test post-test design to collect quantitative data to facilitate the exploration of the first research question:

What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?

The teacher-researcher utilized ReadWorks, an online database of content area passages, vocabulary sets, and reading comprehension questions, to locate and select two texts within the typical reader Lexile measures for the grade levels of

the student-participants and the corresponding content-based measure (CBM) question sets that specifically assess reading comprehension as the pre-test and post-test for the quantitative element of the study. ReadWorks.org hosts informational, curriculum independent articles that are organized by content area, topic, length, and Lexile measure, and are “carefully curated to support reading comprehension” (“About ReadWorks,” 2017). While the teacher-researcher did not use the vocabulary support piece of ReadWorks in this study, ReadWorks has the option for educators to engage in explicit instruction of academic vocabulary and in scaffolding of article length, complexity, and Lexile measure based on individual students’ needs.

Lexile framework for reading. The typical Lexile measure for eleventh to twelfth grade readers at the mid-year 25th percentile is from 1130 to 1440 (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017). Essentially, the middle 50 percent of the population of eleventh and twelfth grade students should be able to read and comprehend texts with Lexile measures between 1130 and 1440 (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017). The Lexile Framework for Reading is a quantitative representation of either a text, or a student’s degree of reading comprehension ability (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017; Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Lexile measures serve two purposes in educational settings: a measure of the difficulty of a given text, or a student’s reading ability level (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017). For individuals, Lexile measures can be reported through a reading comprehension test and field study to link Lexile measure and the student’s reading score. Texts can be quantified with Lexile measures through an evaluation of the text’s readability. The Lexile Analyzer is a software program that can assign a quantitative indicator, a Lexile measure, to a given text once it has evaluated the semantic

(word frequency) and syntactic (sentence length) characteristics contained therein ("About Lexile Measures," 2017; Lennon & Burdick, 2004). For the purpose of this study, since CSR is a collaborative learning activity that requires small groups of students to work on the same text at the same time, the teacher-researcher saw the need to select a common text for student-participants to read. The alternative to the selected method was to first assess each student-participant's Lexile measure prior to applying the intervention, form small groups of student-participants categorized by Lexile measure, and assign each group a text within the group's assessed Lexile measure. The teacher-researcher elected to instead choose texts with Lexile measures within the average Lexile measure range appropriate for the grade levels of the student-participants. The rationale for this choice was two-fold: first, assessing each student-participant's individual Lexile measure and then grouping students categorically by Lexile measure introduces ability grouping as an unaccounted-for dependent variable within the study that could potentially impact the effectiveness of the CSR intervention and outcome of the study. Second, the teacher-researcher's identification of the Problem of Practice (PoP), which generated research questions that guided the development of this action research study, included the pressure school communities face in preparing students to demonstrate proficiency on state-mandated assessments of learning. The state-mandated assessments for each grade level in Tennessee, the TNReady testing protocol, are written at the state's expectation of students' abilities at the given grade level. Students who are below grade level in any given area are not given an assessment commensurate with their ability levels; rather, their proficiency is evaluated at the state's determination of appropriate grade-level performance.

The teacher-researcher would be remiss in conducting a study to understand the impact of a given intervention on students' reading comprehension if student-participants are given texts according to their ability level, as this introduces yet another unaccounted-for dependent variable that could impact students' reading comprehension: difficulty of the given text. Therefore, the teacher-researcher utilized texts with Lexile measures appropriate for the middle 50 percent of eleventh and twelfth graders, or the average eleventh and twelfth grade student.

Quantitative data collection instruments. The pre-test article and reading comprehension question set was titled, "The American Revolution, 1763 – 1783 [excerpt]" (Appendix B) provided by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. The article is 1,720 words, is classified as informational, and is rated at a Lexile measure of 1410 ("About ReadWorks," 2017). The post-test article and reading comprehension question set is titled, "A Local and National Story: Civil Rights Movement in Postwar Washington DC [Abridged]" (Appendix D). The article is 1,670 words, is classified as informational, and is rated at a Lexile measure of 1450 ("About ReadWorks," 2017). The texts utilized for the pre- and post-test were selected from the ReadWorks database by content topic, U.S. History, and by Lexile measure. The Lexile measure of the texts is reflective of the average eleventh to twelfth grade readers' abilities at the mid-year 25th percentile ("About Lexile Measures," 2017). The pre-test (Appendix C) protocol consisted of student-participants working independently to read the informational text, "The American Revolution, 1763-1783 [excerpt]" (Appendix B) and respond to the corresponding reading comprehension question set. The post-test (Appendix E) protocol following the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) instruction and learning activity consisted of students reading the selected

text and answering the corresponding comprehension question set for the informational text, “A Local and National Story: Civil Rights Movement in Postwar Washington DC [Abridged]” (Appendix D).

Utilizing ReadWorks for the pre-test and post-test was of particular interest because of the online accessibility through which the teacher-researcher could give student-participants the pre-test and post-test. Smokey Mountain High School was a one-to-one technology school, which meant each student was issued a laptop for use with schoolwork. Coursework disseminated online was the expectation and the cultural norm of the school, and assigning a pre-test and post-test through any other means would be a deviation from students’ mode of daily academic work that could impact the outcome of the study (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Qualitative data collection instrument. The teacher-researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix F) to collect qualitative data that facilitated exploration of the second research question:

What are students’ perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?

The semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix F) allowed the teacher-researcher to ask student-participants a series of focused but open questions with the possibility of further discussion to explore themes or ideas further as needed (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The semi-structured interview (Appendix E) for this study consisted of three main questions about the student-participants’ attitudes about reading and perception of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), as well as several guiding questions to further prompt discussion for each main question asked. The teacher-researcher interviewed

approximately five student-participants selected at random upon completion of the CSR instruction and learning activity and the post-test.

Data collection methods. The concurrent mixed-methods design consisted of a quantitative analysis of students' reading comprehension measures, pre- and post-intervention, as well as a qualitative assessment of students' perceptions towards the effectiveness of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as a content literacy improvement intervention through a semi-structured interview one-on-one with the teacher-researcher. The following sections detail the procedures used to gather data in this action research study.

Pre-test. The teacher-researcher first assessed students to determine their pre-intervention reading comprehension level of content area social studies texts through a pre-test, which was quantified using students' scores on the selected ReadWorks content-based measure (CBM) reading comprehension question set, before beginning intervention instruction (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The pre-test (Appendix C) was designed to measure students' initial levels comprehension of an informational social studies text written within an average Lexile measure for eleventh and twelfth grade students ("About Lexile Measures," 2017). The teacher-researcher created an individual account for each student-participant on the ReadWorks database, and pre-assigned both the texts and comprehension question sets for the pre-and post-tests. Students received a class code to log in and claim their own pre-created accounts, and were instructed by the teacher-researcher to begin reading the pre-test text when they have successfully claimed their own accounts. The teacher-researcher consistently circulated among students in the classroom as they completed the pre-test tasks. As such, students' desks were

arranged in such a way that the teacher-researcher was able to move freely around the classroom, and could easily view students' screens to monitor for appropriate content access and to maintain a controlled setting. Students were allowed to read and answer the pre-test questions in their own time. When each student finished reading and answering the question set, they clicked the "submit" button at the bottom of their question set screen and their answers were submitted to the teacher-researcher's ReadWorks account. The ReadWorks database autoscored each student's submission, and the teacher-researcher checked each student's autoscore to ensure accuracy. Students were not able to view their scores on the pre-test upon completion to avoid adding an additional variable, or the potential impact of the pre-test score on confidence or self-esteem, to the action research study. Students' comprehension of the pre-test informational article (Appendix B) was quantified by the percentage of reading comprehension questions students answered correctly on a ReadWorks content-based measure (CBM), before beginning intervention instruction (Beyers et al., 2013; Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Collaborative strategic reading intervention protocol. Next, the teacher-researcher provided direct instruction (Appendix G) to teach the students how to correctly use the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention. A Google Slides presentation, containing pertinent information about the CSR process, key vocabulary, and student action steps provided the framework and tangible component of the teacher-researcher's lesson. The presentation of CSR to students consisted of three distinct phases: before reading, during reading, and after reading (Klingner et al., 2012). The teacher-researcher's direct instruction of

CSR (Appendix G) focused on describing the specific student action steps of each phase. Direct instruction for the “before reading” phase consisted of the teacher-researcher teaching students how to *preview* and *predict*. Direct instruction for the “during reading” phase consisted of the teacher-researcher defining “clicks,” “clunks,” and “gist,” and showing students how to identify and address “clicks” and “clunks,” and getting the “gist” of each section of a text. Simply put, “clicks” are portions of a text that students are able to smoothly read and comprehend without interruptions from “clunks.” “Clunks” are unknown words, phrases, or ideas that interrupt smooth reading and comprehension of a text. Getting the “gist” is identifying the main idea of a given section of text. Direct instruction for the “after reading” phase consisted of the teacher-researcher showing students how to formulate and answer questions that will address the “gist” of each section of text, any “clunks” the group identified, and review the key ideas of the passage. Students were allowed to take notes, and also received a CSR Learning Log they were to utilize in the CSR activity to review alongside direct instruction of CSR. The Learning Log and direct instruction of CSR were closely aligned, so students were able to preview the Learning Log and make notes on it as they learned about CSR.

Following direct instruction, the learning activity phase of the study in which the CSR intervention is implemented occurred. To facilitate the CSR protocol as a small-group collaborative learning activity, students received two classroom-ready CSR instruments (Appendix H): The Learning Log for Informational Text and CSR Student Cue Cards (Klingner et al., 2012). The teacher-researcher assigned students to groups of four alphabetically, and instructed students to move to a cluster of four desks, all facing each other, so

that collaboration was not limited by the traditional classroom arrangement of individual desks in straight, uniform rows. The teacher-researcher directed students to select roles for each member of their groups according to the given student cue cards. Students had the option to choose one of four roles, the responsibilities of which were detailed on individual cue cards: the CSR Leader, the Gist Expert, the Clunk Expert, and the Question Expert (Klingner et al., 2012). Each student holding an individual role essential to the functioning of the group is intended to impact engagement, accountability, and self-confidence (Boardman et al., 2015; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012). Once students reviewed the responsibilities on the cue cards, and selected a role, the teacher-researcher directed students to utilize their knowledge of the CSR protocol, the Learning Log for Informational Text, and CSR Student Cue Cards to collaboratively read and analyze the given text with their small groups (Boardman et al., 2015; Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Klingner et al., 2012). Students were given approximately 25 to 30 minutes to work collaboratively through a given text within their assigned small groups. The teacher-researcher circulated among the students, offering support in the CSR protocol whenever students asked or appeared to need reminders. The teacher-researcher did not offer assistance in any questions that could potentially impact students' comprehension of the reading, such as, "What does this word mean?" or "What is this paragraph about?" Instead, students were praised for asking a question, and were asked to pose the question to their group instead of to the teacher-researcher. Students utilized their Learning Log for Informational Text handouts to move them through the three phases of the CSR protocol, prompt students to

complete the responsibilities to their groups as part of their selected roles, and guide students' analysis of the text as they read (Klingner et al., 2012).

Post-test. After students learned and practiced utilizing CSR in their small groups, the teacher-researcher again assessed students' reading comprehension post-intervention using a content-based measure (CBM) of reading comprehension from the ReadWorks database. The teacher-researcher assigned an informational text for students to read from the ReadWorks database (Appendix D). The text was assigned through students' classes on ReadWorks, but paper copies were available for students who request them. Students will then complete the post-test (Appendix E), which consisted of the corresponding comprehension question set from the assigned text. Students required approximately 25 to 30 minutes to complete the post-test reading and comprehension questions.

Semi-structured interview protocol. Finally, the teacher-researcher conducted a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix F) with student-participants to determine their perception of the impact of CSR as an intervention to impact literacy skill development in social studies courses. The teacher-researcher chose to include a qualitative element to the study through semi-structured interviews with student-participants in order to provide depth and richness to the data, as well as to glean the unique perspective of the student-participants about the CSR intervention. Quantitative data alone can give insight into the numerical effectiveness of the intervention, but the holistic perspective of the student-participants' performances is better captured through the integration of the students' thoughts and insights (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The teacher-researcher selected five student-participants at random using

an online random name generator. The teacher-researcher entered all student-participants' names into the generator, and set the selection number to five. The generator selected five student-participants from the list provided at random. The teacher-researcher met with each randomly selected student-participant individually in a neutral setting such as the school library during advisory period, in which students do not have an academic class assigned. The interviews were audio recorded, which allows for transcription and qualitative analysis following the conclusion of the data collection phase of this action research study.

Data analysis and reflection. After collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, an analysis of each will be conducted. The teacher-researcher will use statistical analysis to determine whether a significant difference between the student-participants' pre-test and post-test scores is present, and thematic analysis of student-participant interviews to determine if any consistent themes emerge in student attitudes and perceptions towards CSR (Mertler, 2014). The teacher-researcher will then triangulate the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the data analysis to further explain the results of the action researcher study (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Statistical analysis. This action research study is a mixed-method design, and as such, will rely on statistics to analyze the significance of the quantitative data collected. Statistics will be necessary to determine whether my findings occur due to chance, or are considered statistically significant, or are unlikely to have occurred due to chance, but are instead a result of the application of a dependent variable to a given sample (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). Statistical significance is calculated from the data set as a value that

indicates the likelihood of the numerical data occurring due to chance. This value, derived from the data set, is known as the p -value. If the p -value is less than or equal to the predetermined *alpha* level, usually set at .05, then the results are statistically significant, or likely to have occurred due to chance less than or equal to five percent of the time (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). To determine the p -value of the data set, the teacher researcher will conduct a dependent or paired-sample t test, which is utilized when comparing data gathered through a single group pre-test post-test study design (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Thematic analysis. The teacher-researcher will engage in thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with five student-participants selected at random from the sample. Thematic analysis can be used to find connections, if any exist, of unrelated material (Boyatzis, 1998; Komori & Keene, 2017). In this case, student-participant interviews will be transcribed to text, and will be coded by key words pertaining to student-participants' perceptions and attitudes towards content area reading and Collaborative Strategic Reading. The coded text will be analyzed for emergence of any similarities, which will be identified, named, and sorted into themes as they appear (Boyatzis, 1998; Komori & Keene, 2017). The teacher-researcher will provide qualitative evidence to support the identified themes, and will discuss the significance of the themes to this study, and the potential impact of the findings on future studies.

Triangulation of concurrent mixed research methods. Triangulation is useful when comparing multiple methods used to examine a research problem (Jick, 1979). The focus remains on the research problem, but the mode of data collection varies based on the perspective and research question used to probe

the problem (Jick, 1979). The teacher-researcher concurrently evaluated the quantitative and qualitative data collected regarding the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading on students' reading comprehension of social studies texts in order to develop a holistic, multi-dimensional understanding of the impact of the intervention (Coe et al., 2017; Jick, 1979). The teacher-researcher examined the difference between pre-test and post-test data to determine the quantitative impact of the intervention on students' reading comprehension, but also relied on students' responses within semi-structured interviews to give further insight into the quantitative data and derive meaning coordinating between students' assessment data and personal reflections. The teacher-researcher utilized both qualitative and quantitative data to support conclusions drawn from the analysis and triangulation of all data.

Ethical considerations. Before any data collection occurred, the teacher-researcher obtained assent from all student-participants to utilize their interview, pre-test, and post-test data in the study. All potential student-participants, regardless of whether they choose to provide assent or decline to participate, receive a letter outlining participation in the study (Appendix A). The letter explained the nature of the action research study, the extent of participation required, the principal researcher's commitment to maintain confidentiality and the anonymity of student-participants, and that providing assent for participation in the study is voluntary (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The letter was signed by the teacher-researcher and by the student-participant providing assent or declining participation, and returned to school so it could be retained it for records (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The teacher-researcher will provide a

copy of the completed action research study to student-participants upon request.

Protecting student-participant confidentiality. In terms of confidentiality of individual student-participants, the teacher-researcher will not need to publish individual student-participant pre-test or post-test scores, nor reveal the identity of those students who participated in the study (Mertler, 2014). In addition, the teacher-researcher employed the use of a pseudonym for the school and district to further protect the anonymity of participants. The research upheld the principles of beneficence and importance, as the purpose of the study was to better understand instructional methods that impact content literacy, which could ultimately be of benefit to students in the district (Mertler, 2014). The teacher-researcher did not need to deceive or otherwise mislead any participants, and will conduct the study with the utmost level of integrity, thus upholding the principle of honesty (Mertler, 2014). Any and all records related to the study, both electronic and paper, are secured either digitally by password known only to the teacher-researcher or will remain in a locked location available only to the teacher-researcher (Mertler, 2014). Any data collected and retained by the teacher-researcher is be devoid of student names and identifying information, and is categorized only by participant ID number assigned at random (Mertler, 2014). The only records containing names of students will be signatures indicating whether a student declines or assents to participate in the study, and students' own ReadWorks accounts. Students were prompted to create their own passwords, so their accounts remain accessible only to them or those to whom they have willingly given their password. Records pertaining to the study

will be retained for a period of three years following the completion of the study, and then will be destroyed (Mertler, 2014).

Accounting for bias. Passages and correlated reading comprehension question sets within the ReadWorks database are content-based, but curriculum independent, which means that passages can be relative to the social studies content area without requiring prior instruction or knowledge of the topic in order to comprehend the text. ReadWorks passages are also further categorized by Lexile score to assist in accurately placing the passages within the appropriate grade level readability and complexity of the text. The Lexile Scale is a tool used to quantify the difficulty of a text according to grade level readability and complexity (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Vaughn, Swanson, Roberts, Wanzek, Stillman-Spisak, Solis & Simmons, 2013). Lexile measures for texts are based on word frequency (semantic difficulty) and sentence length (syntactic complexity) (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017; Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Use of Lexile scaled, content area passages and comprehension question sets through ReadWorks allows the assessment of students’ comprehension of a social studies text to be free of teacher-researcher bias, to be curriculum independent, and to be appropriately matched to students’ grade level expectations for reading comprehension (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017; Lennon & Burdick, 2004).

Summary

Teachers, the “curriculum makers,” are the change agents who are best equipped to study solutions to the problems of practice created directly or indirectly by curriculum narrowing on their own classrooms (McNamara, 2008). Action research allows teachers, or school community stakeholders, to conduct a systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process for the purpose of

better understanding and improving their quality and effectiveness in practice (Mertler, 2014).

Through action research, teachers are able to improve professional practice and resulting student outcomes (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Koshy, 2006; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). Action research creates a bridge between theory and practice, in which the flow of information moves in two ways between educational researchers and teachers and encourages a more dynamic and responsive approach to the business of teaching and learning (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Koshy, 2006; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

In order to better understand the widely-recognized problem of a narrowing social studies curriculum due to the weight of standardized assessment brought on by the accountability movement, and the effect it has on students' ability to develop grade-level appropriate reading comprehension and analysis literacy skills in social studies, the teacher-researcher introduced Collaborative Strategic Reading, a content area literacy intervention strategy, and conducted action research following the methodology described herein (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Koshy, 2006; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The desired outcome of the action research study was that the teacher-researcher found an improvement in students' reading comprehension of grade-level appropriate social studies texts, and found positive student perceptions and attitudes of Collaborative Strategic Reading as a collaborative learning activity and content area literacy intervention.

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS

Upon completion of the data collection phase of the research study, the teacher-researcher engaged in reflection, in-depth analysis, consideration of the outcomes indicated by the data, and additional review of literature in the field of study in order to more clearly understand and concisely communicate the findings and possible implications of this action research study. This chapter will explore the data collection strategy used, the data analysis protocols conducted, a discussion of the findings, the link between the findings and the research questions, and the implications of the findings.

Data Collection Strategy Review

The teacher-researcher conducted an action research study for the purpose of determining whether a statistically significant difference in students' reading comprehension is present when a content area literacy intervention, CSR, is applied within classroom instruction in a secondary social studies class. This action research study follows a concurrent mixed-methods design to more fully explore the impact of CSR on student comprehension of grade-level appropriate social studies texts, and students' perceptions of CSR as an instructional strategy (Coe et al., 2017; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The concurrent mixed-methods design of the action research study consisted of a quantitative measure of students' reading comprehension on a pre-test and post-test, pre- and post-intervention, as well as a qualitative measure of students'

perceptions towards the effectiveness of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) through the means of a semi-structured interview protocol with a randomly selected sample of student-participants.

The data collection cycle took place over the course of approximately two weeks, and required approximately a month of communicating and planning with social studies teachers beforehand to ensure that the study would be conducive to teachers' learning goals for their students. Two teachers agreed to participate, and gave the teacher-researcher class time with their students after end-of-course state testing protocols at the beginning of December. The first part of the interaction with students was to explain the study, and gain students' assent. The teacher-researcher provided a letter to students and their families detailing the study, their rights as participants, and a place to indicate their assent or decline to participate in the study (Appendix A). The teacher-researcher clarified to students that all would participate in the learning activities, and that declining to participate indicated that their learning data from the activities would be excluded from the study, but it was not an option to remove themselves from class instruction. 24 student-participants provided assent for participation in the study and took the pre-test and post-test, and participated in the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention through U.S. History classes. Eight student-participants declined to participate in the study, but participated in the class instruction in CSR.

The teacher-researcher conducted a semi-structured interview (Appendix F) with student-participants to determine their attitudes towards and perceptions of the impact of CSR as an intervention to impact reading comprehension in social studies courses. The teacher-researcher interviewed five randomly

selected student-participants using an online random selection generator, in which the names of all 24 student-participants were entered, and set the output to select five of the 24 students at random. Of the five randomly selected, each was present at school that day, and available to interview during their advisory or last block class of the school day. Each interview lasted between three and seven minutes, and student-participants were asked a total of three overarching questions, with supplemental, guiding questions to encourage discussion and elaboration of students' responses when necessary. At this point, data collection concluded, and the teacher-researcher began the process of analyzing the data collected throughout the study.

Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this action research study was to determine whether the data indicated a statistically significant change existed between the pre- and post-test levels of students' reading comprehension of a grade-level social studies text, and to determine students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading intervention (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). This component of the action research study was guided by two research questions:

- 1. What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?*
- 2. What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?*

Quantitative data was collected in the form of students' social studies reading comprehension pre-tests, given prior to the implementation of the CSR intervention, and the post-test, given after the intervention. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five randomly selected

student-participants following the implementation of the CSR intervention. The following discussion is driven by a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the course of this action research study.

The analysis of data gathered through the mixed-methods action research study design examines both qualitative and quantitative inputs, and follows methodology consistent with action research (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). After independent analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, the teacher-researcher triangulated both forms of data to create a more holistic and in-depth analysis of the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading as a content-area reading comprehension intervention (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Quantitative analysis. Quantitative data was gathered from student-participants' pre-tests and post-tests of reading comprehension of a social studies text to explore the first research question:

What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?

The purpose of the pre-test and post-test was to determine a baseline level of reading comprehension of grade-level equivalent Lexile measure social studies texts, and the post-test was to determine whether students' comprehension of such texts improved after the CSR intervention was applied, and whether there was statistically significant evidence to concur the CSR intervention was effective, ineffective, or had no effect on students' reading comprehension.

The passages and comprehension question sets were provided by ReadWorks, and selected by the teacher-researcher based on content area corresponding with the students' current social studies class, U.S. History, the

Lexile measure, and whether the article had reading comprehension questions already created and attached to it. The teacher-researcher chose to use pre-created articles and question sets to avoid possible confirmation bias on the part of the teacher-researcher, and ensure that the questions directly assessed reading comprehension and were curriculum independent (Mertler, 2014).

To protect student-participant confidentiality, all personal and identifying information was removed from the data set when the teacher-researcher entered student-participant pre-test and post-test data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for tracking and analysis, and replaced student names with participant identification numbers assigned at random.

The teacher-researcher conducted an analysis of the quantitative data collected throughout the course of the study to determine whether the data indicated that the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention impacted student-participants' reading comprehension of social studies content-area texts. To begin, the teacher-researcher gathered quantitative data about students' pre-intervention reading comprehension levels from the pre-test, implemented the CSR intervention, and gathered data about students' post-intervention reading comprehension from the post-test. In this study, one set of data was collected from each of the student-participants in the form of the percentage of questions the student-participant answered correctly on the pre-test, which measured student-participants' reading comprehension prior to the application of the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention. The second set of data was collected from each of the student-participants in the form of the percentage of questions the student-participant answered correctly on the post-test, which

measured student-participants' reading comprehension after they participated in the CSR intervention.

Then, the teacher-researcher conducted a dependent, or paired sample *t*-test, which is the statistical process appropriate for analyzing two sets of data from one sample group of participants, (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The paired sample *t*-test compares pairs of observations from each subject, in which one sample group of participants is observed and two sets of data are taken (Mertler, 2014). Conducting a paired sample *t*-test using students' pre- and post-test data allowed the teacher-researcher to determine whether any statistically significant changes occurred in student-participants' reading comprehension, and whether those changes were likely to have occurred due to the intervention or due to random chance (Mertler, 2014). The standard for statistical significance in this study is represented by $p < .05$, or that there is less than a five percent possibility the results occurred due to random chance (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The teacher-researcher utilized the web-based application software GraphPad to input student-participants' pre- and post-test data and conduct the paired sample *t*-test. The teacher-researcher then determined whether a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-test scores existed, and conducted a paired sample *t*-test by various demographic indicators to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed post-intervention for any student groups represented with the sample. The results of the quantitative data for the sample group and subgroups therein follow.

Quantitative results. First, the teacher-researcher found the statistical measures of central tendency for the pre- and post-test data for the sample group as a whole. The data collected demonstrated that gains were made for the

sample group of student-participants between pre- and post-test reading comprehension assessment average scores (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Pre- and Post-Test Measures of Central Tendency

	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test	24	48.83	30.84	6.29
Post-Test	24	53.00	26.10	5.33

Next, the teacher-researcher conducted a paired sample *t*-test with the sample group's pre- and post-test data to determine whether a statistically significant difference between the group's pre- and post-test scores existed (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Pre- and Post-Test Paired Samples *t*-Test

	Paired Differences							
Pair Pre- Test – Post- Test				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2- tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	<i>t</i>	df	
	-4.17	9.76	1.99	-24.35	16.01	0.43	23	

There was no significant difference in scores between students' pre-test (M=48.83, SD=30.84) and post-test (M=53.00, SD=26.10) levels of reading comprehension; $t(23)=.43$, $p = .67$. These results suggest that while a difference exists in students' pre- and post-intervention reading comprehension levels, it is not enough to say whether the difference can be attributed to the CSR intervention.

Quantitative results by gender. In an effort to thoroughly examine the potential impact of CSR on different student populations represented within the sample, the teacher-researcher also analyzed the student-participants' pre- and post-test data by student-participants' genders and racial/ethnic identities. First, the teacher-researcher analyzed the data by gender. The data was separated into two groups according to student-participants' identified "Male" or "Female" gender. None of the student-participants in the sample identified themselves by any other gender. 10 of the student-participants are female, and 14 are male. The teacher-researcher then performed a paired sample *t*-test for both the "Male" and "Female" groups respectively. The teacher-researcher found the measures of central tendency for the female student-participants' data first (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Measures of Central Tendency – Female Student-Participants

	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test	10	51.50	29.43	9.31
Post-Test	10	52.90	24.32	7.69

Female student-participants as a group saw a slight increase of 1.4 percent from pre-test to post-test.

Next, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare female student-participants' reading comprehension scores before and after the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention was applied (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Paired Samples *t*-Test – Female Student-Participants

	Paired Differences							
Pre-Test – Post-Test				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
	-1.40	14.48	-	-34.15	31.35			
						0.10	9	.93

There was no significant difference in scores between female student-participants' pre-test (M=51.50, SD=29.43) and post-test (M=52.90, SD=24.32) levels of reading comprehension; $t(9)=.10$, $p = .93$. These results suggest that while a slight difference exists in female student-participants' pre- and post-intervention reading comprehension levels, it is not enough to say whether the difference can be attributed to the CSR intervention.

The teacher-researcher then analyzed the data for male student-participants in the same way, and first found the measures of central tendency for the male student-participants' pre- and post-test scores (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Measures of Central Tendency – Male Student-Participants

	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test	14	46.93	32.77	8.76
Post-Test	14	53.07	28.21	7.54

Male student-participants' reading comprehension scores on average improved 6.14 percent after the CSR intervention was applied in the study.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the difference between male student-participants' reading comprehension before

and after the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention was applied was statistically significant (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Paired Samples *t*-Test – Male Student-Participants

	Paired Differences							
Pre-Test – Post-Test				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
	-6.40	13.57	-	-35.47	23.18			
						0.4526	13	.67

There was no significant difference in scores between male student-participants' pre-test (M=46.93, SD=32.77) and post-test (M=53.07, SD=28.21) levels of reading comprehension; $t(9) = .10$, $p = .93$. These results suggest that while a difference does exist in male student-participants' pre- and post-intervention reading comprehension levels, it is not enough to say with confidence that the difference can be attributed to the CSR intervention.

No statistically significant difference exists regarding the impact of CSR on student-participants when analyzed by gender. However, it is worth noting the analysis of male student-participant's scores more closely mirror the *t* and *p* values for the whole group of student-participants, while the analysis of female student-participants' scores shows greater deviation from the whole group's data.

Quantitative results by race/ethnicity. Next, the teacher-researcher analyzed the pre- and post-test data according to student-participants' racial/ethnic identity. Initially, the teacher-researcher noticed that 20 of the 24 student-participants identified as "White," while four identified as one or a

combination of the following non-white races / ethnicities: black, black and white, and Pacific Islander. Prior to conducting the analysis, the teacher-researcher reflected on the implications of examining the student-participants' data by race. Choosing an appropriate title for the group of four student-participants that is respectful of each student-participant's individual identity and heritage, appropriately descriptive, non-marginalizing, and equitable is of great importance as an educator and as researcher. The teacher-researcher found titles such as "Other" and "Non-White," while simple and easy to use, to be inequitable, vague, and reinforcing marginalization of races / ethnicities beyond white. Ideally, the teacher-researcher would analyze each racial / ethnic group separately and identify each group using the title given by the student-participant. However, it was not possible to analyze each student-participant's racial / ethnic group identities separately, because the sample size would be too small for analysis. The teacher-researcher instead chose to preserve each student-participant's identified race / ethnicity according to the title the student-participant provided within the group's holistic title. Thus, the teacher-researcher separated the data into two groups: "White" and "Black, Mixed Race Black and White, and Pacific Islander," and performed a paired sample *t*-test for both groups respectively.

The teacher-researcher found the measures of central tendency for the "White" student-participants' scores (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

Measures of Central Tendency – “White” Student-Participants

	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test	20	55.00	28.94	6.47
Post-Test	20	55.70	27.76	6.21

The teacher-researcher saw a slight overall increase of .70 percent on average between the group’s pre- and post-test scores.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether “White” student-participants’ reading comprehension before and after the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention was applied was statistically significant (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

Paired Samples *t*-Test – “White” Student-Participants

	Paired Differences							
“White” Pre-Test – Post- Test				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2- tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	<i>t</i>	df	
	-.70	11.48	-	-24.72	23.32	0.06	19	

There was no significant difference in scores between “White” student-participants’ pre-test (M=55.00, SD=28.94) and post-test (M=55.70, SD=27.76) levels of reading comprehension; $t(19)=.06$, $p = .95$. These results suggested that while a very slight difference does exist in “White” student-participants’ pre- and post-intervention reading comprehension levels, it is not enough to say that the difference can be attributed to the CSR intervention.

Next, the teacher-researcher found the measures of central tendency of the “Black, Mixed Race Black and White, and Pacific Islander” student-participants’ scores (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

Measures of Central Tendency – Black, Mixed-Race Black and White, and Pacific Islander Student-Participants

“B/MR/PI” S-Ps	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test	4	18.00	21.56	10.78
Post-Test	4	39.50	7.00	3.50

The data showed an increase of 21.5 percent on average of student-participants’ reading comprehension scores from pre-test to post-test.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare “Black, Mixed Race Black and White, and Pacific Islander” student-participants’ reading comprehension before and after the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention was applied (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Paired Samples *t*-Test – Black, Mixed-Race Black and White, and Pacific Islander Student-Participants

	Paired Differences							
“B/MR/PI” Pre-Test – Post-Test				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
	-21.50	9.30	-	-51.08	8.08	2.31	3	.101

There was no significant difference in scores between “Black, Mixed Race Black and White, and Pacific Islander” student-participants’ pre-test (M=18.00,

SD=21.56) and post-test (M=39.50, SD=7.00) levels of reading comprehension; $t(3)=2.31$, $p = .101$. These results suggest that while a difference does exist in “Black, Mixed Race Black and White, and Pacific Islander” student-participants’ pre- and post-intervention reading comprehension levels, it is not enough to say that the difference can be attributed to the CSR intervention.

Students of color showed the greatest overall gains, moving from an average of an 18 percent on the pre-test to a 39.50 percent on the post-test. Female students exhibited a slight gain, moving from an average of 51.5 percent on the pre-test to a 52.90 percent on the post-test. Male students’ average score increased from a 46.93 percent on the pre-test to an average of a 53.10 on the post-test. White students exhibited the smallest gain of .70 percent from pre-test to post-test, moving from an average of a 55 percent on the pre-test to a 55.7 percent on the post-test. Despite the average increases in reading comprehension score exhibited by the sample group as a whole and by individual student subgroups, none of the student subgroups were found to have made statistically significant gains from pre-test to post-test. The teacher-researcher then concluded that CSR did not have a statistically significant impact on students’ reading comprehension of social studies texts. The teacher-researcher will discuss the possible implications of this outcome in greater depth in Chapter 5 of this action research study.

Qualitative analysis. Qualitative data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with student-participants to explore the second research question:

What are students’ perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?

The teacher-researcher conducted five interviews with student-participants selected at random. Students were asked three overarching questions designed to inquire as to how they felt about reading, perception of themselves as readers, and their thoughts on using CSR in their social studies class (Appendix F). The semi-structured interview protocol contained open questions that encouraged students to share thoughts freely and allow for possible elaboration. Student-participants were interviewed privately, one-on-one, during the school day, in the school's library forum area. The average length of the interview was five minutes and 10 seconds. Students were assured prior to beginning of the interview that the interview would be recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis, and then the audio recording would be destroyed.

The methodology followed for qualitative data analysis was to first create a written transcription of each recorded interview. The teacher-researcher used the web-based transcription service "Rev" to provide individual text transcripts of each interview for thematic analysis (Appendix I). Then, teacher-researcher created tables for each question asked in the semi-structured interview, into which each student-participant's response was placed and reviewed against the other students' responses for repeating words, phrases, or patterns of thought (Boyatzis, 1998; Komori & Keene, 2017). Each interview text was coded first by question and student-participant. Any repetitions or thought patterns student responses had in common, as well as when a student's response differed from the rest of the students, were highlighted and coded based on the commonalities or difference therein for each question asked in the semi-structured interview (Boyatzis, 1998; Komori & Keene, 2017). Then, the teacher-researcher reviewed

the commonalities and differences identified across all interview questions, and again searched for repeating words, phrases, and /or patterns of thought. Finally, the teacher-researcher summarized patterns and commonalities identified within groups of questions to form an over-arching understanding of themes emerging from the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Komori & Keene, 2017). These rough summaries became the basis for identification of themes within student-participant interviews about reading and the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) instructional strategy.

After discussion with colleagues and peers of the commonalities and patterns within the qualitative data, the teacher-researcher identified four themes: 1) Feelings about reading are fluid; 2) Students' feelings about reading are connected to their understanding of texts; 3) Students' own assessment of reading fluency influences their perception of a "good reader," and; 4) Group dynamics impacted students' responses to Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR).

Qualitative results. Four key themes emerged from the thematic analysis of student-participant interviews: 1) Feelings about reading are fluid; 2) Students' feelings about reading are connected to their understanding of texts; 3) Students' own assessment of reading fluency influences their perception of a "good reader," and; 4) Group dynamics impacted students' responses to Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). The following is a discussion of each theme, the qualitative support for the theme, and the significance of each theme within the context of the action research study.

Feelings about reading are fluid. Student-participants did not indicate consistent feelings about reading, either positive or negative. In interviews,

student responses indicated that their feelings about reading were situational, or related to the format or setting in which reading would occur. Dillon (pseudonym) stated:

Reading in general, I could go without it... if it's something good, I'd read it. Especially if it has a movie that goes along with it... just makes it more interesting. Gives you a visual of what you read.

Dillon's response indicated a disinterest in or apathy toward most reading, but exhibited an inconsistency in feelings toward reading for "something good." Dillon's use of the words "more interesting" to describe books with movie accompaniments indicate that in general, reading is not interesting, and therefore, Dillon was not interest in reading. However, Dillon was not consistently disinterested in reading. Dillon went on to clarify "something good" as likely to include a book with a movie that accompanies it. Dillon described this type of book as "good" because the reader can gain a visual of what he or she is reading. Therefore, having a visual of what is read was important in influencing Dillon's feelings about reading. Dillon made an exception in his feelings about reading for books he considered as "something good." Dillon's feelings about reading were inconsistent, and based more so on the content to be read than the act of reading. Dillon's feelings about reading were closely connected to degree of interest in what he reads. Nadia's (pseudonym) feelings about reading were similar to Dillon's with regard to interest. Nadia distinguished between school reading and reading in general:

I like it if it's interesting to me, but sometimes it bores me a little bit... school reading sometimes, if it doesn't have... a plot to it... it's just... the facts, is really boring to me.

Nadia, like Dillon, stated that interest impacted her feelings about reading. Nadia liked reading if the content to be read is interesting to her. Nadia

juxtaposed interesting reading with school reading in her statement, which she consistently described as boring. By Nadia's definition, school reading was boring because it does not have a plot and is just the facts, and does not interest her. Nadia expressed dislike of school reading, but stated that she liked reading if the content to be read is interesting. Her feelings about reading were inconsistent, influenced by *what* she reads, rather than a consistent outlook about the act of reading regardless of the content. The teacher-researcher will explore the impact of the content on understanding and interest in greater detail later on in this section.

Students' feelings about reading changed in adolescence, or when instructionally, reading got more difficult or less interesting. Several students cited fifth grade specifically as a turning point in their feelings about reading. Dillon also stated his feelings might have been different as a child than they are now as an adolescent:

Maybe not when I was a kid... I don't know. I just went with the flow of life and I guess I just stopped reading. Lost interest, I guess... Maybe if I started reading more, I might gain back an interest.

Dillon did not dislike reading as a child, and continue to dislike reading as a teenager; rather, Dillon stated that he might not have felt like he could "go without" reading as a child, but those feelings changed as he got older. Dillon was not able to share specifically why his feelings changed, but made the assumption that his change in feelings occurred due to a loss of interest. Dillon stated, "It's easier for a kid to read than it is for somebody... that doesn't really like to read... As a kid, there's... creative books." Dillon implied that books for young adults and adolescents are not "creative" and are not approachable for reluctant readers. Amanda (pseudonym) also stated her feelings about reading

changed from childhood to adolescence, “I don’t like [reading]... when I was younger, I really liked to read... the words got harder and the passages got longer... [in] fifth grade.” Amanda, like Dillon and Nadia, exhibited an inconsistency in feelings about reading. Will (pseudonym), like Amanda, Dillon, and Nadia, expressed an inconsistency in feelings about reading over time. However, in contrast to Dillon and Amanda, Will stated, “I like reading, a lot actually... No, not when I was little.” Will stated he currently liked reading, but did not like reading as a child. Will assumed his thoughts in reading changed, “I think around fifth grade.” Fifth grade was a common point in the students’ educational journey where feelings about reading changed. Most students were not able to state precisely why, but commonalities in language used were found in Dillon’s use of “easier for a kid to read” and Amanda’s use of “the words got harder and the passages got longer,” which led the teacher-researcher to conclude that secondary school reading, in which secondary school is considered to be sixth through twelfth grades, is markedly different from elementary school reading, in which elementary school is considered to be kindergarten through fifth grades. Reading, or the manner in which reading is done in secondary grades, becomes more challenging without becoming more interesting, which was discouraging for students.

Additionally, J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series positively impacted students’ perception of reading, which lends further support to the idea that students’ feelings about reading are influenced by the type of texts they read. Three out of five student-participants interviewed referenced Rowling’s novels as influential in their feelings about reading. The teacher-researcher did not ask a specific question about *Harry Potter*; rather, students referenced the novels as

an example when sharing when their feelings about reading changed. Hannah (pseudonym) stated that she was, “super in to the *Harry Potter* series,” while Nadia said,

I’ve recently been reading Harry Potter. So that’s what’s got me started reading a little bit more. I’m on like the sixth out of seventh book right now. So, I’m liking it more.

Nadia also stated previously in the interview that she found most school reading to be “boring” and disinteresting, so her feelings about *Harry Potter* stand in direct contrast to her feelings about school reading. Will also cited Rowling’s novels as influential in changing his feelings about reading:

...when I started reading Harry Potter. I just started reading Harry Potter, and it took my mind off things and then started getting a lot better writing after I did that, because writing was not good in elementary school... I’ve read, I think I’ve read them six times.

For Will, the impact of *Harry Potter* was not limited to his feelings about reading; the novels also impacted his writing skills. Will was the only student to share thoughts specifically about writing in addition to reading, but J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* was the only specific book or book series mentioned by any student-participant in the semi-structured interview.

Most student-participants expressed an inconsistency in feelings about reading, both based on the type of texts and as a child compared to in young adulthood, leading the teacher-researcher to conclude that students’ thoughts about reading are fluid, not fixed. Student-participants specifically referenced fifth grade, or the point in which elementary school ends and secondary school begins, as a turning point in their feelings about reading either positively or negatively. Student-participants cited J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series as influential in forming their feelings about reading. Students were not asked by

the teacher-researcher to share a specific text; rather, students chose to share the novels as a reason for an increase in positive feelings about reading. The teacher-researcher can utilize the findings about fluidity of feelings toward reading and the importance of interest in shaping feelings about reading when selecting student-centered texts designed to best capture the interests of students and capitalize on the fluidity of students' perceptions of reading.

Connection to understanding. Students' expressed feelings about reading were more so influenced by their perceptions of the text than their perceptions of reading as an activity or skill. A student's perception of the text influenced whether they thought it was easy to understand. Students reported understanding social studies texts that have interesting details and are straightforward. Those who stated they were not interested in social studies texts also stated they did not understand them well.

Studies on the topic of students' attitudes toward reading and reading attainment demonstrate that children with more positive attitudes toward reading have better reading skills (McGeown, Johnston, Walker, Howatson, Stockburn, & Dufton, 2015). However, in the era of accountability and assessment in public education, measurable and quantifiable aspects of reading achievement such as fluency and comprehension resulted in reduced attention toward motivation and affect in relation to literacy instruction (Putman & Walker, 2010). Instruction focused primarily on the cognitive skills supporting the reading process, and less concerned with the affective aspects, or growth in feelings or emotional areas such as attitude or self, fail to recognize the importance of stimulating interest in and enjoyment of reading (McGeown et al., 2015; Putman & Walker, 2010). Furthermore, students' method of reading

instruction, presumably including the text utilized as part of the instruction, may be a factor influencing their reading attitudes (McGeown et al., 2015; Putman & Walker, 2010). That is, whether students enjoy reading instruction and the texts contained therein, may correlate to their attitudes about reading (McGeown et al., 2015).

The same is mirrored within the qualitative data collected as part of this action research study. Student-participants who stated that reading in their social studies classes was not interesting to them also reported difficulty understanding, attending to, and engaging with the reading. For example, Hannah, who “like(s) to read a lot” and “likes books” also describes herself as “not very good at history” even though she thinks she is able to understand what she reads for social studies class “pretty well.” Hannah, a self-described avid reader, displayed a lack of confidence in her skills and abilities pertaining to social studies, but demonstrated confidence in her reading skills and abilities overall, calling herself an “advanced” reader. Nadia elaborated further, explaining:

I like it if it’s interesting to me, but sometimes it bores me a little bit... school reading sometimes, if it doesn’t have... a plot to it... it’s just... the facts, is really boring to me... If it’s something that I’ve related to or heard before or if it’s like the details are really interesting... I think I’m okay if I’m really into it.

Nadia’s statement is telling in that students feel differently about reading depending on their interest in the text. Dillon also expressed a difference in interest level depending on the text, stating, “If it’s something good, I’d read it. Especially if it has a movie that goes along with it... Just makes it more interesting. Gives you a visual of what you read.” Dillon’s level of interest in the text affected his interest in reading. If the text had characteristics he considered

to be interesting, like having an accompanying movie, then Dillon was more interested in the text and in the activity of reading. If the text was not interesting to Dillon, his attitude toward reading changed. He stated, "... I could go without it [reading]." Amanda also expressed disinterest in reading social studies content area texts. Regarding how well she understood the texts she read in class, she stated, "Not very well. It's too many dates to remember and events." Amanda cited specific characteristics of informational social studies texts, which do often include dates and events, as the source of her lack of understanding. Amanda's lack of understanding is an affective factor in her feelings toward reading. It is unreasonable to expect students to like reading something they do not understand.

Research demonstrated that interest in the text is an important affective factor of students' reading comprehension achievement, and the findings of this action research study are no exception to the conclusions of previous studies (McGeown et al., 2015; Putman & Walker, 2010). The teacher-researcher found that students' interest in a text used in social studies instruction could impact their comprehension of the text. In order to authentically measure students' reading comprehension levels, rather than measuring comprehension as a reflection of interest in the text, selecting a text that is interesting, straightforward in its presentation of information, and that may be relatable to students' interests, is crucial when planning literacy instruction in social studies. Otherwise, the teacher cannot be sure a student's level of comprehension of the text, rather than degree of interest in the text, is being measured by an assessment tool intended to measure students' reading comprehension.

Student perceptions of reading and fluency. Students described different standards for themselves as compared to peers regarding what constitutes a good reader. Hannah described a good reader as someone who is, “literate” and to be able to “enjoy and comprehend what you read.” In comparison, Hannah described herself as “above grade level” because of her interest in “novels and bigger books.” For a high school student, there is a measurable difference in being “literate” and “above grade level.” Returning to the Lexile framework for the purpose of comparison, “above grade level” or above the middle 50 percent of the average eleventh or twelfth grader would be a measure above 1440 (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017; Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Any texts that measure below “0” on the Lexile framework for readability are marked as “BR,” or “Beginning Reader” (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017; Lennon & Burdick, 2004). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that any Lexile score above “0” can also be called “literate” because ability to read exists and is measurable at this point according to the Lexile framework (“About Lexile Measures,” 2017; Lennon & Burdick, 2004). There is a quantifiable gulf between Hannah’s idea of “above grade level” to consider herself a good reader, and “literate” or anything above “BR” or a “0” on the Lexile framework for others.

Students also used classmates’ verbalized reading fluency as a reference point for assessing what makes a good reader, in addition to reading comprehension. Like Hannah, Nadia and Will appeared to have lower standards for others to be considered good readers, than to consider themselves good readers. Unlike Hannah, however, Nadia and Will also considered skills associated with reading fluency in addition to those associated with reading comprehension. Nadia described herself as a “slow reader” but also a “little bit

better than average.” For others to be considered good readers, Nadia said they should be able to “comprehend what they’re saying.” Will described himself as “not overly fast at reading... I don’t retain much information,” but identified good readers in his class as those who, “...read real fast, and they don’t stumble on many words like I do.” Reading fluency, or the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression, can be connected to reading comprehension (Cotter, 2012; Rasinski, 2006). Will and Nadia informally described reading speed and accuracy as characteristics of good readers, pairing those skills with comprehension skills in their descriptions. Cotter’s study (2012) on the connection between reading fluency and reading comprehension suggest that students who struggle with fluency will also struggle to create meaning and a clear understanding of the texts they read (Cotter, 2012; Rasinski, 2006). Both Will and Nadia’s connections to fluency as it pertains to comprehension in reading are important for teachers to note in content area reading instruction. Students who are not fluent in reading may also not have a clear understanding of what they read, as their lack of fluency can hinder their comprehension (Cotter, 2012; Rasinski, 2006).

Group dynamics and CSR. Students responded positively to each member of their assigned Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) group having a specific, clearly defined role within the group. Hannah’s impression of the collaborative aspect of the intervention was:

I think it was helpful... it wasn’t like you had to do all the work yourself. You had people that would write down and look up the definitions of words, and you would have people who would read it to you so that way... it wasn’t a whole load on you.

Hannah's comments reflected how she viewed the task of reading and understanding the text with group members as opposed to individually. Hannah viewed the task of reading with a group as less work, when in reality, CSR requires students to engage in active reading throughout all three phases of reading within CSR. When students read individually, they were not required to use any particular strategy. Nadia responded positively to CSR as well, and said, "I liked it because we each worked as a group and we worked together... we each had a responsibility to do." Nadia noted the collaborative aspect of CSR as well as the accountability of each person having clearly defined responsibilities to one another throughout the process. Will also responded well to the group collaboration facilitated through the CSR intervention. Will stated, "It helped... when you have other people that have a job that you're trying to help a little bit, but then you have a job too, to think about the text." To Will, the accountability to his group members also helped improve his focus on and attention to the text while he read. Overall, students responded positively to the intervention, specifically because of the impact of collaboration and accountability CSR facilitates among group members on the task of reading and understanding the text.

Furthermore, students referenced the collaborative element of CSR as making the text easier to read and comprehend, as well as providing the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the text with peers. Hannah noted, "I think it was helpful... having the divided members and being able to ask questions... made it easier." Reading individually, students could rely only on themselves for comprehending the text. Additionally, Hannah stated that it was "a lot easier to answer the questions at the end than it was for the first article we

read by ourselves.” Working collaboratively in their assigned CSR groups, students could ask one another questions to provide clarity to what they read, and enhance their understanding of the text. Nadia connected comprehension and collaboration when she stated:

It helped me better understand it [the text] because we each told our thoughts about it and we took some of the difficult parts and we talked about it... so it helped me better understand it.

Peer support for difficult parts of the text facilitated a greater degree of understanding for Nadia than she thought she otherwise would have understood the text when reading independently. When speaking about her group’s decision to read the article out loud together, Nadia stated that she:

...really liked that. That was really cool... I liked it because I paid more attention to it... When we read it together, I was more able to comprehend it.

For Nadia, the impact of working collaboratively was that her comprehension of the text increased, as well as her ability to attend to the text. Amanda also noted an impact on her understanding of the text, “I liked it... it seemed easier... just the way it [the CSR protocol] was all laid out, and the questions were a lot easier to understand.” The students expressed consensus in that the collaborative element of CSR made the task of reading and responding to comprehension questions seem “easier” and that they better understood the text when reading it within their assigned CSR groups.

Students responded negatively to CSR as an intervention when their assigned groups did not work collaboratively. Dillon stated:

Maybe with a different class, it would have worked out better. But, I don’t really feel like everyone was into it that much. I don’t feel it was a good activity for that class because... people weren’t willing to cooperate... my group especially, we weren’t getting anything done... I feel like I’d understand it better myself.

Dillon noted that a lack of cooperation and participation affected whether he thought the activity was productive and worthwhile, and whether it impacted his understanding of the text. Amanda stated, “We [my group] didn’t really talk, so I didn’t really get anything from them... Maybe if they’d voice what they thought about it [the text].” When asked if the CSR activity impacted her comprehension of the reading, Amanda also stated, “Not really, no. It’s basically just reading stuff that I already knew, I guess.” Students who felt as if their groups did not collaborate and authentically participate in CSR as they were asked to also stated that the intervention had little to no impact on their comprehension of the text. The teacher-researcher can conclude that students’ willingness, or lack thereof, to authentically collaborate and engage with one another in their assigned groups impacted students’ perceptions of whether CSR influenced their understanding of the text.

It is important to note that the qualitative data suggested that perhaps, students must be taught how to collaborate effectively with one another before introducing an activity in which learning is derived through collaboration. Collaboration is not necessarily an inherent skill that students will come equipped with to class, and the lack of this skill can inhibit learning opportunities. Dillon shared, “... I’d say 99 percent of the time, we’re working by ourselves. So, maybe just a group thing was a new thing to the class and it just didn’t really work out too well.” Dillon’s observation raises a point for consideration for teachers who are introducing a group or collaborative structure to the class for the first time: it may not go well at first. Teachers should be intentional in first establishing a foundation and expectations for collaboration

within the class dynamic, and should be mindful of the culture and climate of the class before judging the success or failure of a collaborative learning activity.

Link to Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to conduct action research to explore the following two research questions:

1. *What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?*

The research questions were designed to guide the study as a response to the identified Problem of Practice (PoP) regarding teachers' discussions of how students struggle to comprehend and engage with content area texts in secondary social studies courses, and a perceived lack of explicit instruction in reading in those same courses. The teacher-researcher reviewed existing literature regarding curriculum, reading, and instructional strategies in the secondary social studies classroom, and selected the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention as a tool to potentially impact students' reading comprehension of social studies texts. Upon completion of the qualitative and quantitative data analyses, the teacher-researcher made several conclusions about the data that address the two research questions guiding this study. The first research question is:

What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?

Quantitative data was collected to respond to this research question, and is comprised of a statistical analysis of students' pre- and post-test scores. The

data indicated that no statistically significant difference existed between pre- and post-test scores, so the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies was not significant. However, this study was a concurrent mixed-methods design, and qualitative data was collected to respond to the second research question:

What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?

Through semi-structured interviews, randomly selected student-participants expressed thoughts on reading and on the CSR intervention. The teacher-researcher used a thematic analysis protocol to code, categorize, and identify themes within the qualitative data. Four themes were identified: 1) Feelings about reading are fluid; 2) Students' feelings about reading are connected to their understanding of texts; 3) Students' own assessment of reading fluency influences their perception of a "good reader," and; 4) Group dynamics impacted students' responses to Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). Students' perceptions of CSR as an instructional strategy were mostly positive, and expressed consensus that their assigned CSR group's willingness to collaborate was a significant factor influencing their perceptions of CSR. Those students whose groups were collaborative expressed that their comprehension was enhanced and the task of reading and analyzing the social studies content area text was easier and less overwhelming.

The teacher-researcher found that while there was no significant difference pre- and post-intervention in students' reading comprehension of social studies content area texts, students' reading comprehension performance improved from pre-to post-test, and students had mostly positive perceptions of

the impact of the CSR intervention on their understanding of the text. However, another important factor that students identified as impactful to their reading comprehension emerged through data analysis. Students stated that their levels of interest in given texts influence how well they attend to and understand a text, and that their interest in reading overall is fluent based on the type of text they read. This data led the teacher-researcher to identify lack of interest in social studies texts as a factor that could have possibly influenced the discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative data outcomes. CSR, the reading comprehension intervention implemented in this action research study, was selected by the teacher-researcher to potentially impact students' comprehension of social studies texts. CSR does not necessarily make the texts more interesting to students, nor was level of interest in social studies texts treated in this action research study. Students noted that CSR made the process of reading and analyzing the text seem easier and more approachable, but did not state that there was an impact on their interest in the social studies texts presented to them throughout the course of this study.

Summary

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through the course of this action research study for the purpose of better understanding the two research questions directing the study:

1. *What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?*

Quantitative data were collected to provide insight into the first research question. Students' reading comprehension of social studies texts was assessed before and after the CSR intervention was implemented through a pre- and post-tests consisting of a social studies passage and reading comprehension question set. The differences between students' pre- and post-tests were analyzed using the statistical protocol, the dependent t-test, and through that process, found not to be statistically significant. The teacher-researcher then concluded that CSR did not have a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension of social studies texts. Qualitative data were collected in order to address the second research question. The teacher-researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with five randomly selected student-participants regarding their feelings toward reading, the characteristics of a good reader, and their impressions of CSR as a learning activity. Students' perceptions of CSR were categorized and assessed through thematic analysis, through which four themes emerged: 1) Feelings about reading are fluid; 2) Students' feelings about reading are connected to their understanding of texts; 3) Students' own assessment of reading fluency influences their perception of a "good reader," and; 4) Group dynamics impacted students' responses to Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). The teacher-researcher then reviewed both the quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, and found that while students reported having an overall positive response to CSR if their assigned groups participated in the process authentically, the quantitative data indicated that there was no impact on reading comprehension. The teacher-researcher considered the lack of statistical significance of the differences between students' pre- and post-tests before and after the CSR intervention was applied, but the mostly positive response to the

CSR intervention reported in student-participant interviews, and discuss the reflection in greater detail in Chapter 5 of this study. Perhaps the pre- and post-tests assessed students' degree of interest in social studies texts rather than their true ability to comprehend, or the impact of the CSR intervention on their comprehension of the text. Based on students' semi-structured interview responses, they were primarily disinterested in social studies texts, but had fluid responses to reading in general. The teacher-researcher considered the data collected rich in information about students as readers and collaborators for self as a practitioner, for colleagues who teach social studies classes, and for school and district leadership analyzing and responding to challenges in content area literacy.

CHAPTER FIVE IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final reflections contained herein at the conclusion of this study will consist of a review of the action research study premise, the findings of the study, an action plan, and implications for future research and practice. The teacher-researcher will also examine new questions that became apparent through data analysis.

Action Research Study Premise

Action research was utilized in formulating this study because of the teacher-researcher's unique position both as a participant and as an observer in a school leadership role. The teacher-researcher is also primarily a practitioner serving in public education, whose objective is to continually learn, reflect on teaching practices, and engage in research, planning, design, and implementation of practices that will advance student learning and achievement. Action research is the best-suited tool for this type of study, in which the researcher is also a practitioner who engages in a cycle of planning, evaluation, acting, and reflection on instructional practices and their impact on student learning, and will use the outcome of the research to inform his or her practice, and will share his or her learning with other practitioners (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Action researcher as a curriculum leader. As a former curriculum writer for secondary social studies courses, former social studies teacher, current

instructional leader providing support to a high school social studies department, and practitioner in the action research study, the teacher-researcher is deeply integrated in the formation and delivery of curriculum, and engaged in a continuous cycle of reflection upon the effectiveness and impact of the social studies content created for all grade levels (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). As a curriculum leader and action researcher, a unique opportunity existed to evaluate, question, and implement curricular elements to address problems of practice that affect student learning. In the current era of assessment in public education, teachers are now expected to gather, analyze, and make adjustments to their curriculum and instructional methods in response to student performance data. Assessment data of all kinds now drive instruction, and whether learning is considered successful, and the teacher is considered effective. Teachers must be able to understand and authentically respond to data which represents student learning in order to meet expectations of school and district leaders, and more critically, be able to make curricular and instructional decisions that are best and most effective for student learning. In essence, teachers must also be action researchers (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). In this study, the teacher-researcher sought to determine whether explicitly teaching literacy skills in the social studies content area would impact students' comprehension of social studies texts. The teacher-researcher hoped to inform her own practice, and of those with whom she worked at the school and in the district, and have a better understanding of why students appeared to struggle in their written analysis of social studies texts. After a review of the literature and many conversations with peers and colleagues on the matter, the teacher-researcher wanted to consider the

impact of students' comprehension of the texts, rather than a lack in writing skills alone, as the reason for students' generally poor written analyses. The teacher-researcher chose action research as a method for better understanding and exploring this problem and a potential solution due to its cohesion with her current role and responsibilities in assessing and improving curricular and instructional practices within the school, and the potential impact on her practice and the practices of those educators around her (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

As a curriculum leader and action researcher, one must look for opportunities in which these roles can merge. The curricular leader and action researcher can and should provide the knowledge, support, and encouragement necessary to assist colleagues in developing confidence and skill to conduct their own action research, thus impacting many teachers' capacity to critically evaluate and reflect on their professional practices, rather than only one's own. The curricular leader and action researcher's contribution to the professional community in this manner could lead to a lasting improvement of the learning experiences offered to students, and an overall increase in student growth in learning, as teachers simultaneously grow as action researchers (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Positionality. The teacher-researcher was also an assistant principal at Smokey Mountain High School throughout the course of this study, which must be considered due to the duality of the researcher and practitioner roles that exist concurrently in action research (Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). As an assistant principal, the teacher-researcher is a well-known and highly visible insider within the Smokey Mountain High School

community, but as a researcher, the teacher-researcher shifted between being an insider and an outsider depending on setting and phase of the action research study (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

Shifting between insider and outsider roles. The teacher-researcher determined the problem of practice guiding this action research study originally as both an outsider and an insider. As a social studies teacher, the conversations had with other teachers within the same content area were those that are commonly had among those with shared experiences, and the knowledge gained therein was gained by the teacher-researcher as an insider (Herr & Anderson, 2014). In conversations with district curricular leaders about students' writing in social studies and how assessment narrows social studies curriculum, the teacher-researcher was an outsider. District curricular leaders, while supportive and willing to share knowledge about social studies curriculum decisions, were still the teacher-researcher's superiors, and the information gained from those discussions was gained from the teacher-researcher as an outsider to district leaders (Herr & Anderson, 2014). The teacher-researcher had to consider the impact of the district leaders' commitment to the success of the writing process they created and disseminated as an intervention to address students' poor written responses to social studies texts, and the potential bias within the information they shared in these dialogues with her.

Throughout the action research study planning process, the teacher-researcher operated as an insider, utilizing prior knowledge gained as a social studies teacher to plan the study, which was based in selecting and evaluating the effectiveness of an instructional intervention in responding to a problem of practice (Herr & Anderson, 2014). However, when transitioning into the data

collection phase, the teacher-researcher fluidly shifted between being an outsider and an insider as the setting and relationships involved changed (Herr & Anderson, 2014). When asking teachers to volunteer class time for the teacher-researcher to implement the intervention and assess the social studies class for the purpose of the study, the teacher-researcher was an outsider, keenly aware of the power differential that exists between administrator and teachers, which will be discussed in greater length in the following section (Herr & Anderson, 2014). However, as soon as the teacher-researcher took responsibility for the class as part of the study, the teacher-researcher became an insider, implementing the instructional intervention for reading comprehension, responding and making small adjustments to the instruction while monitoring student learning, all of which the teacher-researcher considers to be integral elements of teaching. In conducting semi-structured interviews, the teacher-researcher shifted back to the perspective and status of an outsider, due to the teacher-researcher's role as an assistant principal in the school community, age, education, and students' previous experiences with administration that might impact their response to the teacher-researcher (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Student-participants were asked questions about themselves as readers and about their perceptions of the intervention, in which the teacher-researcher took care to disconnect from the role of an assistant principal, instead focusing on each student and the thoughts he or she was willing to share, and connecting with each student based on shared insider status as members of the same school community. However, it is unknown to what degree students were influenced by the teacher-researcher's role as an assistant principal because no data specifically concerning the teacher-researcher's role in the school community were collected. While analyzing data,

the teacher-researcher became an outsider because the focus of the action research study is primarily on the students, and how the intervention impacted their reading comprehension and their perception of the intervention. The teacher-researcher, as an adult, researcher, and assistant-principal, is an outsider evaluating the response of students, a group of which the teacher-researcher is not a part (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

Power differential. The teacher-researcher is not the teacher of record for any classes at Smokey Mountain High School, instead holding the role of assistant principal. In order to conduct the action research study, the teacher-researcher had to gain permission from current social studies teachers at the school in order to interact with and teach their classes. The teacher-researcher is aware of the impact of the power differential at play in this request, and that teachers may have allowed their classes to participate in order to appease an individual holding a supervisory role within the school (Herr & Anderson, 2014). In order to give participating teachers power within the study, the teacher-researcher first shared that the topic of the study was analyzing students' responses to the Collaborative Strategic Reading intervention and not a study of the participating teacher's effectiveness or any other elements of their instructional practice, conducted the study on days that worked best with the participating teacher's course calendar, chose topics for readings and assessments that directly aligned with the topics to be covered on the teacher's course calendar, gave the teachers approval or denial power on proposed readings and assessments to be used with the study, and placed no additional burden on each participating teacher for those class periods in which the teacher-researcher worked with the students. For those class periods, the teacher-

researcher assumed full responsibility for the students within the classroom. The teacher-researcher attempted to limit the imposition of the study on participating teachers as much as possible, and give power and voice to the participating teachers as much as the structure of the study allowed (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Participating teachers seemed to be more comfortable with sharing their classes as soon as the teacher-researcher began discussing the study as evaluating the impact of a particular instructional tool on students' learning, rather than of the participating teacher's impact on the group of students. The teacher-researcher was sensitive to teachers' differing feelings about the presence of an administrator in the teacher's domain, and took particular care to be respectful each teacher's feelings and relationship with the teacher-researcher as an evaluator when asking to interact with their students during class time.

The teacher-researcher engaged in an action research study that required multiple positionalities, due to the teacher-researcher's roles as both a participant in the action research and as a curriculum leader, evaluator, and practitioner in the school community (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Operating from multiple positionalities allowed the teacher-researcher to gain a greater perspective of the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading on students' reading comprehension, and students' perceptions of the intervention, and better understand and respond the problem of practice.

Problem of practice. The teacher-researcher, through conversations with peers, students, and district and school leaders and observations of a variety of secondary social studies classrooms, identified the potential root of challenge in improving students' written analyses and responses to texts. Rather than focusing on improving the writing in isolation, the teacher-researcher reflected

on the entirety of the process students must go through in order to successfully analyze and respond in writing to a social studies text. Through the review of and reflection on the task of document-based writing from start to finish, the teacher-researcher came to understand that a disparity existed in the district's approach to reading and writing instruction in secondary social studies. The teacher-researcher considered that perhaps the issue was not that students struggle to write, but that students did not fully comprehend what they read, and that little was done instructionally to address this issue as literacy skills were not explicitly taught in social studies classes, and defined content area literacy instruction and reading comprehension as the problem of practice to explore through action research.

Purpose. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), a reading comprehension instructional model that combines explicit strategy instruction with student-led discussion about text, was implemented into the secondary social studies classroom to create a collegial, student-centered environment in which literacy skills were being actively and overtly taught within the framework of the required content (Boardman et al., 2015; Clowes, 2011; Klingner & Vaughn 1999; Klingner et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2001). The primary purpose of this action research study was to evaluate the impact of CSR on students' reading comprehension of social studies texts, and to understand students' perceptions of CSR as a learning activity.

Development of the research questions. This action research study sought to describe the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension of social studies texts. The research questions are:

- 1. What is the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on students' reading comprehension in social studies?*
- 2. What are students' perceptions of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an instructional strategy used in social studies class?*

The research questions were developed to guide the action research study to determine whether CSR has any impact on students' reading comprehension, and students' perspectives of CSR.

Methodology. The teacher-researcher used a concurrent mixed-methods design that consisted of a concurrent analysis of quantitative data, derived from pre- and post-test of reading comprehension given to twenty-four student-participants, and a collection of qualitative data, derived from semi-structured interviews with five randomly selected student-participants about their perceptions of reading in the content area and of CSR, to explore the impact of the intervention on the identified problem of practice (Coe et al., 2017; Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The concurrent mixed-methods design was favorable for this study because collecting both qualitative and quantitative data allowed the teacher-researcher to develop a more holistic understanding of the impact of the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) intervention, and exploring questions that arose throughout the course of data analysis (Coe et al., 2017; Koshy, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2014; Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

Findings. While there was a slight increase from the sample's average pre-test score to the sample's average post-test score, the differences were not statistically significant. The teacher-researcher then concluded that CSR did not have a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension of

social studies texts, but that substantive understanding of students' reading comprehension and perceptions of social studies texts and CSR as an instructional strategy emerged.

Students' perceptions of CSR were categorized and assessed through thematic analysis, through which four themes emerged: 1) Feelings about reading are fluid; 2) Students' feelings about reading are connected to their understanding of texts; 3) Students' own assessment of reading fluency influences their perception of a "good reader," and; 4) Group dynamics impacted students' responses to Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR).

The following questions arose from the study:

1. How might students' interest in texts impact their ability and/or willingness to read and understand the text?
2. How can reading fluency and comprehension skills be taught explicitly within the existing structures of secondary social studies classes?
3. Would frequent, consistent use of collaborative learning structures like Collaborative Strategic Reading in social studies classes of all secondary grade levels impact students' reading comprehension over time?
4. What support can the district and school provide social studies teachers to increase their efficacy in teaching literacy skills in the content area?

These four questions will guide the collaboration of teachers, administrators, and district curricular leaders. In considering the four questions that arose as a result of this study, there are opportunities for growth as a social

studies department and as a school through the collaboration of students, school stakeholders, administrators and teachers. The teacher-researcher reviewed each question, categorized it as either part of what was considered in developing an action plan or as a suggestion for future research, and expanded on the ideas each question generated in the following sections.

Action Plan

The following action plan addresses how the findings of this study can impact future practice, social justice, and educational change at Smokey Mountain High School and within Rocky Top Public Schools.

Implications for future practice. The following questions that arose from the findings of this study can be utilized to create a specific action plan to further address the problem of practice at the center of the study. The teacher-researcher will share the findings of this study with teachers in the social studies department at the school, with teachers in the mathematics, sciences, and elective departments, with her fellow administrators, and with other stakeholders in district social studies curriculum in order to take action in addressing students' ability to read, understand, and respond to texts, and improve educational practices as a result.

One question that arose from this action research study is how reading fluency and comprehension skills can be built into existing curriculum and instruction in social studies courses. This action research study established a need for explicit literacy instruction at Smokey Mountain High School because of students' feelings about reading and understanding social studies texts, which were mostly negative. None of the students interviewed stated that they were able to understand and enjoy the social studies texts they read. As an educator

committed to improving students' learning experiences, the teacher-researcher finds it troubling that students do not like or understand social studies texts. The implications of this problem could be much greater than what can be identified through this action research study. As such, the teacher-researcher and social studies department at Smokey Mountain High School will focus on improving students' attitudes toward and understanding of social studies texts. While the Collaborative Strategic Reading intervention did not have a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension in this study, other teachers, a greater length of time implementing CSR with students, and offering students choice in their selection of grade-level appropriate social studies texts could improve students' understanding and enjoyment of reading in social studies class.

This point is also connected to another question identified through the teacher-researcher's reflection on the findings of this study, regarding whether a collective and frequent, consistent use of collaborative learning structures like CSR would have an impact on all Smokey Mountain High School students' reading comprehension in social studies over time. Students had a mostly positive perception of CSR, primarily due to the support and accountability offered through the collaborative structure of CSR, even though the differences between their pre- and post-test scores were not statistically significant. It is important to note that perhaps the lack of significance could be due to the short implementation time, small sample, and/or the teacher-researcher's role as the instructor for a class of which she is not the teacher of record, and perhaps has not developed the relationships with students that their regular classroom teacher might. For that reason, teachers in the social studies department might

consider selecting a few different collaborative reading fluency and/or comprehension instructional strategies, including CSR, to collectively implement and evaluate with their classes on a larger scale and over a greater amount of time than was utilized in this action research study. Additionally, teachers in the mathematics and science departments may consider exploring the impact of an explicit content area literacy instructional strategy on students' reading comprehension and performance in those disciplines. Perhaps collectively, teachers may find a tool that does have a statistically significant impact on their students' comprehension of content area texts.

Social justice implications. While none of the quantitative data analyses of the sample nor the student subgroups within the sample indicated that CSR had a statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension, students of color experienced the greatest overall gains from pre-test to post-test in this study. Students of color moved from an average of an 18 percent on the pre-test to a 39.50 percent on the post-test. Even so, students of color had the lowest average pre- and post-test scores of all subgroups represented in the sample. This action research study did not focus on any one subgroup in particular, so the reason for these data cannot be sufficiently explained using the data collected in this study.

However, the teacher-researcher noticed a gap between the reading comprehension scores of students of color and scores of other subgroups, as well as black, mixed race, and Pacific Islander students having the largest response to the intervention. The teacher-researcher was encouraged by the gains experienced by these students through the CSR intervention, and saw this data as a reason for other practitioners to be committed to providing direct instruction

in literacy skills because of the potential benefit specifically for students of color. The teacher-researcher believes that all educators should invest in growing and advancing the achievement of students of color in all educational aspects, and should seek out opportunities to incorporate curricular and instructional strategies that could potentially benefit these students in their classes.

Facilitating educational change. The teacher-researcher is most interested in the impact of student interest in a given text on reading comprehension, which is a component of a question that arose through analyses of the data collected in this action research study. Students expressed a fluidity in their feelings toward reading, and stated that they did not understand social studies texts, in which they also expressed disinterest.

Additionally, students had a positive response to the accountability and shared responsibility they experienced within the collaborative structure of CSR. However, those who did not have groups who collaborated with one another with fidelity did not have as positive experiences as those whose groups did authentically collaborate. The teacher-researcher would be interested in knowing how class dynamics impact students' willingness and success in collaborating with one another, and whether direct instruction of collaborative skills would impact collaborative learning experiences for students. In planning for the upcoming 2018 – 2019 school year, the teacher-researcher will share this action research study with teachers at the school through site-based professional learning opportunities, support social studies teachers in incorporating explicit literacy instruction into their curriculum, encourage teachers to incorporate more collaborative learning opportunities for students into their instructional plans, and work with the already established Instruction Committee at the school to

share the findings of this study and support other teachers across all content areas who would like to implement and evaluate the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading on their students' reading comprehension of content area texts.

The teacher-researcher hopes that a foundation for greater use of collaborative learning opportunities and explicit literacy instruction will be built as a result of the knowledge gleaned from this study, and that teachers will place a greater emphasis on the value of student input to the teaching and learning exchange.

Suggestions for Future Research

With regard to the question about whether students' interest in texts impact their ability and/or willingness to read and understand the text, the teacher-researcher wondered whether the pre- and post-tests given in this action research study truly measured students' comprehension of the text, or whether students' performance on the pre-and post- reading comprehension tests were impacted by student interest in the texts used within this study. Based on the theme of students' feelings toward reading being fluid and not fixed, and that understanding of a text is intertwined with interest in a text, that emerged through the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview qualitative data, the teacher-researcher then thought about whether the impact of the CSR intervention was reflected in the quantitative pre- and post-test data, or whether students' interest in the texts was assessed. The teacher-researcher had to consider that it might have been both, but was unsure as to what degree each one impacted students' scores, and whether the impact of each would vary based on the individual student's feelings about the text at the time it was read and their comprehension of it assessed. Teachers have to consider whether, when

attempting to assess students' comprehension, they are instead assessing students' interest in a text. Student-participants in this action research study indicated that they do not understand and do not like reading texts in which they are not interested. However, students expressed interest in and willingness to read other types of texts. For example, J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter* was specifically referenced by three student-participants through their own volition as enjoyable and interesting to read, even though none of those students described reading for social studies class in the same way. The teacher-researcher would be interested to see whether students' reading comprehension was also fluid based on their degree of interest in the text. Thus, the teacher-researcher suggests studying the impact of students' interest in a text on their comprehension of the text. Future action research studies examining the impact of student interest on reading comprehension may consider instead of assigning the same teacher-selected text to every student in the class, collaborate with students and offer choice in text selection in hopes that the element of choice and interest will positively impact students' willingness to read and ability to comprehend the text they select.

Exploring the question of interest as a possible factor impacting students' reading comprehension further, the teacher-researcher considered whether motivation or desire, perhaps expressed as "interest" in semi-structured interviews conducted in this study, impacted students' reading comprehension of social studies texts. Several studies in the field of psychology explored the interaction of will power and motivation as they relate to expressed or assessed ability. A study conducted at the University of South Florida studied the impact of candy, specifically M&Ms, on students' performance on the standard version

of the Stanford-Binet IQ test (Tough, 2013). First, student-participants were given an IQ test, and then divided into three groups based on their score on the test: the high-IQ group (average score of about 119), medium-IQ group (average score of about 101), and the low-IQ group (average score of about 79) (Tough, 2013). Then, students were tested again, and this time, half of the students in each IQ group were offered an M&M for each right answer. The others in each group received no reward. The researchers found that among students who received M&Ms for correct answers within the medium-IQ and high-IQ groups, scores did not improve on the second test (Tough, 2013). However, students in the low-IQ group who were given candy for correct answers on average raised their IQ scores to about 97, which nearly erased the gap between the medium- and low-IQ groups (Tough, 2013). The findings of the study challenged knowledge about intelligence and assessments of intelligence, which purported that intelligence is mostly crystalized, or cannot be changed drastically in a short period of time by something unrelated to the development of intelligence, like M&Ms (Tough, 2013). The question raised by the findings of the M&M and IQ study was whether the true measure of the intelligence of students in the low-IQ group was 79, the average from the first IQ test, or 97, the average from the second IQ test when candy was utilized as a potential external motivator (Tough, 2013). In reflecting on the findings of the M&Ms and IQ study, and the results of this action research study on reading comprehension, the teacher-researcher considered the potential impact of motivation on students' reading comprehension scores, and whether assessments such as the pre- and post-tests used in this study can be affected by external factors and thus inaccurately measure what they seek to measure. Perhaps the components of the CSR

intervention, the social studies readings, the collaborative group dynamic of CSR, the classroom community dynamics, or the instructor, was not motivating to students, and did not produce a change in students' reading comprehension. It is possible also that students did not have the motivation to comprehend the reading at the level they are actually capable of on the pre-test, post-test, or both, and that the assessments of reading comprehension actually measured students' present levels of willingness to comprehend the text rather than true ability to comprehend. As a result of this reflection, the teacher-researcher suggests further studies of the impact of motivation on students' perceptions of reading and reading comprehension, in hopes that educators can better understand the interaction between "skill," or ability, and "will," or motivation, and academic performance.

The last question for discussion raised through this study is regarding what support teachers will need in order to increase their efficacy in teaching literacy skills to their students. The answer to this question is complex and as of yet unknown, because it depends on the needs and ability of each teacher, the culture of the school, the resources available for making adjustments in instructional practices, and whether the priorities of the school and district align with improving students' reading comprehension in content areas other than English/Language Arts. In the teacher-researcher's current district, a commitment exists to improve students' literacy through focused and specific reading curriculum and instruction, but the focus is largely on elementary students. Within the literature review process, the teacher-researcher took note of a study in which the researcher studied teachers' attitudes toward teaching reading in content area subjects (Hall, 2005). In combination with the lack of

teacher efficacy in teaching reading in areas other than English/Language Arts found in Hall's study (2005) and the feelings teachers expressed about teaching reading in social studies to the teacher-researcher in this action research study, the teacher-researcher suggests that a better understanding of what schools and districts can do to support teaching literacy skills in content areas other than English/Language Arts can be developed through further study about teachers' attitudes, perceptions, preparedness, and perceived needs regarding their own ability to incorporate literacy instruction into their respective content area.

Conclusion

This concurrent mixed-methods action research study investigated the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading on students' reading comprehension of social studies texts, and students' perceptions of the intervention as a learning activity. The research was motivated by teachers' perceptions that most students do not fully comprehend nor successfully compose written responses to social studies texts and studies that identified a narrowing of social studies curriculum and instructional time due to pressures from standardized testing and a lack of explicit literacy instruction in content areas other than English/Language Arts. Incorporating Collaborative Strategic Reading as a framework for collaborative, curriculum independent, explicit instruction in literacy skills to improve reading comprehension was positioned as a possible solution to the problem of practice identified in this action research study.

The study occurred during the fall semester of 2017 at a suburban and rural high school in East Tennessee, United States. The sample consisted of high school sophomores and juniors between the ages of 15 and 17 who were enrolled in U.S. History or Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History. The student-

participants were taught to use Collaborative Strategic Reading, and given the task of reading and analyzing a grade-level equivalent social studies text within their assigned groups. Students' reading comprehension of grade-level equivalent texts was assessed before the intervention was implemented, and after the intervention was implemented. The teacher-researcher used elements of ReadWorks, an online article, vocabulary, and reading comprehension question set database organized by subject, topic, and Lexile measure, and also utilized Collaborative Strategic Reading structures presented in Klingner & Vaughn's (2012) teacher handbook. While students had an overall positive response to Collaborative Strategic Reading as a learning activity, the differences between their reading comprehension pre- and post-tests were not statistically significant. Through concurrent triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data, the teacher-researcher identified further questions for consideration.

Ultimately, the results of this action research study indicated that explicit literacy instruction in content areas other than English/Language Arts could benefit students. Whether Collaborative Strategic Reading is the instructional strategy that is most impactful in this endeavor remains to be determined. The findings of this action research study did not support it, but they also did not find Collaborative Strategic Reading to be detrimental to students' reading comprehension. While the gains made by students in reading comprehension were not statistically significant, it is still an improvement. The positive response of students to working with another could be reason enough for educators to be interested in exploring and evaluating instructional strategies through which students can grow together, and establish a working classroom dynamic that supports authentic collaboration among students.

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APPENDIX A
ASSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Dissertation in Practice Title: The Impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading on Secondary Social Studies Students' Content Area Reading Comprehension

Principal Investigator(s):

Kaitlyn Little
University of South Carolina
Doctoral Student, Ed.D.

Advisor(s): Dr. Suha Tamim

You have been invited to participate in a study that documents student perceptions of the content area reading comprehension instructional strategy, Collaborative Strategic Reading. You will be asked interview questions in a one-on-one in-person interview that will give information about what you think about Collaborative Strategic Reading and how you think it impacted your reading comprehension. The interview will take approximately fifteen minutes. Approximately six students will participate in this study.

The goal of this study is to find out the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading on students' content area reading comprehension in social studies. It is important to find out how Collaborative Strategic Reading as an instructional strategy for impacting students' literacy skills to be used in secondary social studies courses has an impact on students' reading comprehension, and how it is perceived by students who use it. Using instructional strategies that are found to have an impact on student learning outcomes, and are well perceived by students, will help teachers improve students' content area reading comprehension skills through instruction.

The purpose of the interview is to gather information about your thoughts and feelings towards the Collaborative Strategic Reading instructional strategy.

Please read this form. You may also request that the form be read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during, or after the project is complete by speaking with the principal investigator, Kaitlyn Little (krlittle@email.sc.edu, 865-579-8201).

As I prepare to set up the interview, please be advised of the following:

- You can decide whether or not you want to participate.
- Your participation is voluntary, and your responses are confidential.
- Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with Smokey Mountain High School (pseudonym), the University of South Carolina, or your future employer.
- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.
- If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- During our time together, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences as a student. You may decide to withdraw your participation at any time, and you are not obligated to answer any question that you are not comfortable with.
- Your name, institution's name, and all identifying information will be removed, in accordance with federal laws surrounding student records. No individually identifiable information will be published.
- The interview will be recorded. The recordings will be transcribed as part of the data analysis. Notes may also be taken during the interviews. The recordings, transcriptions, and any notes taken from that interview will be securely locked and only accessible to the researcher and the transcription company hired, if one is used. Once the data is merged into the study and all names removed, the notes will be shredded and destroyed.
 - o Please note that the IRB at the University of South Carolina may request to review research materials.*
- There are no foreseeable risks or hazards to your participation in this study.
- The location in which you participate in the interview that assures a level of privacy.
- There are no financial benefits to your participation in this research. Your participation will, however, indirectly inform the independent education community of important practices.
- The results of this research will be used for a doctoral research study at the University of South Carolina. It may be submitted for further publication as a journal article or as a presentation.

A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least three years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location off school property that only the principal investigator will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.

If you would like a copy of the completed research project, you may contact the principal researcher directly.
You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant's signature & Parent's Signature (if under 18)

Date

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Researcher's signature

Date

Printed name

APPENDIX B PRE-TEST ARTICLE

“The American Revolution, 1763-1783 [excerpt]”

INDEPENDENCE

The Seven Years' War had left Great Britain with a huge debt by the standards of the day. Moreover, thanks in part to Pontiac's Rebellion, a massive American Indian uprising in the territories won from France, the British decided to keep an army in postwar North America. Surely the colonists could help pay for that army and a few other expenses of administering Britain's much enlarged American empire. Rather than request help from provincial legislatures, however, Britain decided to raise the necessary money by acts of Parliament.

Two laws, the Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act (1765), began the conflict between London and America. The Sugar Act imposed duties on certain imports not, as in the past, to affect the course of trade—for example, by making it more expensive for colonists to import molasses from the non-British than from the British West Indies—but to raise a revenue in America “for defraying the expense of defending, protecting, and securing the same.” The Stamp Act levied entirely new excise taxes (like sales taxes) in America on pamphlets, almanacs, newspapers and newspaper advertisements, playing cards, dice, and a wide range of legal and commercial documents. Those accused of violating the Stamp Act would be tried in Admiralty Courts, which had no juries and whose jurisdiction normally pertained to maritime affairs. The colonists protested that provision because it violated their right to trial by jury. Above all, however, they insisted that both acts levied taxes on them and that, under the old English principle of “no taxation without representation,” Parliament had no right to tax the colonists because they had no representatives in the House of Commons.

British spokesmen did not question the principle but argued that the colonists, like many Englishmen in places that could not send delegates to Parliament, were “virtually” represented in Parliament because its members sought the good of the British people everywhere, not just of those who chose them. That made no sense to the Americans, who lived in a young society where representation was generally tied to population and voters expected their representatives to know and defend their interests. A legislator could not represent people who did not choose him, they argued. It was as simple as that.

Several colonies unsuccessfully petitioned Parliament against the Sugar and Stamp Acts. A Stamp Act Congress of delegates from nine colonies met in New York in October 1765, passed resolutions asserting their rights, and petitioned the

king, the Lords, and the Commons for redress of their grievances. What else could the colonists do? Allowing the Stamp Act to go into effect would create a precedent for new taxes, which Parliament would surely approve again and again because every tax on the Americans relieved them and their constituents of that financial burden.

Boston led the way. On August 14 and 15, 1765, a popular uprising there forced the Massachusetts stamp collector, Andrew Oliver, to resign his office. That meant there was nobody in the colony to distribute stamps or collect the taxes. With a minimum of force, the Stamp Act had been effectively nullified in Massachusetts. Soon other colonies' stampmen resigned to avoid Oliver's fate. In the end, the Stamp Act went into effect only in remote Georgia for a brief time. In the spring of 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, but it also passed a Declaratory Act that said Parliament had the right to bind the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

As if to affirm that right, in 1767 the new chancellor of the exchequer, Charles Townshend, persuaded Parliament to pass an act levying new duties on glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea imported into the American colonies to help pay for the colonies' defense and also to pay royal officials who had previously been dependent on provincial assemblies for their salaries. Those "Townshend duties" sparked a second wave of opposition. In an effort to avoid further violence within America, the colonists organized non - importation associations to build pressure for repeal of the duties among those manufacturers and merchants in Britain who suffered from the decline in exports to America. Only men signed the associations, but women often supported the effort by making homespun cloth to replace British textiles and seeking alternatives to imported tea. Exports to America declined enough that in 1770 Parliament repealed most of the Townshend duties, retaining only the one on tea.

That led to a third crisis in 1773, when Parliament passed a Tea Act to help the financially strapped East India Company (EIC) sell its surplus tea in America. The Tea Act did not impose a new tax. It refunded to the EIC duties collected in Britain and allowed the company to sell tea in America through its own agents (or "consignees") rather than through independent merchants. The king's minister, Lord North, who proposed the act, thought that the Tea Act would allow the EIC to price its tea low enough to compete with smugglers of cheap Dutch tea. The act also gave the EIC a monopoly of the American market, which caused discontent among colonial merchants cut out of the tea trade and others who feared that more monopolies would follow if this one became established. More important, Lord North insisted on retaining the old Townshend duty on tea. He did not anticipate how much opposition that would provoke from colonists determined to resist all taxes imposed upon them by Parliament.

The first tea ship, the *Dartmouth*, arrived in Boston on November 28, 1773. For several weeks thereafter, a mass meeting of "the Body of the People," whose members came from Boston and several nearby towns, tried unsuccessfully to get the consignees to resign and to secure permission from customs officials and the royal governor for the ships to leave the harbor and take their tea back to

England. (In Philadelphia and New York, the consignees resigned and the tea ships were successfully sent back to England with the tea chests still on board.) Finally, on December 16, the night before the tea became subject to seizure by customs men, to whom the consignees would surely pay the duty, a group of men disguised as Indians threw 342 chests of tea into the harbor.

An angry Parliament responded to the “Boston Tea Party” in 1774 by passing a series of Coercive Acts that the colonists soon called the “Intolerable Acts.” They closed Boston Harbor (the Port Act); nullified the Massachusetts Charter of 1691 and instituted a new government with greater royal control (the Massachusetts Government Act); and allowed royal officials accused of committing felonies while executing their offices in Massachusetts to be tried in England (the Administration of Justice Act). The fourth Coercive Act, a new Quartering Act, facilitated housing troops where they could be used against colonial civilians. Soon the king appointed General Thomas Gage, head of the British army in North America, as governor of Massachusetts, and essentially put the province under military rule.

If the Coercive Acts were meant to isolate Massachusetts, they failed; the other colonies rallied to its defense. A Continental Congress met in Philadelphia (September 5–October 26, 1774), adopted a statement of rights, demanded the repeal of several acts of Parliament including the “unconstitutional” Coercive Acts, advised the people of Massachusetts to act in self defense, and approved a comprehensive program of economic sanctions against Britain (the “Continental Association”) that would be enforced by elected local committees. It also called a second Continental Congress to meet on May 10, 1775, if the Americans’ grievances had not yet been redressed. By then, however, war between provincial and regular soldiers had begun at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts (April 19, 1775).

The Second Continental Congress again petitioned the king for redress of grievances and assured him of the colonists’ loyalty. Nonetheless, in a proclamation in August and again in a speech to Parliament in October 1775, King George III said that the Americans were seeking independence. Their professions of loyalty, he claimed, were “meant only to amuse,” that is, to mislead. He had already decided that only force could end the conflict. In November, Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, offered freedom to slaves who fled to the British lines. That further alienated white planters. And in December, the king signed a Prohibitory Act that put American shipping on the same status as that of enemy nations, effectively putting the American colonists outside his protection. Soon he began negotiating with German princes to hire soldiers to help put down the American “rebellion.” Those actions drove more and more Americans toward the independence that the king sought to prevent.

Some colonists—roughly 20 percent of the population—remained loyal to the Crown. Those “loyalists” included farmers and artisans of modest means as well as wealthy merchants and planters. One group, however, was represented among loyalists out of proportion to its incidence in the population as a whole: British officeholders, from sheriffs to royal governors. Other loyalists lived in

areas cut off from the flow of information, and so were not driven by events to reconsider their allegiance, or they had reason to think their liberty and interests would be better served under the Crown than in a government controlled by the majority of their white male neighbors. Many members of the Church of England who lived in Congregationalist Connecticut drew that conclusion. So did the unassimilated members of several ethnic minorities and those slaves who flocked into British lines.

By the spring of 1776, however, even many reluctant colonists thought they had no choice. They could declare their independence and secure foreign help, probably from France, Britain's old enemy, or they would be crushed. On July 2, Congress, confident that it had the support of the people, approved a resolution that "these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States," then spent much of the next two days editing a draft declaration of independence. On July 4, it approved the text by which the United States claimed a "separate and equal station" among "the powers of the earth," free of that allegiance to the Crown and state of Great Britain that had for so long been a cause of profound pride among the British colonists of North America.

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APPENDIX C
PRE-TEST READING COMPREHENSION QUESTION SET

*Correct answers for each question are in **bold**.*

1. The British taxed American colonists in 1764 and 1765 in order to raise money. Why did the British need to raise money?

- A. to help pay for a war the British were fighting elsewhere in Europe
- B. to pay to keep an army in North America and manage their American empire**
- C. to pay for the manufacturing of more goods and supplies in Britain
- D. to pay for the creation of more roads, schools, and businesses in North America

2. In response to the Stamp Act, an uprising in Boston forced the Massachusetts stamp collector to resign his position. What was an effect of the Massachusetts stamp collector's resignation?

- A. Britain gave the East India Company a monopoly of the American stamp market.
- B. Additional stamp collectors were sent to Massachusetts to control the rebellious colonists.
- C. The colonists lost confidence in their ability to force Britain to repeal its unfair taxes.
- D. Stamp collectors in other colonies resigned from their positions.**

3. Read this paragraph from the text:

An angry Parliament responded to the "Boston Tea Party" in 1774 by passing a series of Coercive Acts that the colonists soon called the "Intolerable Acts." They closed Boston Harbor (the Port Act); nullified the Massachusetts Charter of 1691 and instituted a new government with greater royal control (the Massachusetts Government Act); and allowed royal officials accused of committing felonies

while executing their offices in Massachusetts to be tried in England (the Administration of Justice Act). The fourth Coercive Act, a new Quartering Act, facilitated housing troops where they could be used against colonial civilians. Soon the king appointed General Thomas Gage, head of the British army in North America, as governor of Massachusetts, and essentially put the province under military rule.

Based on this evidence, what might have been a purpose of the Coercive Acts?

- A. to encourage colonists in other parts of America to work with Britain to maintain order within Massachusetts
- B. to convince colonists in Massachusetts that the British tax on tea was imposed in order to help the colonies
- C. to control the colonists in Massachusetts more closely as punishment for their actions against British taxes**
- D. to force the colonists in Massachusetts to declare their independence from British rule

4. Based on the text, what was the main goal behind American colonists' rebellious actions against the various acts imposed by the British government?

- A. to address the colonists' complaints and get the British to repeal their acts that the colonists thought were unfair**
- B. to prove to other countries that Americans were more powerful than the British
- C. to convince all colonists that going to war with Britain was the only solution to their problems
- D. to force the British government to grant the colonists independence from Britain

5. What is the main idea of this excerpt?

- A. American colonists declared their independence from Britain because they were unable to pay the taxes imposed on them by the British government.
- B. A number of taxes, restrictions, and actions taken by the British government caused American colonists to declare their independence from Britain.**

- C. Although many American colonists wanted to declare independence, a number of colonists remained loyal to the British Crown.
- D. American colonists declared their independence from Britain as a result of a single act of the British government that the colonists thought was unfair.

6. Read these sentences from the text:

A Stamp Act Congress of delegates from nine colonies met in New York in October 1765, passed resolutions asserting their rights, and petitioned the king, the Lords, and the Commons for redress of their grievances. What else could the colonists do? Allowing the Stamp Act to go into effect would create a precedent for new taxes, which Parliament would surely approve again and again because every tax on the Americans relieved them and their constituents of that financial burden.

Why might the author have included the question, “What else could the colonists do?”

- A. to express that the colonists did not believe they had any choice but to assert their rights**
- B. to express that the British government did not think the colonists would continue to rebel
- C. to suggest that there were other ways for the colonists to achieve their goals
- D. to suggest that the colonists were strong compared to the British government

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The Second Continental Congress again petitioned the king for redress of grievances and assured him of the colonists’ loyalty. _____, in a proclamation in August and again in a speech to Parliament in October 1775, King George III said that the Americans were seeking independence.

- A. Moreover
- B. Therefore
- C. Accordingly
- D. Even so**

APPENDIX D POST-TEST ARTICLE

“A Local and National Story: The Civil Rights Movement in Post-War Washington DC [abridged]”

[...]During the late 1940s and early 1950s, civil rights activists in Washington waged a battle against racial discrimination in the city that had always been viewed as a symbol of our democracy. Their story reveals the deep connections between social scientists, activists, an emerging web of new and old civil rights organizations, and the nation’s liberal elite at the mid-twentieth century. The story also [...] shows the important role of symbolism in the attack on Jim Crow [during the Civil Rights Movement].

Segregation was a powerful institution in postwar DC, just as it was in the rest of the South, but the city’s race-relations history was complex and constantly changing. The city boasted a large and influential free black population during the antebellum era. After the Civil War, the relatively benign rule of the federal government made DC a mecca for America’s black elite. The men and women who belonged to this elite group created numerous significant institutions to promote their interests, including Howard University. In the early twentieth century, however, DC blacks, like those across the nation, witnessed the erection of many barriers to economic and social progress. During the Taft and Wilson administrations, Jim Crow regulations increasingly restricted the movements and opportunities of the capital’s black citizens, and DC’s black population became the focal point of actions taken by segregationists in Congress.

African Americans fought these efforts in a variety of ways and with increasing effort. During the 1930s, DC was a leader in the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” movement, and blacks aggressively protested discrimination in employment. While progress was inconsistent, the New Deal provided an increase in employment opportunities in the federal government to both working-class people and blacks, securing symbolic victories against Jim Crow. During World War II, employment shortages brought significant economic gains to African Americans and spurred them to demand greater political rights.

After World War II, activists stepped up their attacks on Jim Crow in DC. [...]One organization that played a crucial role in the fight against racial prejudice was the American Council on Race Relations. Founded in 1944 with the support of philanthropists Edwin Embree (of the Rosenwald Fund) and Marshall Field, and with the participation of key civil rights leaders including Walter White, Mary McCleod Bethune, and Lester Granger, the organization aimed “to

bring about full democracy in race relations," through the "discovery of fundamental knowledge" about racial problems. University of Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth and African American economist (and future cabinet secretary) Robert C. Weaver led the organization as it sought to promote the scholarly study of racial issues, to develop materials for use by government and private organizations, and to assist local communities in organizing programs of racial cooperation.

One of the council's first projects focused on segregation in Washington, DC. Because of "the symbolic significance of the Nation's Capital as the repository of the American Creed," Embree argued that challenging segregation in Washington could establish a precedent for fighting the institution across the country. In 1946, Embree and Weaver (a DC native) organized the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital, gathering support from over one hundred of the nation's leaders. Over the next two years, Weaver oversaw the preparation of a major study of the capital's race relations, which he intended to use to promote legal and social reform in the city.

[...]

In 1948, Embree, Wirth, and Weaver released the committee's 91-page report. Entitled "Segregation in Washington," it began by focusing on the global implications of discrimination in the District. "Few Americans," it argued, "appreciate what a shock Washington can be to visitors from abroad." As evidence, the report reproduced a letter from a Danish visitor, who noted that "Washington today, despite its great outward beauty, is not a good 'salesman' for your kind of democracy."

The report then examined several aspects of segregation in the city, describing the almost complete exclusion of blacks by eating establishments in the downtown area and the restrictions imposed on black customers in commercial operations. It also described the vise-like grip that housing discrimination placed on black residents. Excluded from newly developed areas in the outlying sections of DC, blacks were forced to find accommodations in the declining and overcrowded interior. In addition, the report detailed the continuing restrictions on employment despite the explosion of civil service jobs. Although new agencies like the Office of Price Administration proved that integrated offices could function efficiently, many federal agencies—the worst example was the State Department—still practiced a rigid discrimination that limited blacks to the lowest-ranking positions.

The final section of the report focused on education and recreation in DC. "Every September," the report stated, "the Superintendent of Schools makes two speeches. They are identical in content, but one is made to Negro teachers and the other to white teachers." This separation was enforced throughout all parts of the public school system. Moreover, separate did not mean equal in the District's schools, as Negro schools received far less funding and had less qualified teachers and older facilities than their white counterparts. Segregation also applied to after-school programs, run by the recreation department, where the

system was so rigidly imposed that the city even named two annual champions (one white, one black) in marbles tournaments.

The report concluded with a call to action: “For more than half a century, DC had been building ghettos of mind, body and spirit. They are ghettos that cramp the soul of the nation. In the Nation’s Capital, we must mean what we say, and give people of all races and colors an equal chance to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

The report received significant national and local attention. [...]The report and the increasing attention it brought to discrimination in DC resulted in significant and immediate reforms. Just days after the report’s release, the Civilian Aeronautics Administration declared that it would bar any discrimination at facilities of the National Airport (now Ronald Reagan Airport). J.A. Krug, the Secretary of the Interior Department, which was negotiating to turn over operation of several District facilities to the local recreation department, declared that his department would not complete the transfer until the recreation department eliminated its requirement of racial segregation in its facilities.

The most interesting outcome of the report was an effort to resuscitate the District’s nineteenth-century “lost” discrimination laws. During their research, committee members discovered that in 1872 and 1873, the Council of the District of Columbia had passed laws giving blacks equal rights in all places of public accommodation, including restaurants and hotels. These laws had never been repealed, but had been surreptitiously removed from the DC code sometime in the early 1900s. To push the local government to acknowledge the validity of the laws, a group of District activists formed the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of DC Anti-Discrimination Laws (CCEAD). Led by Mary Church Terrell, an 88-year-old African American, who was virtually an institution in the District and was the scion of one of its most famous families, the group directed a three-prong attack on public segregation, which consisted of lobbying the DC government, initiating legal action to secure the enforcement of the statutes, and protesting at those commercial facilities that refused to integrate.

After some pressure, the commissioners who ran the city agreed to enforce the laws, partly as a matter of civil rights, but in large part because they viewed the effort as an important precedent for the home-rule independence they had lobbied Congress to grant the local government. Activists initiated a test case in which Terrell, along with two other African Americans and one white person, attempted to get service at Thompson’s Restaurant, a downtown business. When they were refused, they immediately filed charges in the DC corporation counsel’s office. In July 1950, a DC district judge dismissed the charges, declaring the antidiscrimination laws “repealed by implication.” Later that year, a local appellate court reversed the decision and the restaurant asked the United States Court of Appeals to intervene.

[...]

While the courts were considering the matter, CCEAD organized protests at several downtown stores to push them to integrate. During 1950 and 1951, activists secured the signatures of 4,000 DC residents, who pledged not to patronize Woolworth's, Hecht's, Kresge's, Murphy's, and other major department stores that refused to serve blacks at their lunch counters. Within the year, each of these establishments capitulated to the pressure and agreed to provide full services to African American customers.

Activists also won in court, after a long battle. In 1952, a divided federal bench declared the antidiscrimination laws invalid. Ignoring the content of the laws, the five judges in the majority focused on the question of the government's authority to pass and enforce them. However, in an eight-to-zero decision, the US Supreme Court reversed, declaring that the laws had been authorized by the District's home-rule powers when adopted and that they remained valid. The decision was a major victory for local activists, providing a rallying point to attack segregated institutions across the city, and serving as a harbinger of other civil rights battles that would take place in the near future.

The efforts of national and local civil rights activists to draw attention to the practice of segregation in the District of Columbia provided a powerful framework for mounting an attack on school segregation. By the early 1950s, segregation in the District was a national disgrace, and one that could not be met with arguments of states' rights. The efforts of local and national activists reveal the multifaceted approach of civil rights lawyers, activists, and liberal institutions to promote civil rights in the postwar years. By highlighting the corrosive effect of segregation on the nation's capital, a vital symbol of democracy, activists were able to change the terms of debate and, therefore, the law.

The full text can be found on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History website. The website requires registration for a free subscription.
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APPENDIX E
POST-TEST READING COMPREHENSION QUESTION SET

*Correct answers for each question are in **bold**.*

1. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, civil rights activists fought racial discrimination in Washington, DC. What was that city a symbol of?
 - A. equality
 - B. democracy**
 - C. prosperity
 - D. peace

2. The text describes a series of events in the Civil Rights Movement in postwar DC. What development during World War II preceded these events and may have been a cause of them?
 - A. DC became a leader in the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” movement
 - B. employment shortages brought significant gains to African Americans**
 - C. the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation’s Capital was organized by Edwin Embree and Robert C. Weaver
 - D. the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation’s Capital released a report on race relations

3. The “Segregation in Washington” report concluded that “DC had been building ghettos of mind, body, and spirit.”

What paragraph contains information that best supports the report’s conclusion?

- A. paragraph 6 (“In 1948...”)
- B. paragraph 7 (“The report then...”)**
- C. paragraph 9 (“The report concluded...”)
- D. paragraph 10 (“The report received...”)

4. The “Segregation in Washington” report resulted in significant and immediate reform.

What evidence from the article supports this statement?

- A. **“Just days after the report’s release, the Civilian Aeronautics Administration declared that it would bar any discrimination at facilities of the National Airport (now Ronald Reagan Airport).”**
- B. “‘Every September,’ the report stated, ‘the Superintendent of Schools makes two speeches. They are identical in content, but one is made to Negro teachers and the other to white teachers.’”
- C. “‘Every September,’ the report stated, ‘the Superintendent of Schools makes two speeches. They are identical in content, but one is made to Negro teachers and the other to white teachers.’”
- D. “In addition, the report detailed the continuing restrictions on employment despite the explosion of civil service jobs. Although new agencies like the Office of Price Administration proved that integrated offices could function efficiently, many federal agencies—the worst example was the State Department—still practiced a rigid discrimination that limited blacks to the lowest-ranking positions.”

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Although DC had a large and influential free black population in the 19th century, segregation had become a powerful institution in postwar DC.
- B. A report released by the American Council on Race Relations in 1948 criticized the deep segregation found throughout DC.
- C. After a DC restaurant refused to serve a group of three African Americans and one white person, legal charges were immediately brought against it.
- D. **Civil rights activists successfully fought racial inequality in postwar DC by using a multifaceted approach to draw attention to discrimination.**

6. Read these sentences from the text: “The most interesting outcome of the report was an effort to resuscitate the District’s nineteenth-century ‘lost’ discrimination laws. During their research, committee members discovered that in 1872 and 1873, the Council of the District of Columbia had passed laws giving blacks equal rights in all places of public accommodation, including restaurants and hotels. These laws had never been repealed, but had been surreptitiously removed from the DC code sometime in the early 1900s.”

Why might the author have put the word “lost” in quotation marks?

- A. to show that he is quoting the words of a committee member
- B. to indicate that the discrimination laws were not really lost**
- C. to draw attention to the long period of time during which the discrimination laws had been lost
- D. to question the validity of the discrimination laws

7. Read this sentence from the text: “The decision was a major victory for local activists, providing a rallying point to attack segregated institutions across the city, and serving as a harbinger of other civil rights battles that would take place in the near future.”

How could this sentence be rewritten without changing its meaning?

- A. “The decision was a major victory for local activists because it provided a rallying point to attack segregated institutions across the city and served as a harbinger of other civil rights battles that would take place in the near future.”**
- B. “The decision was a major victory for local activists although it provided a rallying point to attack segregated institutions across the city and served as a harbinger of other civil rights battles that would take place in the near future.”
- C. “The decision was a major victory for local activists; nevertheless, it provided a rallying point to attack segregated institutions across the city and served as a harbinger of other civil rights battles that would take place in the near future.”
- D. “The decision was a major victory for local activists; in contrast, it provided a rallying point to attack segregated institutions across the city and served as a harbinger of other civil rights battles that would take place in the near future.”

APPENDIX F
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date: Time of Interview: Name:

Gender: Age:

Feelings about reading

1. What are your feelings about reading?
 - 1.1. Have you always felt that way about reading?
 - 1.1.1. If not, when did your feelings about reading change?
 - 1.1.2. Why did your feelings about reading change?

Perception of self as a reader

2. How would you describe yourself as a reader?
 - 2.1. What makes a “good” reader?
 - 2.2. How do you know if you are a “good” reader?
 - 2.3. How well do you think you understand what you read for social studies class? Why?
 - 2.4. What strategies or tips do you use to aid you as you read in social studies class?

Perception of Collaborative Strategic Reading as an instructional strategy

3. What did you think about using Collaborative Strategic Reading in social studies class?

- 3.1. How did Collaborative Strategic Reading impact your comprehension of the social studies passage?
- 3.2. What impact did reading collaboratively with classmates (in a group) have on your understanding of the social studies passage?

APPENDIX G

COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIC READING (CSR) GOOGLE SLIDES PRESENTATION

Join the Class on ReadWorks.com

How to get students to their assignments

1. Have students go to www.readworks.org/student
2. Students enter class code [REDACTED]
3. Tell your students that their default password is [REDACTED]

Note: Students can change their passwords when they log in, and you can change student passwords on this page.

1

Collaborative Strategic Reading

What is it? How do we use it? Why do we use it?

2

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR)

What is it?

- CSR is an instructional strategy that relies on collaborative learning (group work) to help students improve their reading skills, and make reading content-area (social studies) texts more enjoyable and interactive

How do we do it?

- Follow the specific steps for three phases of reading: before, during, and after

Why do we do it?

- CSR is designed to help students improve reading comprehension (what you understand from what you read) and turn reading into a group work activity

3

Before Reading: Preview

- Why is it important to preview a text?
- You preview a reading passage to get a sense for what it will be about, and activate any background knowledge you may already have about the topic

3 Steps for Previewing:

- 1. Read the title
- 2. Read the subheadings and think about how they relate to the topic
- 3. Look at the pictures, charts, and/or information boxes and think about how they relate to the topic

- Record 2-3 statements on your learning log about what you already know about this topic. We will do one together, and you will do 1 or 2 more on your own.
- Share with a partner or with your groups. I will choose one person to share out from each group

4

Before Reading: Making Predictions

There are three steps to making good predictions:

- 1. Use clues from the text preview
- 2. Make an educated guess about what you might learn
- 3. Write one to two predictions of what you think the passage will be about

We will make one prediction together, and you will do one or two more on your own in your learning log.

When you finish, turn to a partner within your group and share what you've got.

5

During Reading: Clicks and Clunks

When I think of the Click and Clunk strategy, I think of driving a car. When you drive and everything moves smoothly, you click along, but when you hit a pothole, you CLUNK- hit it. It disrupts your smooth ride. You can think about clicks and clunks like this as words or ideas in a text- most make sense and as you read along smoothly, but occasionally you hit a word or idea that is unfamiliar that disrupts the flow of your reading.

Identifying clunks and figuring out what they mean will help you understand what you read without using a computer or dictionary.

6

During Reading: Click and Clunk Strategies

- Identify clunks (words or ideas that are unfamiliar and disrupt the flow of your reading) and write them in your learning log as you read
- Use fix-up strategies to figure out the meaning of the clunks
- Write a brief definition or explanation in your learning log

Fix-Up Strategies for Clunks:

- 1. Reread the sentence with the clunk and look for key ideas to help you figure out the word. Think about what makes sense in the sentence.
- 2. Reread the sentence with the clunk and the sentences before or after the clunk looking for clues.
- 3. Break the word apart and look for a prefix, suffix, or a root word.
- 4. Look for a cognate (related or similar word) that makes sense.

7

During Reading: Get the Gist

The "gist" is the main idea in a section of text

Get the Gist has three steps:

- 1. Identify the most important who or what in the passage
- 2. Identify the most important information about the who or what
- 3. Write a short, complete sentence containing the most important information

8

After Reading: Wrap Up Question Generation

You will generate questions about what you've read to enhance your comprehension of the text.

How to Write Wrap Up Questions:

- Identify an important fact in the text you want to remember. This will be the answer to your question
- Write a question that requires the answer you identified

Write 2-3 Wrap Up Questions as a group

9

APPENDIX H LEARNING LOG FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT AND STUDENT CUE CARDS

Learning Log for Informational Text

Name _____ Date _____

Today's Topic _____

Before Reading: Preview

Brainstorm: Connections to prior knowledge

Predict: What I might learn about the topic

During Reading: Section One

CLUNKS

DEFINITIONS

_____ = _____ 1 2 3 4

_____ = _____ 1 2 3 4

_____ = _____ 1 2 3 4

Gist: _____

During Reading: Section Two

CLUNKS

DEFINITIONS

_____ = _____ 1 2 3 4

_____ = _____ 1 2 3 4

_____ = _____ 1 2 3 4

Gist: _____

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(Klingner et al., 2012).

Learning Log for Informational Text (continued)

During Reading: Section Three

CLUNKS		DEFINITIONS	
_____	=	_____	1 2 3 4
_____	=	_____	1 2 3 4
_____	=	_____	1 2 3 4

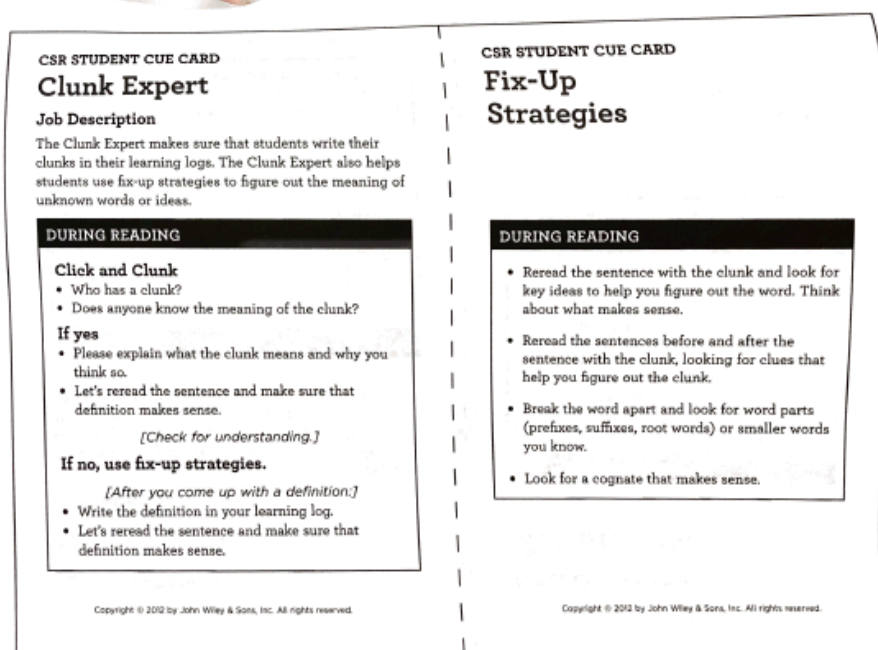
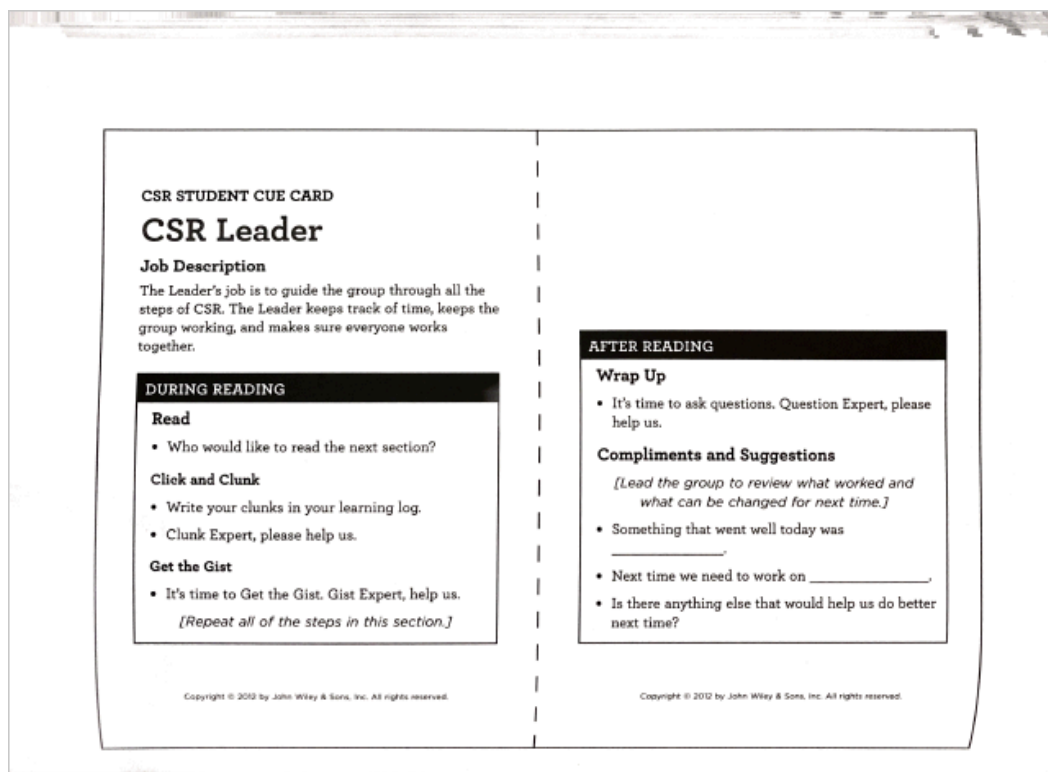
Gist: _____

After Reading: Wrap Up

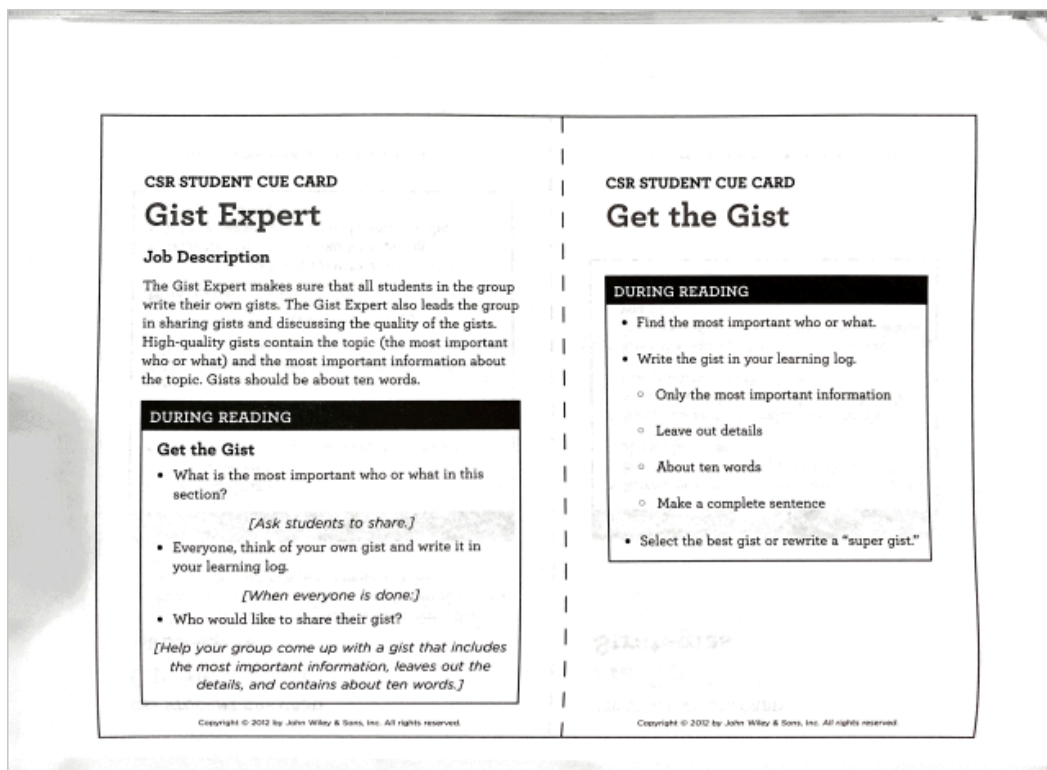
Questions: Write questions and answers.

Review: Write one or two of the most important ideas in this passage. Be prepared to justify your ideas.

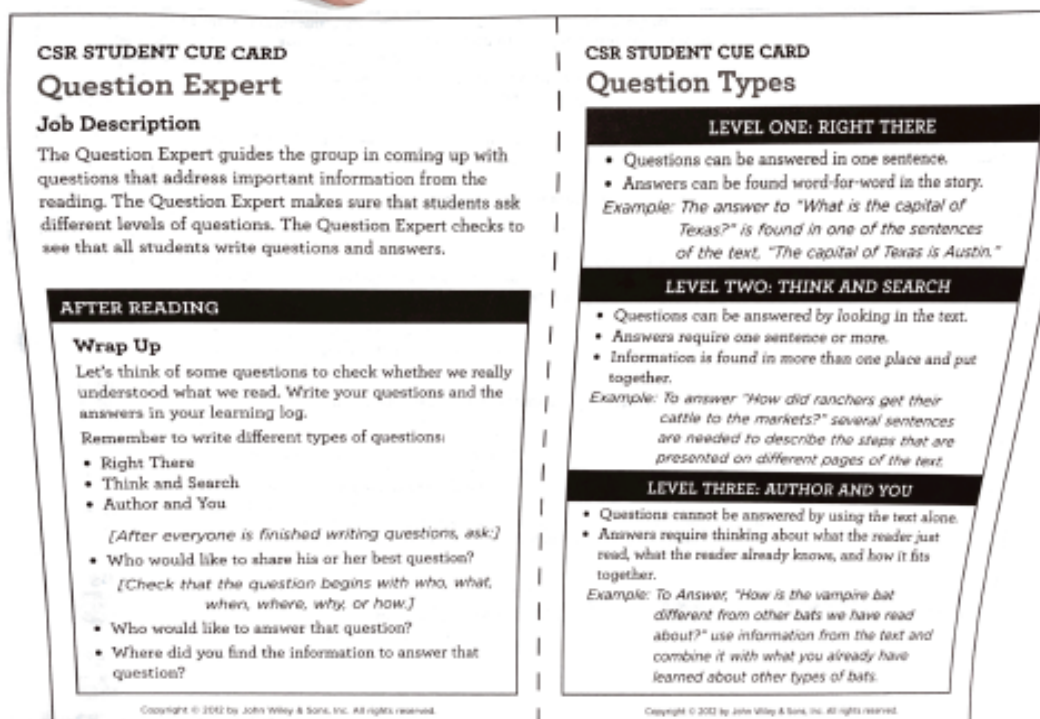
(Klingner et al., 2012).



(Klingner et al., 2012).



(Klingner et al., 2012).



(Klingner et al., 2012).