What Is the Impact of Utilizing an Authentic Study of an Author’s Life and Literary Works to Increase Students’ Motivation to Read in a Third Grade Gifted and Talented Classroom?

Cherie B. Salem

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WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF UTILIZING AN AUTHENTIC STUDY OF AN AUTHOR’S LIFE AND LITERARY WORKS TO INCREASE STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO READ IN A THIRD GRADE GIFTED AND TALENTED CLASSROOM?

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family and friends who have believed in me since
day one of beginning this educational journey. I also dedicate this study to all the students
and educators who have inspired me over my twenty-five years of teaching.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin I would like to thank God for giving me the ability to go through this humbling and enriching process. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Janet Files of the Coastal Area Writing Project who taught me how to look at teaching reading and writing differently. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Virginia Simmons for inspiring me to learn more about teaching gifted students. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Jeanne Cobb, for seeing something in me and giving me an opportunity to teach my first literacy class to pre-service teachers at the collegiate level and to conclude, Dr. Duffy for always being so encouraging throughout the dissertation writing process.
ABSTRACT

This Dissertation in Practice (DIP) utilizes action research methods to answer the question of: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom? Through intentional questioning and inquiry, the following Chapters provide justification of the Problem of Practice (POP), why students who have the ability or will to read, do not have the motivation or desire to read. Does this negative attitude toward reading begin through literacy curriculum taught in our schools today? Literacy curricula in schools today do not foster the affective elements of reading: attitude, desire, and motivation. Instead most literacy programs are scripted, fast paced, data driven, and are mandated by states or districts.

Through the action research cyclical process, quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed concurrently through a Mixed Method Triangulation design. Based on the results of the action research study, third grade Academically Gifted and Talented students seemingly demonstrated an increase of affective elements (attitude, desire, and motivation) in reading through the implementation of an author study,
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The rationale for my research study comes from frustrating firsthand experiences with students in my gifted and talented classroom losing the desire to read. Students entering the gifted and talented program in third grade equated reading instruction with prior reading experiences from their regular education classroom. Reading was equated with earning points from a computerized program called Accelerated Reader (AR). The AR program is a computerized program that assesses reading comprehension by multiple-choice quizzes. The AR program became the independent reading program for students before entering the third grade gifted and talented program. “AR is an isolated event in most classrooms and is not integrated into other literacy activities” (Smith and Westberg, 2011, p. 2). When students began to be introduced to other literary text in the gifted and talented program not associated with AR, some students began to lose the desire to read because of not earning extrinsic points for completing a quiz after reading.

Mikulecky (1978) was one of the first literary researchers to discuss students who have the will and skill to read, no longer have the desire to read. He called this “aliteracy” (p. 6). When it comes to reading instruction and the term gifted and talented, there are numerous definitions, opinions, or misconceptions of the two. Due to these varied definitions, opinions and misconceptions of gifted learners and reading instruction, the majority of gifted and talented students at the elementary school level may not get the appropriate literacy curricula for their diverse needs.
If not given the appropriate literacy curricula at the elementary school level, gifted students that have the will and skill to read, may lose the desire to read if not continually motivated throughout their academic career. “There is evidence that capable readers lose interest and enthusiasm for reading as they progress in school” (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007, p. 156). Gifted and Talented English Language Arts students at the elementary school level need depth and breadth through engagement, literary discussions, inquiry, and thematic-conceptual thinking (Galbraith and Delisle, 2002). Gifted learners, similar to English Language Learners (ELL), and Special Education students with Individual Education Plans (IEP’s) need diverse opportunities to learn based on their individual needs/ability. All students, including gifted learners, need to be able to learn at their own pace, elect out of content that they already know and have mastered, go beyond basic instruction, work with concepts that require more than simplistic thinking, and partake in opportunities that connect their learning to the “real world” (Galbraith and Delisle, 2002).

Unfortunately, many gifted students at the elementary school level do not get these opportunities due to being assigned more/busy work or assigned to help other students. Many gifted and talented students are underachieving in their classrooms due to unrecognized abilities, needs being unmet, lack of challenge, and boredom (Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2011). This unrecognized ability/underachievement of gifted learners has been termed by educators a “quiet crisis” or “sounds of silence” (Renzulli & Park, 2002; Sternberg, 1996).

Aliteracy begins with students who have the will and skill to read, nevertheless lose their motivation, passion or desire to read as they go through school. Students and
adults more than ever are choosing not to read due to reading instruction in schools have become an agonizing experience. For instance, “high-stakes tests, Lexile levels, searches for evidence, dialogic notes, and sticky notes galore—we have demanded of readers many things we would never do ourselves while reading” (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 46). To aid in the continuance of the desire to read and preventing aliteracy in our elementary schools, the focus of my Dissertation in Practice (DIP) will analyze whether utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom. The teacher-researcher selected this intervention to aid in students constructing knowledge about an author and his/her various works. By Immersing students into an author and their literary works, opens students up to various reading experiences over just introducing students to a single text or genre.

**Statement of the Problem**

By reflecting on my educational experiences in the classroom and the literacy programs taught in our elementary schools, I began to notice the lack of reading in students who had the ability to read, but not the motivation or desire to read. Students complained about reading boring stories in their assigned reading series, not being able to select books that they wanted to read due to their Lexile levels, and having to take commercialized reading test to prove that they were reading. These observations led me to my Problem of Practice (PoP): The growing problem of students who have the will and the skill to read, not the desire to read (aliteracy). Through informal inquiry and intentional questioning of students, parents, and colleagues, I began to see how consequential of a problem aliteracy was and still is.
My Problem of Practice (PoP), became clearer to me through Steven L. Layne’s poem about aliteracy (Layne, 2009, p. 1).

Aliteracy Poem

Mrs. Thompson’s second graders are amazing!
The principal says they can comprehend anything-
Even a medical textbook.
Mrs. Thompson’s second graders are incredible!
The superintendent says their oral reading is completely seamless- like the gentle flow of an eternal spring.
Mrs. Thompson’s second graders are fantastic!
The P.T.A. president says they finished the reading workbook
And the phonics workbook before the end of the Third Quarter. Mrs. Thompson’s second graders worry me.
You see, I’m the aide who works in Mrs. Thompson’s classroom, and I know something that the others don’t.
Mrs. Thompson’s second graders don’t like to read.

This poem reiterated to me as a teacher-research, how students may be becoming disengaged readers through mandated ritualized reading practices that are not differentiated by ability. John Dewey spoke about these same ritualized practices that Layne described in his poem. Dewey (1938) described ritualized practices as a kind of social control when he spoke about social forms that become enacted formalities and empty ritualistic actions. Dewey (1938) also stated that these ritualized practices “may become merely outward show with no meaning behind them” (p. 59). Regrettably for
many of our students, these same practices are still going on today. “Dewey insisted that children understand and appreciate literature best if they experience it as a form of communication” (Flinders and Thornton, 2017, p. 44). As a teacher-researcher, I want my gifted and talented third grade students to encounter quality literary experiences over taking multiple-choice tests and earning points for books read.

Rosenblatt (1960) also believed in the quality of literary experiences over the number of books read for a comprehension test. Through the utilization of action research in my classroom, I want to construct a quality literary experience of an authentic author study over a commercialized reading system that assesses comprehension and gives extrinsic points for reading.

**Study Rationale**

As a teacher-researcher, I see this disheartening sight called, aliteracy happening on a daily basis in my classroom. Gifted learners who have the will and skill to read, are losing the desire and motivation to read. Since the 1970’s aliteracy has been a problem in education. Mikulecky stated:

Positive reading habits and attitudes seem to deteriorate with each successive year students spend in school” (Bullen, 1972 and Mikulecky, 1978). Mikulecky discussed the concerns with the minimum standards reading programs, and how “most programs ignore or don’t take aliteracy into account. (Mikulecky, 1978, p. 6).

He also stated a concern about literacy programs not fostering affective elements of reading, “I know of no current program plans that put equally heavy emphasis on developing reading and learning as a habit, as well as an ability. Instead, many students
are actually dissuaded from developing positive reading habits by singular over emphasis on a steady program of basic skills” (Mikulecky, 1978, p. 6). As a teacher-researcher, I have experienced first-hand how a basic skill commercialized reading program is used for reading instruction and to see if students are reading/comprehending based on passing multiple-choice reading assessments.

Seeing the effects of commercialized reading programs along with mandated scripted fast paced, data driven literacy programs and how they are fostering aliteracy in my third grade gifted and talented students, I wanted to pursue my interest of aliteracy with a group of education majors at our local university. As an instructor of an undergraduate Children’s Literature Course for the past six years, I have utilized a get-to-know-you Interest Inventory at the beginning of each semester. I discovered that the majority of preservice teachers in their junior and senior year, did not like to read. Similar to Mikulecky’s (1978) research, Goodwin (1996) discussed this literacy issue among college students and defines this issue the “invisible epidemic” (p. 5).

According to Goodwin’s (1996) research study, he found that many of the students surveyed and interviewed at the collegiate level disliked reading as a child. “Early educational experiences do not seem to foster a positive attitude toward reading especially that related to academics” (Goodwin, 1996, pp. 12-13). Numerous students interviewed at the collegiate level stated that the early educational reading methods and the overemphasis of repetition of skills added to their negative attitudes toward reading (Goodwin, 1996). Through informal inquiring into my college students’ early reading experiences and reflecting on Mikulecky’s (1978) and Goodwin’s (1996) research, I
knew as a teacher-researcher that I needed to look closely at the commercialized program utilized as a reading program prior to students entering my gifted and talented classroom.

While reflecting on my literary classroom practice, I thought about the “magic pill” reading programs at the elementary level and how they are killing the love of reading in children (Gallagher, 2009). If the way students “have learned or been exposed to basic reading skills is so boring and joyless they hate it, they will never read outside their classroom” (Trelease, 2013, p. 1). I want to inspire my gifted and talented students to want to read beyond obtaining points for reading and to be motivated to read through authentic literacy experiences. As time goes on in school, similar to the college students, their motivation will decline due to the constraints of literacy curricula and the pressure of extrinsic motivation. I began to realize that my third-grade students felt like they were considered readers by their previous teachers, as well as their parents if they were performing well and gaining points on the Accelerated Reader (AR) commercialized reading tests. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) discussed this desire to be evaluated or recognized favorable through extrinsic motivation and performance goals.

Many of my gifted and talented students want to be viewed or evaluated favorable by their regular education teachers and feel the daily pressure to succumb to extrinsic motivation due to the unrealistic beliefs of teachers and parents. “Because children often read in school where they are evaluated and compared with others, competitions, recognition, and grades may figure prominently in their motivation for reading.” (Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997, p. 422). Feeling the pressure to conform to this commercialized extrinsic approach to reading, and the need to challenge this negative regular education classroom reading approach, I attended numerous reading, writing and
gifted conferences that promoted authentic literacy through picture book authors. Through these authentic experiences, and the action research process, I want to keep students inspired and motivated to read (other than obtaining extrinsic points) by introducing them to an author study experience. Through this author study experience, students will be immersed into rich literary works that cultivates choice, along with enriching whole/small group discussions.

To solidify my conceptual framework and action research of an author study, I discovered Carol Brennan Jenkin’s book, The Allure of Authors: Author Studies in the Elementary Classroom and The Author Studies Hand Book: Helping Students Build Powerful Connections to Literature, by Laura Kotch and Leslie Zackman. Jenkin’s work describes a different approach to reading through the utilization of an author study. Through the implementation of an author study intervention, students will be introduced to various authors through class books read aloud. The teacher-researcher will select one specific author to model the author study process. During this author study process, students will be guided to think of themselves as readers and authors (Bruner, 1960). After the class read alouds on select authors, students will be immersed in gaining background knowledge through class author discussions, researching the author’s life, and reading his/her literary works. After the modeling process is completed by the teacher-researcher on how to be immersed or participate in the author study process, students will be given managed choice authors to study (a choice of different authors to select from). Through the utilization of an author study, over a formalistic commercial scripted reading program, the teacher-research will test her action plan to see if students continue to be motivated to read books about authors and their numerous works.
**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of the present action research study is to test my theory to see if an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works will increase student motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom. In accordance with the identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for this Dissertation in Practice (DiP), how does the negative attitude toward reading begin through literacy curricula taught in our schools today? If literacy curriculum does not foster a positive attitude or the affective elements of reading, how are we educating a society of young people who can read, but do not have the desire to read? Mikulecky, had concerns about aliteracy in the 70’s when he spoke about “the minimum standards reading programs, and how most programs ignore or don’t take aliteracy into account” (Mikulecky, 1978, p. 6). To further my knowledge on aliteracy, the teacher-researcher needed to be more aware of reading motivation since her gifted and talented students were losing their desire to read.

In 1997, Wigfield and Guthrie, did a study on children’s motivation for reading to the amount of breadth of their reading. They looked at the different theories of motivation and constructs within the theories: self-efficacy beliefs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and social aspects of motivation. The teacher-researcher will look further into these motivational theories through the review of scholarly literature and through the implementation of an author study. Through an author study experience, the teacher-researcher wants her students to experience the affective elements of reading.

**Research Question**

In order to begin to understand the nature of the students’ literacy, or aliteracy, experiences in my classroom, I posed the following Action Research Question:
What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works on students to increase their motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom? Through this authentic author study experience, students will be able to connect with literacy through the exploration of an author’s life, choice of author reading materials, and the experience of group discussions that aids in building and stimulating a nurturing classroom literacy community (Kotch and Zackman, 1995).

Theoretical Framework

A century ago John Dewey insisted that learning comes from experiences. “There is no discipline in the world so severe as the discipline of experience subjected to the test of intelligent development and direction” (Dewey, 1938, p. 90). Dewey believed in authentic learning experiences. He believed that education comes out of real student-centered experiences. As a teacher-researcher, I want my students to read and experience literary discussions on fictional and real-world topics; not just read a book and take a test for extrinsic points or to see if a student is reading.

Similar to our educational system today, progressive education and traditional education offered multitudes of experiences. John Dewey stated, “Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had” (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). To change the experiences associated with formalistic scripted reading instruction and by engaging students in a study of authors and their works, I hope to motivate my students to experience a lifelong passion for reading. Dewey in, Experience and education: The kappa delta pi lecture series, discussed these same wrong experiences that are still going on in classrooms today that can hinder learning.
“How many acquired special skills by means of automatic drill so that their power of judgment and capacity to act intelligently in new situations was limited? How many came to associate the learning process with ennui and boredom? How many found what they did learn so foreign to the situations of life outside the school as to give them no power of control over the latter? How many came to associate books with dull drudgery, so that they were conditioned to all but flashy reading matter? (Dewey, 1938, p. 27).

According to Jenkins (1999) and an action to change reading instruction through the integration of author studies and literature-based reading programs, John Dewey’s progressive educational beliefs of constructing knowledge through experience can still be relevant today. Through the constructivist process, students will be able to construct knowledge by examining diverse literature by the same author, question and analyze his multiple works and make meaning through individual interpretation of the authorial experience.

**Action Research Methodology**

To put action behind John Dewey’s progressive educational beliefs, the teacher-researcher reviewed various literary works and the methodology utilized by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) in *Relations of Children’s Motivation for Reading to the Amount and Breadth of Their Reading* to see how they measured students’ interest and value of reading. “A goal of every classroom teacher should be to improve her or his professional practice as well as student outcomes” (Mertler, 2017, p. 13). My action research methodology will follow the cyclical action research model of planning, acting,
developing and reflecting (Mertler, 2017). The planning stage consists of identifying and refining my topic on reading motivation, aliteracy, and author studies. After refining my research topic, the teacher-researcher will gather, locate and review specific scholarly literature from literary textbooks and internet search engines. From the specific research information compiled, the teacher-researcher will develop a research plan that will lead to the acting stage of collecting and analyzing data. From the acting stage, the teacher-researcher will develop an action plan and reflect on the results/process (Mertler, 2017).

“This process of systematically collecting information followed by active reflection—all with the anticipation of improving the teaching process—is at the core of action research” (Mertler, 2017, p. 13). My action research study will focus on the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the action research study will be the small sample size of fifteen student participants, changing mindsets toward gifted curriculum and measuring self-efficacy of reading motivation (interest, value, choice, motivation, and desire-aesthetics of reading). Students today are constantly forced to acquire information quickly that they are not interested in or will be later tested, and schools have become other places than promoting authentic reading (Gallagher, 2009; Miller, 2009). With fast paced data driven curriculum self-efficacy in reading is difficult to measure and takes times. Until authentic interest is generated in teaching the reader and not just the reading, there will always be limitations to what educators can do in their classrooms. According to Gallagher (2009), due to the limitations of authentic reading practices and the
overemphasis/unbalanced reading programs that adhere to state-mandated reading tests, education is preventing the development of students in becoming lifelong readers. “We are developing test-takers at the expense of readers” (p. 7). To foster change and overcome these limitations, educators need a voice in the reading curricula taught in their classrooms.

**Summary and Conclusion**

My action research study seeks to examine the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom. Through the intervention of an author study, students will have literary choice over specific books assessed by commercialized basic skill reading programs. The intervention of an author study is needed based on informal observations, student, teacher, and parent comments on the current literacy programs at the elementary school level. Gifted learners who have the skill and will to read are losing the desire to read other literary works due to the overuse of scripted data driven commercialized reading programs.

Through an author study experience, I want my students to have the desire to continue to want to read other literary works and not be turned off to reading. “The core of any successful literacy program is enjoying stories and helping children develop a pleasure reading habit” (Krashen, 2016, para. 2). Through an authentic author study experience (immersion into rich literature, choice, and discussion), my students will be exposed to a world of authors and their craft of writing to help aid in motivating them to discover their favorite authors and their literary works. To instill lifelong reading, I do not want my students to read books just for points or be penalized for not reading certain
books. Through this action research process, the teacher-researcher wants to evoke change in motivational literacy practices in her classroom through the investigation of an authentic unit of study on an author’s life and literary works in a third grade gifted and talented classroom.

**Glossary of key terms**

These are the common terms that recur throughout this DiP that require definitions.

**Academically Gifted and Talented:** Throughout most of this century, intellectual giftedness has been defined as a unidimensional construct. The most frequently used measure of that dimension has been the IQ (Sternberg, 1997).

**Accelerated Reader:** A commercial incentive reading program (Tunnel, Jacobs, Young, & Bryan, 2012).

**Aesthetic:** An experience in reading where the reader lives through the evocation of the text as imagined and visualized (Wilhelm, 1997).

**Attitude:** Attitude and motivation have a close relationship and usually go together because of effort and desire of success. One way to measure attitude and motivation is through an (AMTB) Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1985).

**Affective Domain of Reading:** Elements of reading: attitude, desire, and motivation to read (Layne, 2009).

**Aliteracy:** People, both children and adults, who have the ability but not the desire to read (Layne, 2009).

**Authentic:** Literary practices that are practiced not just within a school but also for real-life purposes outside of schools (Tunnel, et al., 2012).
Author Study: The study of authors to build a community of readers, to form mentor relationships with authors, to develop effective reading strategies (Kotch and Zackman, 1995).

Efferent: An experience in reading where the reader can acquire or take away information from the text (Wilhelm, 1997).

Engagement: Condition for learning that encompasses having personal value for students, students seeing themselves as readers, environment free of anxiety along with teacher modeled reading habits by someone students: like, respect, trust and want to emulate (Miller, 2009).

Extrinsic Motivation: Performance goals, desire to outperform, gratification of receiving a tangible form of recognitions for success (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

Formalistic Literacy Practices: Corporate machinery of scripted programs, comprehension worksheets, computer-based programs, and test preparation curriculum (Miller & Kelley, 2009).

Immersion: A literacy rich classroom with hundreds of books that encourages students to read and discuss books of varying levels and genres (Miller, 2009).

Intrinsic Motivation: A construct related to the interest value component. Reading efficacy (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

Illiteracy: The inability to read (Layne, 2009).

Multiple Response Author Study: Merging together each author study perspective-author study as literary biography, author as critical response, and author study as aesthetic response. (Jenkins, 1999).
**Reading and Writing Workshop**: An environment that promotes authentic reading and writing practices through these key components: mini-lessons, reading time, choice, response, and community (Atwell, 1998).

**Self-Efficacy**: Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as a generative capacity where different subskills are organized into courses of action (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997)

**Touch-Stone Text**: Text that are written well and full of curriculum potential (Wood Ray, 2002).

**Traditional Curricula**: The emphasis and expectation to learn skills, memorize facts from worksheets and textbooks (Wilhelm, 1997).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of relevant scholarly literature researched from ERIC documents, journal articles, and books. “A review of literature can reveal a study that could be systematically replicated in your classroom or provide you with potential solutions to the research problem you have identified (Mertler, 2014, p. 60). This chapter is organized around the major ideas of aliteracy and how to address this growing literacy issue through authentic reading experiences. To understand the depth of this problem, a review of multiple works of literature will be provided in sections. The first section consists of background research on educational theories. The second section consists of historical/background information on aliteracy and traditional formalistic literacy curricula/practices. The concluding section consists of gifted and talented learners and authentic literacy instruction with the emphasis of author studies. These sections work together to demonstrate the relationship between aliteracy and the need for authentic literary instruction in a gifted and talented classroom.

Purpose of Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to ground my analysis and initial theory by examining the background of aliteracy, formalistic literacy curricula, motivation, and an authentic literacy practices such as an author study approach to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom. To gain a deeper understanding and relevance of this study, the foundational stages of learning/theory will
be examined, as well as the educational practices utilized today that contribute to
aliteracy. Through researching educational databases and reviewing relevant scholarly
literature, insight will be gained on how early theorist viewed authentic educational
experiences and how these authentic practices have been placed aside for state, district
mandated, literacy programs.

**Theoretical Framework**

To understand curriculum practices of today, one needs to reflect on the
educational theories/philosophes of the past. Over a century ago John Dewey questioned
what and how information was taught in schools. He spoke about how removed what was
learned in school to what was learned in life, the automatic drill of facts, and the boredom
of the learning process in the traditional school (Dewey, 1938). As stated in Chapter One,
Dewey (1938) questioned, “how many came to associate books with dull drudgery, so
that they were conditioned to all but flashy reading matter?” (p. 27). John Dewey’s
question is still asked today by many in the educational field (Atwell, 2007; Barth, 2013;
Gallagher, 2009; Layne, 2009; Miller & Kelley, 2014; Wilhelm, 1997).

**Progressive Education**

Dewey, the father of progressive education, along with other educational pioneers
believed in a child-centered educational practice that aided students in constructing
knowledge through their experiences along with actively being involved in the learning
process (Hayes, 2007). Over the past hundred years, progressive education has been
termed constructivism, Learner Centered ideology, open education, child center
education and developmentally appropriated practice (Schiro, 2013). For this action
research study, the teacher-researcher will refer to a constructivist approach along with its
relation to progressive education and how an author study follows the same premise of student inquiry/constructing knowledge through experience.

John Dewey envisioned a school where students would have the opportunity to encounter real world experiences with the emphasis being on the child and their learning experiences instead of the overemphasis of curriculum. Dewey believed that a teacher’s role was to provide an environment of exploration based off students’ prior experiences (Dewey, 1938). He believed that the curriculum taught in schools should not focus on repetitive, rote memorization and should match the child’s interest to previous learning experience. Dewey saw disconnect between the child and curriculum utilized in a traditional school setting (Dewey, 1938). “How many students, for example, were rendered callous to ideas, and how many lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them?” (p. 26). Dewey’s (1938) vision of school did not resemble the traditional school experience, because he believed that education should be perceived in terms of real-life experiences and students should construct knowledge through those experiences.

Unfortunately, in many schools today the traditional school experience still exists. Students associate reading with decoding, recalling information, extracting evidence from text, taking multiple choice tests, worksheets, and increasing reading levels. According to Beers and Probst (2017), schools have taken the personal out of reading, an aesthetic act, and turned into an efferent act (Rosenblatt, 1978) of finding information on a page. The same systematic nature of curricula John Dewey (1938) describe over a century ago is still a concern today. To emphasize how past theories are still relevant today, Hayes
(2007) constructed a traditional/progressive approach comparison table to depict what this would look like today in the twenty-first century (p. xiii).

Table 2.1 Traditional and Progressive Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Approach</th>
<th>Progressive Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The specific curriculum and educational outcomes as well as the majority of the classes to be taken are to be prescribed by the state or local district.</td>
<td>The curriculum is more flexible and is influenced by student interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have as their primary function introducing students to content knowledge and skills as outlined in the mandated curriculum.</td>
<td>Teachers are facilitators of learning who provide a learning environment in which students can use a wide variation of activities to learn in large part through discovery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tools used by teachers are primarily textbooks and workbooks. Today these are being supplemented often by the use of technology such as powerpoint presentations.</td>
<td>Progressive teachers use a wider variety of materials and activities which allow individual and group research. This often includes the utilization of community resources.</td>
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Through the utilization of a progressive approach to education over the traditional approach, the teacher-researcher will be able to provide a learning environment that promotes the study of an author and their works through varied activities, choice and interest.

Constructivism

Constructivism can be traced back to the roots of Progressive educators such as Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky. According to McCarthy (1990) literature-based approaches to reading and writing share constructivist roots. Through a constructive approach, students construct meaning through examination, questioning, analysis of task and experiences. While there are several interpretations of constructivism, “concept development and deep understanding are the foci” (Fosnot, 1996, p. 10). Jerome Bruner (1960) believed that students construct knowledge by going beyond the information
given. Like “the schoolboy learning physics is a physicist, and it is easier for him to learn physics behaving like a physicists than doing something else” (p. 14). Through the implementation of an author study, students will inquire into an author’s life and his/her numerous literary works to construct new knowledge and reading experiences. Through the use of an author study constructivist approach, cognitive constructivism of ideas will be constructed through students’ individual thoughts, questions, analysis, and writing experiences. Comparable to Bruner’s schoolboy example of being a physicists, third grade gifted and talented student participants will learn about authors by studying and behaving like authors (Bruner, 1960).

Similar to constructivism and Dewey’s beliefs in the progressive education approach, Rosenblatt (1978) believed that students should build on diverse experiences of reading and creating meaning. She believed that students should be able to read text and discuss their experience. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) believed that meaning did not just come from the text. She believed in the social experiences of reading and creating meaning; the Transactional Reading Theory.

An authentic author study approach allows students to have such social reading experiences along with constructing meaning through whole and small group discussions. “An emphasis on human development focuses on how people engage with others socially to learn how to use cultural tools (writing, reading) that will contribute to one’s understanding of self and society” (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 198). Students cannot just go through the motion of reading an AR book and taking a test to develop life-long reading habits. Metaphorically that would be just one piece of the pie in making up reading instruction. Students need additional experiences and transactions associated with reading.
**Transactional Reading Theory**

Louise Rosenblatt (1978), believed that meaning came from the experience of the text and reader together. “In Rosenblatt’s theory, reading is a “transaction” in which the reader and the text converse together in a particular situation to make meaning” (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 19). She believed that multiple meanings could be taken from a text without having one correct answer. “For Rosenblatt, the reader’s own individual purposes, mood, and background experiences with life and reading become primary influences on the meaning that is evoked” (p. 19). Rosenblatt distinguishes between two types of reading, efferent and aesthetic. Efferent reading is to acquire facts or information that you can take away from the text. Aesthetic reading is “maintained for the purpose of “live through” an experience that is enjoyed while reading. Text themselves are not intrinsically literary or nonliterary; the stance taken toward a text is what makes the reading aesthetic or efferent” (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 20).

Regrettably today, many classrooms focus on the traditional approach to learning by acquiring facts (efferent stance) and responding to reading instead of developing an aesthetic stance of reading. Students in my classroom as well as in our school, have a heavy mandated emphasis of nonfiction text to assist in increasing state test scores. Students are required to read so many nonfiction articles within the week/month from a commercialized nonfiction reading program. After reading the nonfiction articles, they are to answer comprehension questions on what they read. “Most classroom reading, questions, and texts are designed to elicit efferent responses, and assume that there are correct answers to these questions” (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 20). Many teachers in our school use this commercialized program as a reading curriculum (similar to the AR program).
By the time students get to fifth grade gifted and talented at the elementary level, the gifted learners state that they hate the program and do not want to read.

**Motivational Theories**

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), stated that there are numerous theories of motivation and different constructs within those theories. The expectancy-value theory of motivation encompasses efficacy beliefs as well as the expectancy of success or failure (McKenna and Robinson, 2014). “Expectancies have three characteristics that influence how they affect behavior” (p. 224). These characteristics of expectancy are certainty, value, and desirability. For this study, the teacher-researcher will look at the self-efficacy of value and desire. According to Ford (1992), participants are motivated to achieve goals that they value and think they can attain.

Based on Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) research study, “Children with higher intrinsic motivation read more, and with more breadth, than student with lower intrinsic motivation” (p. 426). As stated previously, many gifted learners come to school having intrinsic motivation to read, or desire to read, nonetheless lose that desire to read the longer they stay in school (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007). “Too many times, reading instruction is exclusively centered on imparting the skill of reading” (Layne, 2009, p. 66). Through the authorial study process of high interest reading material, along with rich literary discussions, the teacher-researcher wants to continue to motivate and cultivate lifelong readers who have the will, skill, and desire to read. According to Jones and Brown (2011), when high-interest material is utilized, students are more apt to be motivated and engaged.
Unfortunately, many traditional reading programs do not consider motivation/will to read; only the skill of reading. As educators we cannot assume that gifted learners who have the will to read will read. Will and skill are two different constructs. “Will is an afterthought for many teachers who aren’t trained in this area and, consequently are unsure how to address the more intangible attributes of attitude, interest, motivation, and engagement” (Layne, 2009, p. 66).

**Historical Perspectives In Reading**

**Aliteracy**

When individuals who have the will and skill to read, no longer have the desire to read, the problem is called aliteracy. The lack of authentic educational experiences and the over use of formulistic test-driven curriculum, students are losing their desire to read. According to Beers and Probst (2017), “Students enter schools that are test-driven, data-focused, and Lexile-leveled, and learn that reading is too often simply the task of remembering information” (p. 56).

Unfortunately, today many students are leaving school and bragging about not having to read another book (Beers and Probst, 2017). The concern over aliteracy was discussed in the 1950’s and still needs to be addressed today (Flesch, 1955; Layne, 2009; Tunnel et al., 2016; Beers and Post, 2017). “Concerns about education are not new, and we need to realize that many of today’s new issues and “fads” are related to enduring educational concerns that have long been debated” (Schiro, 2013, p. xv). Rudolf Flesch (1955) wrote about an experience that he had encountered with a twelve-year-old boy in his book, *Why Johnny Can’t Read” And What You Can Do About it?* This book was inspired by a young 12-year-old boy who Flesch agreed to tutor who was having reading
difficulties. As Flesch worked with the boy, he found in his opinion that the boy did not have a reading problem, rather he was the product of a very ordinary American school education. The point Rudolf Flesch was trying to make still stands true today, but in a form of a new question, “Why won’t Johnny read, even if he can? (Layne, 2009, p. 6). Steven Layne (2009) discussed a similar situation as Flesch (1955), with one of his previous students named Marie.

Too many students in schools today are like Johnny and Marie. Larry Mikulecky (1978) and Gertrude Bullen (1972) stated, that each year a student stays in school, positive reading habits and attitude decline. Mikulecky and Bullen’s research continues to be prevalent today on aliteracy. According to Layne (2009), due to the unfamiliarity of the term aliteracy, some policymakers, board members, and district administrators do not even recognize that aliteracy is a growing problem in the educational field. This goes back to Mikulecky’s (1978) research when he discussed the concerns with the minimum standards reading programs, and how “most programs ignore or don’t take aliteracy into account” (Mikulecky, 1978, p. 6). In Mikulecky’s (1978) research, he also stated a concern about literacy programs not fostering the affective elements (attitude, desire, and motivation) of reading and placing too much emphasis on basic skills. Sadly, Mikulecky’s concerns on literacy programs are continuing today with the onset of aliteracy starting at an early age.

According to Trelease (2006), students entering kindergarten are excited to learn and read. “We have 100 percent interest in kindergarten but lose 78 percent of our potential lifetime readers by senior year” (p. 1). Trelease’s findings support other research (Mikulecky, 1978; Bullen, 1972; Layne, 2009; Gallagher, 2009; Barth, 2013;
Beers and Probst, 2017) about how students are losing their love of reading as they continue through school. Barth (2013), further states that when students get out of school our most able learners never want to have anything to do with education. He states that schools are succeeding in “getting 95 percent of its students scoring at the 95th percentile on standardized tests, and, at the same time, students are leaving a teacher, a grade, or the school “burning their books” saying, “I’m done with this stuff; I’m outta here!” then you have won the battle and lost the war” (Barth, 2013, p. 205). Prior review of literary research and the above student quotes reiterate that changes need to be made in how we as educators, as well as the teacher-researcher, teach reading in our classrooms.

Many schools today are hindering the love of learning in our students through mandated scripted programs and standardized testing (Atwell, 2007; Gallagher, 2009; Wilhelm, 1997). When students come to school excited about learning and that learning turns to dread through their educational experiences, reform needs to occur (Dewey, 1939; Barth 2013; Bullen, 1972; Mikulecky, 1978, Trelease, 2006). Policymakers, states, administrative districts, need to become aware of the growing issue of aliteracy and answer the hard question of what happens to these students throughout their educational career that put them at risk of not wanting to learn or to continue to be life-long learners (Barth, 2013; Layne, 2009; Beers and Probst, 2017). Gallagher (2009) discusses how school mandated curriculum and test preparation are killing the love of reading and coined the term Readicide to describe these harmful effects on reading. “Readicide is the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools” (Gallagher, 2009, p. vii).
In today’s schools, the value of test taking has become more important than developing a lifelong learner (Barth, 2013; Gallagher, 2009; Beers and Probst, 2017). Schools often say that they value reading, but what they are really saying is that they value the raising of reading test scores more (Gallagher, 2009; Beers and Probst, 2017). With overemphasis of test preparation and standardized reading test, teachers are forced to adhere to mandated instruction (Gallagher, 2009). Marzano (as cited in Gallagher, 2009) in an analysis of standards, discussed that in a typical K-12 school system, found that the knowledge and the skill described represented 3,500 benchmarks. To cover that amount of content, school would have to change to K-22.

Many teachers as well as the teacher-researcher, feel forced to teach hurried lessons in order to follow school mandated curriculum (Gallagher, 2009). “Out of fear of failure or pressure from outside our classrooms, we let go of the very strategies and routines that could make our students succeed at reading, thinking and writing” (Miller, 2009, p. ix). Teachers have had to let go of teaching novels and best practices in literacy to teach basic reading skills with short text along with increasing test preparation curricula. Miller (2009) discusses how intermediate and secondary students are reading less and less every year while policy makers continue to craft “program after program in which they claim to have the answers, these children are graduating and breathing a sigh of relief that they never have to read a book again” (Miller, 2009, p. 3). Instead of schools nurturing the love of reading or nurturing the continuation of a lifelong learner, they are nurturing aliteracy through empty ritualistic programs (Layne, 2009; Mikulecky, 1978).

Study after study is conducted on students and reading (Miller, 2009). More programs are implemented, but there has been little to no change in reading practices
over the years (Miller, 2009). Layne (2009) describes a time when a board member comes into his classroom while teaching and leaves boxes. Inquisitive, he asked the board member what was in the boxes and she replied that it was the next new reading program. He furthered discussed that he was infuriated about not being informed or asked about the new program. Gallagher (2009), also discussed a similar issue when he noticed funds in his school were being diverted from buying books to purchase supposedly magic pill reading programs. Unfortunately, many teachers today still do not have a voice in what is taught in their classrooms and are rarely consulted when it comes to literacy or other educational practices (Dana & Yendoll-Hoppy, 2014). Dewey spoke of this same practice in 1938, when he spoke about the exclusion of teacher voices in their community. Miller (2009) synthesizes the problem well when she describes the lack of teacher voices and the use of overemphasized reading programs when she states:

> These programs may deceive schools into believing that they are using every available resource to teach reading, but ultimately, they are doomed to fail because they overlook what is most important. When you take a forklift and shovel off the programs, underneath it all is a child reading a book. (p. 3).

If we want to see change in our students’ reading practices, we need to value their interests over magic pill reading programs (Gallagher, 2009). Standardize tests do not value interest of students or predict if they are going to be a lifelong learner (Barth, 2013). Educators need to spend more time observing students to see what they do with their own time and what they like (Barth, 2013).

To observe students closely, leads back to the early theorist and the learner centered/progressive approach of students’ interests, needs, and experiences (Schiro,
Education today has gotten away from a progressive/learner-centered theory approach that nurtured authentic educational practices (Schiro, 2013). The greatest objective of any school should be to create graduates who continue the joy of learning and to educate themselves throughout their adult lives (Barth, 2013). The reality of our educational system today contrasts the promotion of a lifelong learners that John Dewey (1938) spoke of over a century ago. Unfortunately, graduating students who read well enough to graduate are taking “a silent vow: if I never read another book, it’ll be too soon” (Trelease, 2006, p. 2).

Many educators since Dewey have been concerned over the silent vow of reading our students are taking today and have voiced the need for authentic educational practices to prevent alliteracy. Beginning in the 50’s Rudolf Flesch wrote about a boy not wanting to read due to being a product of an ordinary American school education. Mikulecky and Bullen in the 70’s wrote about how aliteracy was a growing problem and each year a student stays in school, positive reading habits/attitude declines. In the 80’s Atwell, Graves, and Murray wrote about the process of reading and writing through a constructivist approach of workshops. In the 90’s many educators thought by giving students books and time to read would solve the problem of aliteracy. Today, many students are not reading for enjoyment due to trying to obtain a certain Lexile level, extract information from text, and to pass tests (Beers & Probst, 2017).

Unfortunately, it takes more than educators and researchers to recognize that alliteracy is a growing problem. According to Layne (2009), policymakers, board members, and district administrators are unfamiliar with the term alliteracy and do not recognize that it is a problem in the education field. If American schools continue to
focus mainly on poor formalistic reading programs and repetitive skills, aliteracy will continue to be a growing problem (Chong, 2016).

**Traditional Reading Practices**

Authentic real-world teaching is lost to increasing test preparation, data driven formalistic curricula, and computerized reading programs. Students today are beginning to equate reading with the overuse of work sheets, basal readers, and reading programs that foster an overemphasis of skills (Gallagher, 2009; Layne, 2009; Wilhelm, 1997). Numerous students in schools today are having negative experiences with reading and do not see themselves as readers. According to Beers and Probst (2017), if students continue to equate reading with answering question, extracting information, and how much they remember, the efferent stance of reading, “we will, for yet another year, not become a nation of readers” (p. 50). With the over use of formalistic mandated curriculum, students do not have time to make/construct meaning for themselves or inquire what they have read, because schools are not devoting time for students to read books (Atwell, 2007; Gallagher, 2009; Miller & Kelley 2014).

“Sustained silent reading time is being abandoned because it is often seen as “soft” or “nonacademic”. For many students, academic reading, though incredibly important, has become their only reading” (Gallagher, 2009, p. 4). The use of novels is either being limited or eliminated from numerous elementary schools to make room for more test practice. “In an attempt to raise reading scores, school districts across the country are removing books from kids” (p. 11). If students continue to experience traditional formalistic reading programs and are not being immersed in real-world authentic reading practices, we are producing limited thinkers (Gallagher, 2009). When
limited thinking is being fostered through poor formalistic reading practices, deeper learning or interest is not valued and overall quality of work declines in the gifted learner (Galbraith, & Delisle 2002).

**Accelerated Reading Program**

Judith Paul created the Accelerated Reading Program (AR) when she was not satisfied with her child’s school reading program (Stefl-Mabry, 2005). She wanted to create a program that aided in reading comprehension as well as motivate continual reading. According to Renaissance Learning (2007),

> The purpose of Accelerated Reader is to enable powerful practice. It does this by providing data that helps you monitor and personalize reading practices, encouraging substantial amounts of practices, according to guidelines based on research findings, making practice fun for students by facilitating successful encounters with text. (p. 5).

The Accelerated Reading program (AR) was designed for a motivational reading practice, not a stand-alone reading curriculum that assess if students are reading depending passing a multiple-choice reading comprehension test. Krashen (2003) wrote,

> None of the studies long term follow-up data telling us if children continue to read after the incentive system is no longer in place. This is crucial considering Mcloyd’s (1979) findings that the use of rewards inhibits subsequent reading. (p. 21).

This was also a concern of Groce and Groce (2005). They felt that even though students had a managed choice of selection of books based on the AR program, they had concerns when students would not choose a book if not associated with AR or if the book was
below their reading level. According to Smith and Westberg (2011), the AR process was mostly isolated or independent with little to know interaction with other students or their teacher. According to their study, students did not “read for the pleasure of reading. Rather they were motivated by earning treats, candy, parties, and other incentives” (p. 4).

By utilizing an author study approach over a traditional mandated literary approach, students will gain a more in-depth experience of the text and self through a transactional/reciprocal process of sharing rich literature. Dewey (1938) and Rosenblatt’s (1978) work reiterated the importance of these authentic experiences in learning over a strict methodology of teaching that is still being utilized today. If students do not have a positive transaction or experience in reading they will become disengaged readers or aliterate. According to Beers and Probst (2017), “test scores might go up, but what we truly value might not, such as interest, creativity, self-reliance and passion for the disciplines” (p. 109). Through the implementation of an author study, the teacher-researcher hopes to foster motivation of continual reading.

**Gifted Learners and Literary Needs**

When thinking of gifted learners, some educators and parents of nongifted students believe why do anything special for these learners? They are going to get the information anyway because they are smart, and more time needs to be spent on the students who need extra help (Davis, Rimm, and Siegle, 2011). Even the definition of giftedness is multifaceted and “gifted education continues to be variable within the United States. Gifted children will have very different opportunities, depending on the state in which they live” (Davis et al., 2011, p. 10). According to Galbraith & Delisle (2002), there are federal/state government definitions for gifted. There are researcher,
parent, teacher, and student definitions for gifted learners. “There is no right, absolute, or generally accepted definition of giftedness” (p. 14). In 1925, Lewis Terman defined gifted as the top one percent measured by the Stanford-Binet test. Paul Witty in 1940, defined gifted as children exhibiting outstanding performance in the arts and in leadership. In 1978 Joseph Renzulli, defined gifted as having three basic traits: ability, commitment, and creativity. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act defined giftedness as:

The term “gifted and talented,” when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. (Galbraith, & Delisle 2002, p. 15).

Due to the multifaceted definitions of giftedness, there are many misconceptions associated with gifted learners and their academic needs. In many states, having a gifted program is not mandatory and funding is limited. (Davis, et al., 2011). In the states that do provide gifted programs, qualifications for the program and gifted services can be very diverse depending on the state or district guidelines. Because of these inconsistencies of giftedness, parents of gifted learners and gifted students can receive mixed messages from educators Galbraith, & Delisle, 2002).

Teachers that do not understand the gifted learner can hold unreasonable academic expectations in school. Whether it being more work in a content already mastered or peer tutor other students in the class, both can lead to underachievement in the gifted learner. “Underachievement can be learned by gifted students for whom
“school” and “education” exist in separate spheres” (Galbraith & Delisle, 2002, p. 172). Students who have prior knowledge on a given subject or already have mastery in that content area, do not want to sit through instructional teaching or complete redundant assignments. Piirto (1999) speaks of this when she gives an example of a gifted student who sits through a reading assignment that has already been mastered and the student restrains from raising her hand because she knows the teacher will not call on her. Gifted leaners, like the one Piirto (1999) described, may also mislearn information already mastered due to the redundancy of information and skills. The teacher-researcher has experienced what Piirto describes with her gifted and talented students through the misconception/mistreatment of gifted students in the regular classroom setting. For instance, the teacher-researcher observed a regular education classroom teacher toss graded papers onto the floor for students to pick up and say to students how could they be in a gifted program with these kind of grades.

Some gifted learner may receive authentic differentiated Academically Gifted Services (AG) yet may be expected to complete assignments or adhere to computerized reading programs in a regular education classroom as well. Unfortunately, if gifted learners must adhere to the same curricula designed for their same age peers, they may become discontented, and turned off to learning (Davis et al., 2011). Gifted learners do not need more of the same academic experiences. They need differentiated and richer literacy experiences. These students will continue to underachieve due to lack of authentic interdisciplinary curriculum that “provides for depth and complexity of thought, and authentic methodologies and products that enhance student learning and motivation”
Davis et al., 2011, p. 200). From prior experience and background information gained, this is why the teacher-researcher is passionate about her action research topic.

If gifted students are not being challenged by differentiated authentic literacy experiences, they may lose their intrinsic motivation to read. According to Wigfield & Guthrie (1997), interest and motivation play an integral part in influencing reading performance. Because of the lack of authentic reading experiences, skewed perceptions of gifted learners and mixed messages, gifted students may underachieve to downplay or hide their giftedness. “Gifted children, who often receive curriculum and instruction that is unchallenging and lacking in rigor and creative appeal, have come to be seen as the source of their own difficulties” (Galbraith & Delisle, 2002, p. 173). All students, especially gifted learners need differentiated authentic literacy experiences that develop their level of ability and educational needs. As stated previously in Chapter One of this study, levels of ability are celebrated in sports through professional athletes and levels of ability are celebrated in the arts through professional musicians, actors and actresses. If varying levels are celebrated and fostered in other areas, why are gifted learners/programs considered elitist? (Galbraith & Delisle, 2012). “Tens of thousands of gifted and talented children and adolescents are sitting in their classrooms-their abilities unrecognized, their needs unmet” (Davis et al., 2011, p. 1). Gifted students need integrated in-depth content development that is accelerated and complex (Shore & Enersen, 2007).

The majority of students in schools, including the teacher-researcher’s school, are exposed to text books, data driven, test preparation, one-size-fits-all curricula and are rarely exposed to authentic literary experiences (Gallagher, 2009; Tunnell, 2012).
Literacy curricula in schools do not foster the affective elements of reading: attitude, desire, and motivation (Layne, 2009). Instead most literacy programs are scripted, fast paced, data driven, and are mandated by states or districts (Gallagher, 2009).

“Students who have the skill and will to read, need to see the value of what they are reading” (Billmeyer & Barton 1997, p. 15). With the push of redundant reading practice, along with valueless reading assignments students are losing their interest in reading (aliteracy). According to Wigfield & Guthrie (1997), interest affects motivation. “Children with higher intrinsic motivation read more, and with more breadth, than students with lower intrinsic motivation” (p. 426). Intrinsic readers read for self. They read with an aesthetic stance to experience the literary elements of a book for pleasure. Reading aesthetically goes back to Rosenblatt’s (1978), theory on how a student responds to reading. These readers may also take an efferent stance to acquire facts or information for themselves. Even if material is difficult and students are interested, comprehension will also be enhanced (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Students who are intrinsically motivated or have an affective response (attitude, desire, and motivation) toward reading, see reading as a pleasure instead of as a chore. Both Dewey (1938) and Rosenblatt (1978) believed that reading should not be a drudgery and that reading should be a lived experience. Through an authentic author study, the teacher-researcher wants her students to elicit the affective responses toward reading and live through the pleasure of discussing authors and their literary works.

More schools are putting an emphasis on the efferent stance of reading to acquire facts over the aesthetic stance of experiencing what is read (Layne, 2009; Beers and Probst, 2017). Students today are constantly forced to read to acquire information that
they are not interested in or will be later tested (Gallagher, 2009). Some children do not read outside of school because of the negative experiences with reading in school (Tunnell et al., 2016). In schools, reading classes have become other places than promoting authentic reading (Miller, 2009). This is the same concern that Dewey had in 1938 when he wanted to change the traditional classroom setting. Reading programs today still consist of traditional reading practices. The focus in reading today consists of formalistic reading practices such as assigned texts, taking notes, answering questions, taking tests and when done, the process starts all over again. (Gallagher, 2009; Miller & Kelley 2014; Wilhelm, 1997).

Along with the redundant reading practices, students also experience negative reading experiences with meaningful educators. Tunnell et al., (2012), describes an experience where a twelve-year-old boy was embarrassed by asking a public librarian about a wrestling magazine. Because of the embarrassment the boy did not want to return to library. Educators must be careful of the disconnect between in and out of school reading as well as disempowering student readers by judging their out or in school reading habits.

Because of these negative literacy practices, students are developing disconnect between in school reading to out of school reading (Tunnell et al., 2012). “Some children don’t read outside school because they have negative experiences with reading inside of school” (p. 6). Students who once had an intrinsic motivation to read are losing their desire to read due to reading misconceptions and the lack of authentic school reading experiences (Gallagher, 2009; Tunnell et al., 2016). Educators need to listen to student reading interests in and out of school and not judge negatively what students like to read.
Most gifted students have intrinsic motivation or self-efficacy of reading, but as time goes on in school, their motivation declines due to the pressure of extrinsic motivation (Galbraith & Delisle, 2002). According to (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), extrinsically motivated readers gain gratification in receiving tangible forms of recognition for success in reading. They gain their success in reading through grades, performance goals and incentives. Some of these aspects may include competition in reading, the desire to outperform others, recognition for reading success, and a desire to be evaluated favorably by educators. If students become only interested in reading for tangible/extrinsic rewards, this may decrease their motivation to read over time (Tunnell et al., 2016). This is one of the issues the teacher-researcher is seeing with the overuse or sole use of the Accelerated Reading (AR) program in her rising third grade gifted and talented students.

Schools and teachers need to reflect on their literacy practices to see if they are disempowering or empowering lifelong readers. According to Miller (2009) teachers teach the way they had been taught. “No matter what we heard in college about authentic reading, there was little support for teaching reading any way other than the whole-class novel” (Miller, 2009, p. 13). If literacy practices do not change in schools, we will continue to breed aliteracy and underachievement in our schools. Delisle & Galbraith (2002) also spoke about underachievement becoming a yearly problem because it is taught so well in our schools.

**Authentic Literacy Practices**

“Authentic literacy tasks are the types of activities that are practiced not just within the wall of a schoolroom but also for real-life purpose outside school” Moje’s
work (as cited in Tunnell, et al., 2016, p. 6). Dewey (1938) noted this same practice when he spoke of the need of authentic learning experiences. The first step in any authentic literacy practice is developing a classroom environment that encourages and nurtures the love of reading (Brassell, 2009). “Teachers desirous of making reading a prominent feature of the classroom landscape will want to plan so that books fit smoothly and easily into the school day and their students’ lives” (Tunnell et al., 2016, p. 8). An atmosphere that promotes the value of books and students’ reading interests sets a tone that books and reading are important (Atwell, 2007). Students need time to read books of interest and hear books read aloud during school (Layne, 2009; Miller, 2009; Tunnell, et al., 2016). Unfortunately, these reading practices do not happen in most schools, including the teacher-researcher’s school.

In many classrooms, reading instruction consists of worksheets and basal reader textbooks (Gallagher, 2009; Wilhelm, 1997). The teacher needs to be purposeful in planning time with books and read-alouds in the classroom (Layne, 2009; Trealease, 2006). To nurture self-efficacy in readings, students need daily support through a reading and writing workshop. The reading and writing workshop model were designed in the 1980’s to foster an atmosphere of authentic reading practices (Atwell, 2007). The workshop model relates back to what Dewey (1938) believed that an authentic learning environment should be like.

The premise of a reading and writing constructivist workshop model is to learn from experienced readers and writers through mini-lessons (Wood Ray, 1999). Through the implementation of modeling during a mini-lesson, students learn strategies and experience how to read and write like experienced authors (Brunder, 1960). Katie Wood
Ray (1999) calls this “reading like a writer” (p. 12). Wood Ray (1999) describes that reading like a writer is like a craftsman who examines the work or craft of others to learn or refine their craft. Through mini-lessons and shared authentic reading experiences, students will notice “reading is the writer’s way of visiting another craftsperson’s “gallery” (Wood Ray, 1999, p. 15). Other pertinent pieces to the workshop model are student choice and collaboration (Atwell, 2007). Students experience a literary rich environment in which they have choice of reading material and collaboration. (Atwell, 2007; Wood Ray, 1997). By giving student choice in reading, authentic book chats and conversations about authors, authentic literacy can occur (Atwell, 2007; Layne 2009).

One of the most important aspects of a reading workshop, is giving students time to read (Atwell, 2007). The reading and writing environment are a quiet and thoughtful environment which Atwell (2007) calls the reading zone. In order to create a reading zone within the reading and writing workshop structure, educators have to know what students like to read and are interested in. According to Layne (2009), through the implementation of interest inventories and student self-assessments, information will be gained on student interest, attitude and motivation (affective domain of reading).

By knowing students’ interests and creating a deliberate learning environment that invites choice as well as nurtures reading, students will begin to feel empowered and encouraged to read (Atwell, 2007). By promoting a positive attitude toward reading, students will appreciate varying levels of books and embrace their inner reader (Atwell, 2007). “The path of lifelong reading habits depends on internalizing a reading lifestyle along with reading skills and strategies” (Miller, 2014, p. xix). Through intentional planning of authentic literacy practices and the implementation of an author study,
students will be able to go more into depth on an author and their various works (Jenkins, 1999). Through developing intrinsic motivation, a construct related to interest, choice, and self-efficacy, students are more likely to engage in reading (Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997).

By closely looking at research on the decline of reading and motivation, the teacher-research wants to increase motivation by incorporating challenge, choice, collaboration, and constructing meaning through an authentic author study in her third grade gifted and talented classroom. According to Marinak, (2013) research on motivation, “interventions need to focus on choice, challenge, collaboration and authenticity” (p. 9).

**Author Study**

“Over the last two decades, literature-based reading and writing programs have flourished in elementary classrooms across the country. Once recent dimension of these literature-based programs has been the author study” (Jenkins, 1999, p. 42). Through a multifaceted approach, students look at the author’s life and their works. The three dimensions of a multiple response author study are called: Author study as an aesthetic response, an author study as critical response, and an author study as a literary biography. An author study as an aesthetic response builds on personal connections and the relationship to the text. The next part of the author study is through critical response. The critical response section of the author study looks at the literary elements, structure, and depth of the piece/text. An author study as literacy biography does not judge the text. Instead it sheds light on the background and experiences of the writer (Jenkins, 1999).
The first step in creating a successful author study is to be aware that there are multiple responses to an author study (Jenkins, 1999). To deepen students understanding of authors, their works need to be read aloud (Wood Ray, 1999). By reading books aloud, the teacher introduces genres, authors and books student might not have been aware of on their own (Miller & Kelly, 2014). When selecting books to be read aloud, teachers should select books that lend to the exploration of other books (Miller & Kelly, 2014). By giving students reading experiences and author awareness, students will less likely be intimated when selecting books on their own (Miller & Kelly, 2014). Through fostering daily read alouds through a reading and writing workshop, students will be able to hear about authors’ lives and their works. According to Jenkins (1999),

Children attach themselves to authors without direction from us. They return, time and again, to these authors for many of the same reason that we return: emotional sustenance, wisdom, appreciation of the author’s craft, and intrigue with author as a person and as a writer. (p. 14).

By immersing students into multiple authors and their works, students will be able to notice the craft of an author, discuss why they might have used that craft in their writing, and envision themselves using the specific craft in their own writings. It has been said that in an authentic reading and writing classroom, “the writing and the reading float on a sea of talk” (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998, p. 12). By hearing about authors’ lives read-aloud, students will be able to collaboratively discuss the lives of authors. After students have been introduced to an author’s life through read alouds, the teacher will model how to use the author’s work/books as a touchstone text. “No matter what grade you teach, there are touchstone authors who appeal to your students, write many books, and provide
children with the stories and information they need for their life stage” (Miller & Kelley, 2014). A touchstone or mentor text are books that are written well and are used as co-teachers in teaching reading and writing strategies (Miller & Kelley, 2014; Wood Ray, 2002).

When teachers introduce students to multiple authors in a reading and writing workshop, they may read aloud touch-tone texts as co-authors. These touch-stone texts can be utilized to study the authors, their works, and how to incorporate reading/writing (Wood Ray, 2002). By immersing students into books that are written well by co-teachers (authors), students may begin to hear and read books differently (Wood Ray, 2002). They can begin to question and have authentic conversations about reading and writing. This goes back to what Rosenblatt (1978) describe when she discussed the aesthetic and efferent stance that readers take. To continue to guide the reader’s aesthetic stance, the teacher may ask aesthetic bound questions (personal connecting questions) from quality books (Jenkins, 1999). The type of touchstone text (quality literature) and connections may influence quality responses. Students may share their aesthetic responses orally within the group or write their personal connections.

After the aesthetic responses are elicited though quality text, the teacher will conduct various mini-lessons as needed on deepening and extending the students literary experience through critical response (Jenkins, 1999). Deepening and extending students literary experiences though critical response through the authorial process is not the same formalistic reading practices as textbooks or worksheets. “The most reliable indicator of motivation for literacy learning is not the type of reading program that districts follow,
but the actual daily tasks that teachers provide in their classrooms” (Turner & Paris, 1995, p. 662).

The aesthetic process is built first in the authorial process through immersion of quality text and the acknowledgement of aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1978). After the foundational piece of eliciting aesthetics responses, the teacher critically observes and listens to students and “the decision about which element to teach often emerges as children discuss a story” (Jenkins, 1999, p. 59). This student observational process goes back to the progressive approach/Learner Centered Ideology. Throughout the author study process, mini-lessons are conducted based on what students are developmentally ready to understand (Jenkins, 1999). Through group-constructed or peer collaboration, mini-lessons would consist of plot, character development, point of view and theme. By evoking and developing aesthetic responses, students develop life connections and experiences to literature.

To continue to heighten and intensify the literary experience of the authorial process, students will learn about authors’ lives. According to Jenkins (1999), author study as a biography can go last or at the beginning of the author study. Jenkins (1999) noted that she had had numerous conversations with teachers over the years on the author study as a biography, and some teachers stated at the beginning of the author study, students showed readiness to learn more about the author’s work and other teachers stated that they did not want the knowledge of the author to compromise their students’ experience with the author’s work/literature. For my research plan, I will introduce the author (biography) first to build background knowledge about the author and his/her literary works.
Through the author study as a biography, students read and research authors’ lives. According to Wood Ray (1999), “by focusing on the authorial process of reading, students will also gain strategies of writing” (p. 14). By learning about authors’ lives students will be able to link what they have learned about the author to their works/literature through the writing process. “When students learn about author backgrounds and where authors get their ideas, they become better readers and writers” (Brassell, 2009, p. 27). Throughout the biographical study of an author or authors, students will also learn the authors approach to writing (Jenkins, 1999). By showing students the author’s writing craft (author’s craft) and “as we develop a teaching relationship with authors and their works, we will find that certain text seems to surface as very important to our reading” (Wood Ray, 2002, p. 147).

To further the authenticity of a multiple response author study, the hosting of an author studied, would show students that writers are real humans (Jenkins, 1999). According to Layne (2009), it is better for an author to come to school and talk to students about the reading/writing process instead of reading multiple students’ letters that a teacher may have forced them to write. By having an author to visit a classroom or school, it exposes students to reading/writing ideas that they might not have heard of before and it often inspires students to read/write more (Layne, 2009). “Students should hear from and speak to an author several times throughout their school career” (Layne, 2009, p. 131).

**Conclusion**

Through the authentic experiences of an author study, Dewey’s (1938) visions of authentic literacy practices has been revitalized (Jenkins 1999). By taking the time to
build the affective domain of reading and aesthetic responses to what is read, students will be empowered to want to read (Dewey 1938; Rosenblatt 1978; Wilhelm, 1997; Jenkins, 1999; Atwell 2007; Layne 2009; Tunnell et al., 2016). With reading time in schools and literary choice, students who have the will and skill, will continue to have the desire to want to read (Dewey 1938; Atwell 2007; Layne 2009; Miller & Kelley, 2014; Tunnell et al., 2016). Through the value, depth, and authentic methodologies of a multiple response author study, gifted learners will continue to be intrinsically motivated to read (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Davis et al., 2011).

If schools continue to place an efferent stance of reading to acquire facts instead of the aesthetic stance of experiencing what is read, aliteracy will continue to occur (Gallagher, 2009; Layne, 2009; Tunnell et al., 2016). Along with the redundant reading practices, students will continue to experience negative reading experiences with meaningful educators (Dewey, 1938; Atwell, 2007; Gallagher, 2009; Tunnell et al., 2016). Schools and teachers need to continually reflect on their literacy practices to see if they are disempowering or empowering lifelong learners (Atwell, 2007; Barth, 2013; Tunnell et al., 2016). Through multifaceted authorial experiences, “Children learn to read experientially, by being immersed in real texts and real literacy events from an early age” (Zemelman & Hyde, 1993, p. 35).

The review of this literature section has emphasized background research on educational theories, aliteracy, traditional/formalistic literacy practices, motivation, gifted learners, and the need for authentic literacy practices with the emphasis of author studies. Each of these ideas are significant in understanding the need for change in literacy practices due to the lack of research on the impact of the utilization of an author study in
a gifted and talented classroom. Through the implementation of an author study, 
authentic literary practices play a significant role in motivating gifted learners to continue 
to have the desire to read. If we continue with traditional formulistic test-driven 
curriculum, negative literacy practices in education, aliteracy will continue to be “the 
invisible epidemic” in our gifted learners (Goodwin, 1996, p. 5). According to Layne 
(2012), “we have taught them the skills, but without the desire to use those skills, where 
is the benefit (p. 13). By being a teacher-researcher and an advocate for change in literacy 
practices, students will be able to increase their skills along with their desire to read.

If we do not nurture authentic positive reading habits in students, they will not 
see themselves as readers or lifelong readers (Atwell, 2009; Miller & Kelley 2014; 
Tunnell et al., 2016). Students who have had negative reading experiences in schools and 
have experienced literacy program after literacy program that consist of basal reading, 
mountains of worksheets, and test preparation curriculum will be graduating and happy 
that they will never have to read another book (Miller, 2011).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to examine if an author study will increase motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom. Numerous research findings have shown dwindling of reading motivation as students continue through school (Bullen, 1972; Mikulecky, 1978; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Trelease, 2006; Robinson, et al., 2007; Miller, 2009; Layne, 2009; Gallagher, 2009; Barth, 2013, Beers and Probst, 2017). Unfortunately, little research has been completed on the impact of author studies and motivation to read in a gifted and talented classroom. Through an author study experience, I want my students to regain their desire to read and become motivated to read other books by authors. This chapter will discuss the cyclical action research model of planning, acting, developing and refining (Mertler, 2017). Through this cyclical action research process, the teacher-researcher will be able to contextualize the research question of: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom?

Role of the Researcher

For this study, I will be a “full participant,” in the observational study, which means, “the researcher is first and foremost part of the group-as opposed to being an “outsider”-who also happens to be collecting data on the group” (Mertler, 2017, p. 96). I
will serve as a teacher inquirer and instructor for the study. “Meaningful teacher inquiry should not depart from the daily work of classroom teachers but become a part of their daily work” (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 85). I will serve as an instructor by introducing an author study through various whole and small group mini-lessons to student participants throughout the six to eight-week unit of study. The mini-lessons will consist of the researcher introducing the author (biography of the author), read alouds from the authors various literary works, noticing of author craft throughout their literary works, literary elements, and depth of discussions of student participants. During the author study, the teacher will be observing whole/small group student participants and taking field notes. The teacher-researcher will also informally, as well as formally, utilize conversational interviews, surveys, and questionnaires with student participants, parents, and the school librarian during the six week author study. “Interviewing students in the classroom can be a rich source of data” (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D, 2014, p. 103). By the teacher being a full participant in the action research, the information gained from all participants will give the teacher participant insight into her teaching practices, as well as how her students learn (Mertler, 2017).

**Action Research Validity**

To ensure validity, the teacher-researcher will use a variety of instruments to collect data. Through the variation of instrumentation, the use of multiple methods is known as triangulation (Mertler, 2017). “Triangulation is an inherent component of mixed-method research designs” (Mertler, 2017, p. 142). Through the use of multiple methods: observations, interviews, and questionnaire responses, the teacher-researcher hopes to see consistent reoccurring themes that validate the research question. “Good
and ethical teaching involves looking carefully and closely at student work—that is generated in teacher’s classrooms to better understand students’ progress and what adjustments can be made to instruction to help all students learn” (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D, 2014, p. 148). By being a reflective practitioner, the teacher-researcher will look closely at the author study assignments to monitor and adjust instruction as needed.

The focus and instrumentation utilized during this study is for the sole purpose to improve the teacher participant/teacher-researcher’s reading instruction within her classroom and implement change based on the action research findings.

Research Context

Teacher-Researcher. As a teacher, I am very passionate about literacy instruction and Gifted and Talented education. I teach Gifted and Talented English Language Arts and Math at an Elementary School in the state of South Carolina. I am interested in furthering my knowledge on why students who have the will and skill to read, do not have the desire or motivation to read, and how the impact of utilizing an author study will increase students’ motivation to read in a gifted and talented classroom.

In order to better understand the issues at play related to people’s choices of whether to read or not, and what to read, I would like to utilize my third grade gifted and talented class, parents of gifted students, and colleagues.

Students. Third grade students are identified as Academically Gifted through state testing and are served in a special class pull out model for English Language Arts. Fifteen Student participants receive daily instruction in English Language Arts for the time period of an hour and a half. This is the first year that students begin services in an
Academically Gifted setting. Students are used to a systematic basil program and commercialized reading incentives such as Accelerated Reader (AR). This type of reading incentive and instruction has been ingrained in them by their previous primary teachers. Student participants believe that reading Accelerated Reader books and taking test on books read is reading/instruction. Some of my students will read only AR books to get points or automatically ask, is it an AR book? On top of AR being treated as an extrinsic motivator to read, it also becomes a punishment to not read AR books in their regular education classrooms. When returning to their regular classrooms, the gifted students would be kept in for recess to read AR books and then made to take a commercialized based test to see if they understood what they had read. According to Tunnell, et al., (2012):

Since passing the program’s test on each book is the mark of a successful reader, some students find other ways to answer the questions, such as viewing a movie based on the book. An additional problem is that the tests themselves are not always accurate. (p. 222).

This was a way for teachers to see if a child was reading or not reading by punitive tests. Students were being turned off to reading books other than marked Accelerated Reader books from the school library or the regular classroom library. If a book was not AR, some students would not want to read at all. “Students who read for points are interested only in books approved by the program. Many terrific books aren’t a part of the program, so students skip over them because they don’t count in the point total” (Tunnel, et al., 2012, p. 222).
To inquire in the fifteen student participants’ mindset toward Accelerated Reading and reading motivation, various data instruments will be utilized throughout the author study. To obtain a purposeful sampling at the beginning of the author study, conversational interviews, questionnaires, and the MRP-R (Motivation to Read Profile Revised) will be conducted in the teacher-researcher’s third grade gifted and talented classroom to measure the self-concept of a reader and value of reading. During the author study, the teacher-researcher will observe and take field notes and at the completion of the author study, the teacher-researcher will conduct a written survey and the same MRP-R (Motivation to Read Profile Revised) to see if motivation to read changed due to the intervention of an author study approach. “Asking students about their thinking and their learning is a natural part of lessons and instructional activities, and when related to an inquiry question, naturally occurring conversations with students can automatically become “interviews” (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D, 2014, p. 103). By asking students about their thinking, the teacher-researcher will connect to her students by showing that she values what they think and feel about their reading experiences.

Educators and Parents. In my action research study, I will utilize a purposeful sampling of fifteen parents and one school librarian. The utilization of a survey or questionnaire for parents of gifted students will show the teacher-researcher if students’ motivation toward reading changed before or after the author study. Along with the survey/questionnaire, I will also informally interview the school librarian. Through the utilization of the librarian, a personal interview will be conducted to see if students voluntarily check out books by the author and the amount/frequency of author related books checked out by student participants during and after the author study experience.
Research Site

Wood Elementary School (pseudonym) is located in a Coastal Suburban Community in South Carolina. The school is over fifty years old and has a population of 1,083 students. According to data retrieved from our school Data Clerk (personal communication, February 7, 2017) out of the 1,083 students: 53% are male, 47% are female, 3% are Asian, 7% are African American, 6% are Hispanic, 1% are Indian, 10% are of Mixed Race, 1% are Pacific Islanders, and 72% are Caucasian. Out of the 1,083 students, 53% of our students receive free and reduce lunch. Academically out of the 1,083 students, 53% of our students receive free and reduce lunch. Academically out of the 1,083 students 10% are classified as Self-Contained, 4% students are classified as Special Education, and 8% are classified as Academically Gifted and Talented (G/T).

Design of the Study

The teacher-researcher will follow the cyclical action research model of planning, acting, developing and refining (Mertler, 2017). In the planning stage, the teacher researcher identified the Problem of Practice (POP), why students who have the ability or will to read, do not have the motivation or desire to read. To gain insight into the problem through the planning stage, the teacher-researcher reviewed numerous scholarly literary works to gain insight into the problem and to refine the research question: what is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom?

By refining the research question through the review of the literature, it aided the teacher-researcher in gaining insight and discovery into the research design. “A literature review allows you to use the insights and discoveries of whose research came before yours in order to make your research more efficient and effective” (p. 61). After
reviewing the literature, the last step in the planning stage is selecting an appropriate research design for collecting and analyzing the teacher-researcher’s data (Mertler, 2017).

Through the acting and developing stages of the research process, the teacher-researcher will develop preliminary instrumentation and data collection through the use of a blended mixed method design (Mertler, 2017). By utilizing a mixed-method design, the teacher-researcher will begin the study by asking third grade gifted and talented students to take a teacher made attitude survey on prior reading experiences and participating in an author study. The survey will be given before and after the study. “Surveys can give students a space to share their thoughts and opinions about a teaching technique or strategy, a unit, or their knowledge about particular subject matter (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D., 2014, p. 114). By giving student participants a survey on their thoughts/opinions on an author study before, during, and after reading will give the teacher-researcher insight into their interest/attitudes and how it correlates to motivation (Gardner, 1985). “Survey research involves acquiring information from individuals representing one or more groups—perhaps about their opinions, attitudes, or characteristics” (Mertler, 2017, p. 96).

Throughout the research study, the teacher-researcher will continue to utilize a mixed-method research design. “Action research allows for the use of all types of data collected through the use of a wide variety of techniques” (Mertler 2017, p. 42). The teacher-researcher will continue the research process by administering the Motivation To Read Profile-Revised (MPR-R) before and after the author study to measure reading motivation.
During the author study process, the teacher-researcher will informally observe student participants on how they interact and respond to the various text(s) by the author through their writing in their author journals, and through their daily literary response questions. The teacher-researcher will observe student participants’ interest in the author study through their active involvement in reading the various Roald Dahl texts, discussions, and collaboration during the author study process. Through unstructured observations, “classroom observations are usually recorded in the form of field notes” (Mertler, 2017, p. 131). The teacher-researcher will take field notes on students during the author study. I will observe student discussions on the literacy works of the author and the amount/frequency of books checked out of the library on the author studied.

Student participants will voluntarily log books read by the author during the six week period on a current teacher generated reading log. Throughout the author study, students will also be asked to reflect on the process and mini-lessons taught during whole and small group instruction. The time frame for student participant data collection will be six weeks during the ending of the first nine weeks to the beginning of the second nine weeks of school. The data collected will be displayed in teacher generated tables.

Another form of data collection will be by asking some open-ended questions and unstructured informal interview questions. “An alternative to observing people is to directly ask them questions” (Mertler, 2017, p. 133). Through this data collection process, the teacher-researcher hopes to gain in-depth qualitative data on student motivation and the impact of an author study. For example, the teacher-researcher will conduct an informal conversational interview with the librarian about what she observes during student library time. Along with interviewing the librarian, the teacher-researcher
will informally interview students about their reading practices. In order to capture this aspect of conversations with all research participants, the teacher-researcher will utilize a research binder that will house all of the diverse artifacts, conversations, observations, and interactions that come out of the research setting.

**Ethical Considerations**

To ensure the confidentiality of participants in the research study, names will not be given. Student participants will be identified by initials. “An action researcher’s ability to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants and their data is a vitally important component of the action research process and of any action research project” (Mertler, 2017, p. 157).

To look closely at my students’ work, and to question others in my school, the teacher-researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), obtained written permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and will adhere to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. “Most universities and school districts have some sort of review process for ensuring that a proposed research study is conducted in such a manner as to protect the rights of any human subjects involved” (p. 108). Before research may begin in the teacher researcher’s class, a review and approval of the research has to be approved by the IRB process. Once approved by the IRB process, the teacher-researcher will use a letter of participant consent to explain the nature of the study and to ensure that participants are aware that participation in the action research study is completely voluntary and that there will be no ramifications for nonparticipants (Mertler, 2017).
Through this action research study process, the teacher-researcher plans to utilize the triangulation of data in a way to protect students from ineffective reading practices, as well as to bring change in my classroom literacy practices. Ethically students should not be penalized for not reading certain books by their regular education teachers. Based on the reading practices that I have observed as a teacher-researcher in my classroom as well as other classrooms in our school, motivation to read is declining and aliteracy is on the rise. “The aliteracy rate is surpassing our illiteracy rate” (Layne, 2009, p. 8). “We have more readers who can read and don’t than we do readers who can’t read at all! Yet the focus as a nation remains almost exclusively on reading skills” (Layne, 2009, p. 89). Layne’s quote reiterated to the teacher-researcher that she did not want her students to become nonreaders and that change needs to occur through this action research process.

Potential Weaknesses

Through this teacher inquiry process, I have discovered strict research proposal guidelines that have to be followed from the teacher-researcher’s academic site. According to Heather Sheehan (personal communication, January 13, 2017), the Director of Program Assessments and Evaluator at our County’s District office at the elementary school level: “Post-Secondary students working on their thesis/dissertation must submit a summary of their thesis/dissertation proposal, an approval letter from their ethics committee, and a letter of support from their research advisor.”

When granted permission to conduct research, a list of conditions has to be agreed upon and it takes eight weeks for approval. The potential weakness of the study will be gaining permission to do the study with students at the elementary level due to scheduling surveys and interviews during non-instructional times before or after school. The other
possible weakness of the study is that data collection has to be done before February due to the stipulation that no research can be conducted within the elementary school after the month of February. Another limitation is methodological weakness associated with teacher pleasing and getting questionnaires back from parents.

Students at the elementary level, especially gifted students with perfectionist tendencies, want to please their teachers regardless if they like a certain topic or subject. Gifted students may also feel pressure from their parents and this may lead to pleasing the teacher to get a higher extrinsic grade or score. The final limitation, is associated to the unusual lack of parent or student involvement in school surveys. Gifted students and parents of gifted students are usually very involved. Circumstances beyond control lead some students to miss school or relocate due to coastal hurricane flooding.

**Social Justice Issues**

The social justice issue for this study is twofold. One is the misconception of gifted learners and their need for a differentiated reading curriculum based on their ability. Before teaching academically gifted and talented students, I never thought about social justice issues experienced by gifted learners. It was not until I moved from teaching regular education to gifted education seventeen years ago, that I realized that I needed to be an advocate for their diverse educational needs. Throughout the seventeen years of teaching gifted learners, I noticed that many parents of nongifted students, including educators thought that a gifted program was for the elitist and felt like these programs were undemocratic/unfair (Galbraith & Delisle, 2002; Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2011). Because of this mindset, numerous educators, parents, and schools have questioned the need for a gifted program or differentiated curriculum. As stated
previously in the Chapter, according to Galbraith and Delisle (2002), we celebrate our gifted athletes throughout school with pep rallies, scholarships, endorsements, and professional contracts in athletics. We even celebrate gifted musicians, actors, and actresses through dramas/plays, but through misconceptions, bias, and judgement of academically gifted, students are discouraged from being too smart or exceptional (Galbraith & Delisle, 2002). “It’s the insensitive, uninformed comments from teachers, peers, and/or parents that make gifted kids want to downplay, deny or hide their giftedness” (p. 22) Sternberg (1996) classified this as the sounds of silence.

Sternberg stated the rationale behind the sounds of silence as “some see the program as “welfare for the rich.” Average children are the majority, and their parents prefer not to support other parents’ “pointy-headed” bright children” (Davis et al., 2011, p. 2). Due to the sounds of silence, Sternberg described many gifted students today; viewing smart as a punishment and feeling that their teachers do not like them or being perceived as know it all’s when they have mastered the curriculum within their grade level. According to Renzulli (1991),

The mismatch between gifted youth and the curriculum they are forced to study most of the time is nothing short of American tragedy. The human waste in terms of both student and faculty time is inestimable, and this waste can be found in both rich schools and poor, and even in schools that have well established programs for the gifted. (pp. 75-76).

As a teacher-researcher at the elementary school level, I began to see this mismatch between gifted learners and the literacy curriculum they were forced to follow when leaving my classroom. Students had to make up work missed while attending my class,
read assigned books from a commercialized reading program to prove reading, and belittled for not knowing information deemed necessary from a worksheet by their regular education teacher. Students who once loved to read and investigate were becoming overwhelmed, anxious, and unmotivated. Parents of my gifted students began to complain and wanted change in the regular classroom or pulling their child out of the gifted program. Instead of changing the curriculum in the regular classroom, the district mandated that teachers of gifted students teach the same scripted SRA Imagine It! Reading Program with a “side” of Best Practices for gifted students. Gifted students had to sound out words phonetically, read below level passages several times and answer surface level comprehension questions. On top of a scripted Imagine It! Reading Program, Accelerated Reader, a commercially prepared reading incentive program was implemented to make sure students were reading. Students had to achieve so many Accelerated Reading (AR) points a month. Those who did not acquire the necessary points for the month lost their recess/incentive and not want to read or check out books other than Accelerated Reader AR books. Students who acquired the necessary points from AR were able to attend pizza parties and a field trip to the beach.

Gifted students began to lose self-efficacy of reading due to the books they enjoyed reading were not part of the Accelerated Reading (AR) program. Students were being turned off to reading due to having to read certain books for a certain amount of points each month and having to participate in scripted formalistic reading program below their level. These aliterate reading practices relate back to the social injustice that Dewey, 1938; Mikulecky, 1978; Bullen, 1972; Layne, 2009; Gallagher, 2009; Barth, 2013; Beers and Probst, 2017 have described across the years.
According to Brassell, he states that “Most reading incentives send the wrong messages to kids (Brassell, 2009, p. 79). He further states that he does not support any program that is “Mandated as the way” (Brassell, 2009, p. 79). To me, the teacher-researcher, the social justice issue/message is clear, that no one reading methodology works for all students and teachers need to utilize a variety of methods. “When bright students are presented with curriculum developed for age-peers, they can become bored and unhappy and get turned off from learning” (Davis et al., 2011, p. 127).

As time progressed, the Imagine It! Reading program was phased out of the Gifted and Talented program due to more parent and teacher complaints. Gifted students were not progressing academically and being turned off to reading. I noticed that my students had the ability to read, but no longer had the desire to read (aliteracy). The teacher-researcher observed firsthand how social justice and curricula impacts students.

Sternberg (1996) stressed that gifted students are one of our valuable natural resources and that negative mindsets toward gifted students needed to be changed. According to Davis, Rimm, & Siegle (2011), Sternberg reiterated that gifted programs “need to be expanded and evaluated. And to remove the sounds of silence, everyone-parents, teachers, administrators, and others-must be educated” (p. 2). These social justice issues and the factors that I have observed as a teacher-researcher have impacted the students in my care and are the impetus for this research study.

**Summary and Conclusion**

In 1955 Rudolf Flesch wrote his book *Why Johnny Can’t Read: And What You Can Do About It* (Flesch, 1955, 1986). This book was inspired by a young 12-year-old boy who Flesch agreed to tutor who was having “reading difficulties.” As Flesch worked
with the boy, he found in his opinion that the boy did not have a reading problem, rather he was the product of a very ordinary American school education. The literature reviewed for this research establishes that the age-old concern in this country with illiteracy needs to change with the times. A new question, Why won’t Johnny read, even if he can? needs some of our serious and undivided attention” (Layne, 2009, p. 6). I have argued that part of the problem could be that the lockstep methods and the scripted programs/commercialized reading programs that teachers are required to use may in fact be the biggest part of the current problem of motivation or aliteracy among students and adults alike. For example, Krashen (2016) stated that as early as kindergarten, literacy programs are “Forcing young children to study flashcards in the car and spell words during family outings in order to “master” 100 words is turning kindergarten into kindergrind” (para. 3). He also argued that if we really want to produce life-long readers, we need to let them read and read books they are interested in reading. “Children who develop a love of reading will master thousands of words, without suffering” (para. 3).

Through the action research process, I plan to address these concerns when answering my research question: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom?

By implementing a methodology based on Mertler’s (2017) action research cycle: planning, action, developing and reflecting, I hope to discover that the implementation of an author study will motivate my students to remain intrinsic readers and not to become aliterate as they continue down their educational paths.
CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter four addresses the findings and implications of the present action research study, what is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom through data analysis techniques, coding, and themes. The chapter begins by revisiting the overview of the study which includes the identified Problem of Practice, the refining of the research question, the intervention of an author study, and the general findings of the action research.

Overview of Study

The teacher-researcher followed the cyclical action research model of planning, acting, developing and refining (Mertler, 2017). In the planning stage, the teacher-researcher identified the Problem of Practice (POP), why students who have the ability or will to read, do not have the motivation or desire to read. To gain insight into the problem through the planning stage, the teacher-researcher reviewed numerous literary works to gain insight into the problem and to refine the research question, what is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom.
By refining the research question through the review of the literature, it aided the teacher-researcher in gaining insight and discovery into the research design. “A literature review allows you to use the insights and discoveries of whose research came before yours in order to make your research more efficient and effective” (p. 61). After reviewing the literature, the last step in the planning stage is selecting an appropriate research design for collecting and analyzing the teacher researcher’s data (Mertler, 2017).

Through the acting and developing stages of the research process, the teacher-researcher developed preliminary instrumentation and data collection protocols through the use of a mixed-method design (Mertler, 2017, p.147). By utilizing a mixed-method design, the teacher-researcher began the study by asking third grade gifted and talented students to take a survey on any prior knowledge or thoughts on participating in an author study in reading. The survey was given before the study. “Surveys can give students a space to share their thoughts and opinions about a teaching technique or strategy, a unit, or their knowledge about particular subject matter (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D, 2014, p. 114). By giving student participants various surveys before, during, and after the author study on their thoughts/opinions of reading, reading programs and authors will give the teacher-researcher insight on the purpose or need for the study on reading motivation. “Survey research involves acquiring information from individuals representing one or more groups—perhaps about their opinions, attitudes, or characteristics” (Mertler, 2017, p. 96)

Throughout the research study, the teacher-researcher continued to utilize a mixed-method research design. “Action research allows for the use of all types of data collected through the use of a wide variety of techniques” (Mertler 2017, p. 42). The
teacher-researcher continued the research process by administering the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MPR-R) before and after the author study to measure student participants’ self-concept and value of motivation in reading.

During the author study process, I observed student participants on how they interacted and responded to the various text(s) by the author. I noticed student participants’ interest in the author study through active involvement in the text, discussion, and collaboration during the author study process. Through unstructured observations, “classroom observations are usually recorded in the form of field notes” (Mertler, 2017, p. 131). Along with the field notes, I observed reading logs and books checked out of the library to see if students were interested/motivated to read other books by the author.

Student participants logged books read by the author during the six week period on a current teacher generated reading log. Throughout the author study, students were asked to reflect on the process and lessons taught by recording in their own author journals. The time frame for student participant data collection was six weeks during the ending of the first nine weeks to the beginning of the second nine weeks of school.

Another form of data collection utilized was asking some open-ended questions and structured interview questions. “An alternative to observing people is to directly ask them questions” (Mertler, 2017, p. 133). Through this data collection process, I gained in-depth qualitative data on student motivation and the impact of an author study. For example, I conducted an informal conversational interview with the librarian about what she observes during student library time. Along with interviewing the librarian, I informally had conversational interviews with my students about their reading practices.
In order to capture this aspect of conversations with all research participants, I utilized a research binder that housed all of the diverse artifacts, conversations, observations, and interactions that come out of the research setting.

**Intervention**

The Intervention of the action research study was the implementation of an author study. “Over the last two decades, literature-based reading and writing programs have flourished in elementary classrooms across the country. Once recent dimension of these literature-based programs has been the author study” (Jenkins, 1999, p. 42). Through a multifaceted approach, students looked at the author’s life and their works. The three dimensions of a multiple response author study are called: Author study as an aesthetic response, an author study as critical response, and an author study as a literary biography. An author study as an aesthetic response builds on personal connections and the relationship to the text. The critical response section of an author study looks at the literary elements, structure, and depth of the piece/text. An author study as literacy biography does not judge the text. Instead it sheds light on the background and experiences of the writer (Jenkins, 1999).

To deepen students understanding of authors, their works need to be read aloud (Wood Ray, 1999). By reading books aloud, I introduced genres, authors and books student might not have been aware of on their own (Miller & Kelly, 2014). When selecting books to be read aloud, teachers should select books that lend to the exploration of other books (Miller & Kelly, 2014). By giving students reading experiences and author awareness, students will less likely be intimated when selecting books on their own (Miller & Kelly, 2014). Through fostering daily read alouds through a reading and
writing workshop, my students will be able to hear about authors’ lives and their works. According to Jenkins (1999)

Children attach themselves to authors without direction from us. They return, time and again, to these authors for many of the same reason that we return: emotional sustenance, wisdom, appreciation of the author’s craft, and intrigue with author as a person and as a writer. (p. 14).

By immersing students into multiple authors and their works, my students are able to notice the craft of an author, discuss why they might have used that craft in their writing, and envision themselves using the specific craft in their own writings. It has been said that in an authentic reading and writing classroom, “the writing and the reading float on a sea of talk” (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998, p. 12). By hearing about authors’ lives read-aloud, my students were able to collaboratively discuss the lives of authors. After students were introduced to an author’s life through read alouds, I modeled how to use the author’s work/books as a touchstone text. “No matter what grade you teach, there are touchstone authors who appeal to your students, write many books, and provide children with the stories and information they need for their life stage” (Miller & Kelley, 2014). A touchstone or mentor text are books that are written well and are used as co-teachers in teaching reading and writing strategies (Miller & Kelley, 2014; Wood Ray, 2002).

After I introduced my students to multiple authors in a reading and writing workshop, they were able to read aloud touch-tone texts as co-authors. These touch-stone texts were utilized to study the authors, their works, and how to incorporate reading/writing (Wood Ray, 2002). By immersing students into books that are written
well by co-teachers (authors), students began to hear and read books differently (Wood Ray, 2002).

Students began to question and have authentic conversations with me about reading and writing. This goes back to what Rosenblatt (1978) described when she discussed the aesthetic and efferent stance that readers take. To continue to guide the reader’s aesthetic stance, I asked aesthetic bound questions (personal connecting questions) from quality books (Jenkins, 1999). The type of touchstone text (quality literature) and connections may influence quality responses. Students shared and wrote their aesthetic responses in their journals (See Appendix G). After the aesthetic responses were elicited though quality text, I conducted various mini-lessons as needed on deepening and extending the students literary experience through critical response (Jenkins, 1999). Deepening and extending students literary experiences though critical response through the authorial process is not the same formalistic reading practices as textbooks or worksheets. “The most reliable indicator of motivation for literacy learning is not the type of reading program that districts follow, but the actual daily tasks that teachers provide in their classrooms” (Turner & Paris, 1995, p. 662).

The aesthetic process was built first in the authorial process through immersion of quality text and the acknowledgement of aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1978). After the foundational piece of eliciting aesthetics responses, I critically observed and listened to students and “the decision about which element to teach often emerges as children discuss a story” (Jenkins, 1999, p. 59). This student observational process goes back to the progressive/Learner Centered Ideology. Throughout the author study process, mini-lessons were conducted based on what students were developmentally ready to
understand (Jenkins, 1999). Through group-constructed or peer collaboration, mini-lessons consisted of plot, character development, point of view and theme. By evoking and developing aesthetic responses, students developed life connections and experiences to literature (see Table 4.4).

To continue to heighten and intensify the literary experience of the authorial process, students learned about the author’s life. According to Jenkins (1999), author study as a biography can go last or at the beginning of the author study. Jenkins (1999) noted that she had had numerous conversations with teachers over the years on the author study as a biography, and some teachers stated at the beginning of the author study, students showed readiness to learn more about the author’s work and other teachers stated that they did not want the knowledge of the author to compromise their students’ experience with the author’s work/literature. For my action research plan, I introduced the author (biography) first to build background knowledge/schema about the author and his literary works.

Through the author study as a biography, students read about the author Roald Dahl. According to Wood Ray (1999), “by focusing on the authorial process of reading, students will also gain strategies of writing” (p. 14). By learning about authors’ lives students are able to link what they have learned about the author to their works/literature through the writing process. “When students learn about author backgrounds and where authors get their ideas, they become better readers and writers” (Brassell, 2009, p. 27). Throughout the biographical study of an author or authors, students learned the authors approach to writing (Jenkins, 1999). By showing students the author’s writing craft (author’s craft) and “as we develop a teaching relationship with authors and their works,
we will find that certain text seems to surface as very important to our reading” (Wood Ray, 2002, p. 147).

To further the authenticity of a multiple response author study, the hosting of an author studied, would show students that writers are real humans (Jenkins, 1999). According to Layne (2009), it is better for an author to come to school and talk to students about the reading/writing process instead of reading multiple student letters that a teacher may have forced them to write. By having an author to visit a classroom or school, it exposes students to reading/writing ideas that they might not have heard of before and it often inspires students to read/write more (Layne, 2009). “Students should hear from and speak to an author several times throughout their school career” (Layne, 2009, p. 131).

Through the authentic experiences of an author study, Dewey’s (1938) visions of authentic literacy practices has been revitalized (Jenkins 1999). By taking the time to build the affective domain of reading and aesthetic responses to what is read, students will be empowered to want to read (Dewey 1938; Rosenblatt 1978; Wilhelm, 1997; Jenkins, 1999; Atwell 2007; Layne 2009; Tunnell et al., 2016). With reading time in schools and literary choice, students who have the will and skill, will continue to have the desire to want to read (Dewey 1938; Atwell 2007; Layne 2009; Miller & Kelley, 2014; Tunnell et al., 2016). Through the value, depth, and authentic methodologies of a multiple response author study, gifted learners will continue to be intrinsically motivated to read (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Davis et al., 2011).

If schools continue to place an efferent stance of reading to acquire facts instead of the aesthetic stance of experiencing what is read, aliteracy will continue to occur
Along with the redundant reading practices, students will continue to experience negative reading experiences with meaningful educators (Dewey, 1938; Atwell, 2007; Gallagher, 2009; Tunnell et al., 2016). Schools and teachers need to continually reflect on their literacy practices to see if they are disempowering or empowering lifelong learners (Atwell, 2007; Barth, 2013; Tunnell et al., 2016). Through multifaceted authorial experiences, “Children learn to read experientially, by being immersed in real texts and real literacy events from an early age. (Zemelman & Hyde, 1993, p. 35).

Data Collection Strategy

The first day of the author study, I had fifteen third grade academically gifted and talented student participants take a Reading Attitude Survey of ten questions. All student completed the Reading Attitude Survey (see Appendix C) that asked opinions on reading, reading programs, and author studies. After the survey was handed out, the student participants told me that question three and ten were repeated. I apologized and said not to answer question ten since it was the same as question three. The survey responses are recorded in Table 4.1 in this chapter with question being omitted due to repetition. After students participated in the survey, I orally discussed that the students were going to do an author study on the children’s book author Roald Dahl. I gave some background information on what books he had written to build schema and make connections. After I gave some background information on his books, I gave every student a nonfiction book, Tell Me More About Roald Dahl to read silently as the teacher-researcher read aloud.

As I read aloud, I would stop and discuss information that described his literary works. After I read aloud, the class had a whole group discussion on any connections,
thoughts, likes, or dislikes about the author and his works (eliciting aesthetic responses). After the discussion, I stated that they would be jotting their thoughts down in their own author study journals after reading about the author Roald Dahl and his literary works. I modeled how to set up their journals and stated that they could write any of their thoughts similar to our “think aloud” whole group strategy on Roald Dahl and his works in their journals. They could write their thoughts, connections, likes, dislikes, questions or anything that they would like to say or share in their journals (just like we did when we had a whole group discussion-aesthetic responses). After reading and setting up their journals, I gave student participants time to write down some information about what they just learned about Roald Dahl or any other thoughts on the first read aloud about his life (see Appendix G). After the students wrote in their journals, I had students to vote anonymously as they walked out of the classroom door if they enjoyed learning about the author Roald Dahl (biography of an author). They could either vote Yes or No by placing a colored chip on a balance scale marked with a Yes or No (see Appendix I). All students placed their chips on the Yes side of the scale where it said that they liked learning about the author. I will continue to pose questions throughout the study for students to anonymously vote and for the teacher-researcher to gauge student participants’ motivation of the study.

The following days of the author study, I wanted to gather more data through literary response questions. I showed students a collection of Roald Dahls’ literary works and said that the student participants and I would be reading extracts of his literary works. I explained that abstracts or extracts are just parts of his various novels and if they enjoyed what they had read during the class period, they could go voluntarily and check
out the entire novel at the library. Daily in class, student participants had a choice to read abstracts/extracts on: *Matilda, James and The Giant Peach, The BFG, Danny and The Champion of the World, Fantastic Mr. Fox and The Twits*. I went over the procedure of how each Roald Dahl extract would be placed at a table in a folder with a copy of literature questions (aesthetic and critical response questions-see Appendix F) to answer after each story. Students could rotate to any table to read one of Roald Dahls’ works. After completing the reading of choice of the day, I asked the students to write in their author study journals about any thoughts, connections, likes, dislikes or questions they may have after reading or during the study (aesthetic responses). When students completed their author study journals, I would read or tell students facts about Roald Dahl’s life (author biography). Student participants began to be very eager to further the discussion and want to tell me about what they read or liked from their earlier readings. I stated that I loved hearing what they had to say, but also wanted them to write their thoughts in their journals as well (see Appendix G).

Throughout the study, student participants were reading and discussing about Roald Dahl’s life and his works (aesthetic responses). I decided to place several Roald Dahl novels from the class bookcase on a table for students to check out. I told students about the books and the class checkout procedure. As soon as I was finished discussing the checkout procedures, the students all wanted to check out the books. Unfortunately, I did not have enough books for everyone and I let the remaining students without a book voluntarily go to the library to check out a Roald Dahl book of their choice. I was surprised at how fast student participants wanted to continue to read more Roald Dahl
books. Daily student participants would come in and ask to go to the library or exchange the class library book for another Roald Dahl book (see Appendix J).

During the Roald Dahl author study, on Halloween, our school could dress up as a favorite book character for Red Ribbon Week. A couple of students in the class and I dressed up as characters from various Roald Dahl books. I was excited to see that some students dressed up as characters from the author study because they were not asked to do so but were inspired to do so (see Appendix K and Appendix G). I dressed up like a witch from the story *The Witches* and read aloud part of the novel to the class on Halloween. At the end of class, I posed the question if they enjoyed the read aloud, *The Witches* by Roald Dahl? All of the students but one voted that they liked the read aloud (see Appendix I).

Throughout the study, I observed, conferenced with students, posed questions for students to answer at the end of class about Roald Dahl along with students’ writing in their author study journals (see Appendix G). To triangulate the data, I utilized the Triangulation Design of gathering quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to see if the merged data/results agreed. By utilizing a mixed-method design of student participant author journals, literary response questions, initialed reading logs by parents to show if student participants were voluntarily reading Roald Dahl books outside of class, surveying parents to see if student participants were talking about and reading Roald Dahl books at home and informally interviewing the librarian on the amount of Roald Dahl book checked out from the library aided in validating and the overall interpretation of the data (see Appendix E, H, and J).
General Findings/Results

Early analysis and interpretation of the Reading Attitude Survey showed, out of the fifteen student participants surveyed, 93% liked to read. Gardner (1985) showed a correlation between attitude and motivation. Liking to read was not a surprise to me since the majority of academically gifted and talented students are motivated to read. I also wanted to see student participants’ attitudes on scripted reading programs, commercialized reading programs, and prior knowledge on author studies (see Table 4.1). To further gauge attitude and motivation of reading, I administered the Motivation to Read Profile Revised (MRP-R) to see student participants’ self-concept of reading and value of reading (see Appendix D). Pre and post MRP-R were recorded before and after the author study process. Eleven out of fifteen student participants took the pre MRP-R and thirteen out fifteen student participants took the post MRP-R (see Table 4.2). I would have liked that all fifteen student participants take the pre- and post MRP-R, however limitations of a hurricane, relocation, flooding, and student illness kept student participants out of school for multiple days. Throughout the analysis process, student participants author study journal entries, unstructured interviews, observations, and question(s) of the day showed student participants continuation of liking to read by reflecting on their thoughts during the author study process. As the author study concluded, student participant reading logs and quantitative data from the library showed continual motivation of reading books by the author outside of class.

Table 4.1 demonstrates prior knowledge of reading, reading programs, author studies, self-concept of a reader and value of reading before the intervention of an author study. As depicted in the Reading Attitude Survey, the majority of students were not
motivated or did not know if they were motivated by the scripted reading program of *Imagine It!* due to student participants had not experienced other methodologies of reading instruction. The majority of student participants stated that they did have a favorite author and would like to study an author and their works. This was valuable information to the teacher-researcher to gain feedback on prior reading experiences due to interest and attitude affect motivation (Alexander and Filler, 1976).

*Table 4.1 Reading Attitude Survey Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response-Yes</th>
<th>Response-No</th>
<th>Response-Do Not Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Do you like to read?</td>
<td>14 (93%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (07%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Reading stories from the <em>Imagine It!</em> book series inspired me to want to read more?</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Taking Accelerated Reading tests motivates me to read more?</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Taking Accelerated Reading tests do not motivate me to read more?</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Do you have a favorite author?</td>
<td>11 (73%)</td>
<td>1 (07%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Do you like studying about authors?</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Do you like reading the</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>1 (07%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
77 different books by the same author?

8-Do you think studying about an author and his/her life would motivate you to read more?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Response</th>
<th>Total Response Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Pre-Reading-Author Study)</td>
<td>(Post-Reading-Author Study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as a Reader</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2, the MPR-R Survey results, depicted eleven student participants out of fifteen student participants gained in self-concept and reading value after participating in the author study process. During the MPR-R Survey, one student participant moved/relocated and three student participants either had a pre- or post- responses due to being absent (leaving eleven students having both pre- and post-survey responses). Due to the small sample size the MPR-R Survey results may not be statistically significant.

*Table 4.2 Comparison of Pre- and Post MPR-R Survey*
Data Analysis and Reflection

During the author study process, student participants were excited to write information down in their author study journals. Students could jot down information daily or as they felt motivated to write in their journals (aesthetic responses). Only during certain times throughout the author study, I asked student participants to respond to posed aesthetic or critical response questions in their author study journals (see Table 4.3). Student participants would be completely honest about their thoughts and some would even sketch illustrations in their journals.

As the teacher-researcher, I would informally observe students while reading the extracts of Roald Dahls’ literary works. The majority of student participants would be reading. Only one or two students were not focused (looking around the room). When I informally asked the unengaged student participants if they did not like the author study, one student participant stated that they liked the author, they did not like answering the questions, and the other student participant stated that they liked reading the authors’ works, and that they were just thinking. Daily student participants would come into class and ask if we were doing a read aloud from one of Roald Dahls’ works and if we were doing the author study? Due to student participants aesthetic responses (orally and written) I began to notice that affective elements such as increased motivation and interest were becoming more evident in the student participants’ journal entries and literary questions answered after reading extracts of Roald Dahls’ works (see Table 4.3 and Table 4.4).
Table 4.3 Literature Response Questions after Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes-Response(s)</th>
<th>No-Response(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do any of the characters remind you of someone in your life?</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you read other books by this author?</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Student Participants’ Journal Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author Journal Quote</th>
<th>Construct - Perception/Value</th>
<th>Construct - Attitude/Emotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I can’twait to read Matilda”</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Enthusiasm/Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I wish I could read the whole Matilda”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m reading BFG at home. And for Red Ribbon week you get to dress up as your favrate book carater and I am going to be fantastic Mr. Fox”</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Personal Connection (self)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Today I read James and the giant peach and did the questions. I am also reading the real book”</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I want to learn everything about a author”</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Enthusiasm/Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I do not vote because I don’t like auhor studys. Because I don’t’ understand the questions”</td>
<td>Low Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I can’t wait to find out more about RD and his life and I have some questions too”</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Enthusiasm/Desire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I told my dad about Roald Dahl” | Interest | Personal Connection (self)  
“I just checked out the BFG and I can’t wait to read it” | Interest | Enthusiasm/Desire  
“When I have free time I go to the library to check-out a Roald Dahl books” | Interest | Motivation

To validate student participants’ author journal responses and answers to student participants’ literature response questions, I asked students to vote on various single posed questions anonymously throughout the author study as they left the classroom (see Table 4.5).

*Table 4.5 Anonymous Student Participant Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes-Response</th>
<th>No-Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you enjoy learning about the author Roald Dahl and his works?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you enjoy the read aloud, <em>Witches</em>?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like studying about an author and his works better than reading the <em>Imagine It!</em> series?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like answering questions after reading Roald Dahl extracts/abstracts?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to read other works by Roald Dahl?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did studying an author motivate you to read more?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Will you continue to study other authors and their works?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Along with gauging reading motivation, by asking a weekly question, I also asked specific questions to be answered on a piece of paper or in the student participants’ author journal: what has been your favorite Roald Dahl text so far, have you checked out any Roald Dahl books, have you told your parents about the author study, what do you like about doing an author study, do you want to study another author and their works, and what author do you want to study next? The majority of students had listed that they had checked out books from the library and told their parents about the author study. To triangulate student journal responses, I asked student participants’ parents three survey questions (see Table 4.6). Out of the fifteen parent surveys, ten parents replied, one parent/student participant relocated, and four parents did not respond. I also had parents to initial student participants’ reading logs to show that students voluntarily were reading Roald Dahl novels after school hours (see Table 4.7). To show consistency and a correlation of Roald Dahl books voluntarily being read and checked out during the study, I logged classroom books checked out and informally interviewed the librarian by asking, “Have you noticed any of my G/T students checking out Roald Dahl books?” she stated, “I have seen Roald Dahl books checked out, but I do not know if they are your G/T students. I can get data on students and the books they checked out if you need that from our district?” I stated that I would appreciate that and it would help me with my data (see Table 4.8 and Table 4.9).
Table 4.6 Parent Online Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes-Response/Thumbs Up</th>
<th>No-Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has your child talked about the author study Roald Dahl?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have they been excited about reading?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you seen them read a Roald Dahl book?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 Student Reading Log Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author Study Book Titles</th>
<th>Amount/Frequency of Books Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twits</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matilda</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Witches</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James &amp; The Giant Peach</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFG</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantastic Mr. Fox</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie and The Chocolate Factory</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roald Dahl Revolting Recipes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George’s Marvelous Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enormous Crocodile</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 Roald Dahl Library Books Checked Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roald Dahl Library Books Checked Out</th>
<th>Amount of Books Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFG</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James and The Giant Peach</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie and The Chocolate Factory</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantastic Mr. Fox</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic Finger</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie and The Great Glass Elevator</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George’s Marvelous Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witches</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matilda</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twits</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny and The Champion of The World</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.9 Roald Dahl Classroom Books Checked Out**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roald Dahl Books Checked Out</th>
<th>Amount of Books Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James and The Giant Peach</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twits</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Missing Golden Ticket</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George’s Marvelous Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantastic Mr. Fox</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolting Recipes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Interpretation**

Through the above variation of instrumentation, and the use of mixed-methods triangulation design, I was able to merge and interpret the different data sets to see consistent reoccurring themes to support and validate my action research question. To find the pattern or reoccurring themes, I utilized the cycles of coding methods: Elemental and Affective (Saldana, 2016). Through the Affective Method, I was able to evaluate value and emotion associated with the author study. Through NVivo Coding, I was able...
to quote student participants’ thoughts from their author journals to capture enthusiasm and interest. According to Saldana (2016), NVivo Coding is “useful in educational ethnographies with youth. The child and adolescent voices are often marginalized, and coding with their actual words enhances and deepens an adults’ understanding of their cultures and worldviews” (p. 106). By looking at student participants’ thoughts in their author study journals and student participants’ responses to literature questions, I categorized/organized data based on student participants’ reading engagement, connections to relatable characters, new information gained, and student participant vocabulary that indicated self-efficacy (desire, interest, value, and motivation).

“Assigning codes to pieces of data is how you begin to construct categories” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 206).

At the beginning and end of the action research study, student participants took the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R). The MRP-R showed an increase in student participants’ self-concept and value of reading. Through coding, these increases were also shown to be evident throughout the student participants’ responses in their author study journals and throughout their literature response questions. “A student who has a healthy self-concept as a reader is more likely to approach the reading tasks with enthusiasm and interest…” (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013, p. 279). Student participants exhibited interest and enthusiasm by repeatedly writing in their journals and answering the literary response question— that they would continue to read Roald Dahl books. Student participants showed value in reading by making personal connections to Roald Dahl characters, sharing information read with parents/others, and by wanting to further read entire novels by Roald Dahl.
Analysis of Data Based on Research Question. Throughout the action research study, the triangulation and merging of data sets have been consistent in answering the research question: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom?

Reading Attitude Survey. The Reading Attitude Survey depicted that 93% of student participants already were motivated to read and that the majority of student participants were not motivated or did not know if they were motivated by prior commercialized reading programs. Students did have prior knowledge of favorite authors and were motivated to study more about authors. This information aided in answering the research question by showing that students were motivated to read and wanted to read or experience other text than commercialized reading programs.

Motivation to Read Profile-Revised Survey. Gave the teacher-researcher insight on motivation before and after the author study. The Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MPR-R) gave the teacher researcher a break-down of data depicting student participants’ self-concept and value of reading. The teacher-researcher was able to take a closer look at individual student data and their perception of reading. Overall the student participants’ self-concept was high and only grew by +2. Student participants’ value of reading grew more by +22. This data aided in answering the research question by showing growth in motivation after studying an author and their literary works.

Roald Dahl Literature Response Questions. Through the Roald Dahl literary response section of the author study, student participants had an opportunity to engage in aesthetic responses, critical responses, and literary biography responses throughout the
author study. Two specific questions in the literary response section asked a personal/contextual and an author/illustrator question to gauge motivation and interest of the different Roald Dahl extracts/abstracts read. The majority of student participants stated that they connected to Roald Dahl characters and that they would like to continue to read more of his works other than the extracts/abstracts. By including aesthetic response questions in the author study, the teacher-researcher was able to see if student participants were valuing what was read by making personal connections and by wanting to read more (relationship to the text).

**Student Participants Author Journal Response.** This piece of data proved to be the most authentic data in supporting the Action Research question. Students were able to write down their thoughts in their journal throughout the entire author study process. Students had a choice of which Roald Dahl extract to read. They could write what they liked, disliked, connections, questions, thoughts, or whatever they wanted to say. By giving students choice in what to read and write, helps with students who may not like or be motivated by the author study. During the author study, students were honest in saying if they liked a certain Roald Dahl text or did not like a Roald Dahl text. One student participant stated that they did not like the text, *Matilda* because it was child abuse and one student noticed how Roald Dahl wrote about his family members and made them into characters in his stories. The majority of journal entries were about liking the texts that they had read and how they were interested in reading the entire book or other books by Roald Dahl. Students were motivated to write their thoughts down in their journals and even illustrated pictures to go along with the texts.
**Parent Survey, Reading Log, and Librarian Interview.** These three data sources were able to show me if student participants were motivated beyond the author study going on in the classroom. Student participants had choice to further read works by Roald Dahl outside of the classroom. I immersed student participants in Roald Dahl’s life and only six of his works (abstracts/extracts) during class. Student participants were engaged in class read alouds, class room discussions, questioning, and journaling. I wanted to see if students were motivated beyond what was going on in the classroom setting. By surveying parents, and by parents initialing daily reading logs, I was able to see that students were talking about Roald Dahl and reading his novels. To further validate this data, I informally asked the librarian if she had noticed Roald Dahl books being checked out of the library during the study. She stated, “that she had noticed some, but really wasn’t paying attention and that she could ask the district office for a print out of Roald Dahl books checked out during a certain time period”. A few days later the librarian gave me printed hard copy data from the district office to support that student participants were voluntarily checking out Roald Dahl books from the library during the study. All of this data supported the impact and motivation of an author study.

**Conclusion**

In summation of the data analysis, by looking at students’ attitude toward reading before beginning the author study, I was able to gauge their feelings and interests on prior reading experiences. According to Alexander and Filler (1976) attitudes about reading should relate to motivation for reading. Through the attitude survey, I was able to see that students were interested in studying about authors if had the opportunity. By utilizing the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised, author study journals, surveys, and amount of Roald
Dahl books read outside of class during the study, I was able to evaluate students’ self-efficacy of reading motivation by coding/categorizing personal reading responses. Through this coding of information, out of the small sample size of fifteen student participants, twelve students were motivated by the author study and wanted to continue to study Roald Dahl and other authors. Students listed authors such as: Dr. Seuss, Lemony Snicket, Eric Carle, Judy Blume, J. R. R. Tolkien, Tedd Arnold, Jeff Kinney, Maya Angelou, Barbra Park, and JK Rowling in their author journals to study (see Appendix G). Based on triangulation mixed-method design data analysis results of the action research study, an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works seemingly impacted third grade academically gifted and talented student participants’ motivation to read.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Introduction

In Chapter five, the teacher-researcher presents the summary and conclusion of the disseminated data followed by an Action Plan. The chapter begins by revisiting the purpose of the research study followed by key information leading to the Action Plan and leadership role of the teacher-researcher’s recommendations and closing remarks on the research experience.

Discussion and Overview

The purpose of this research study was to change the literacy practices in the teacher-researcher’s classroom by posing the researcher question: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom? As a teacher-researcher, I began to reflect on my educational literacy practices and the literacy programs taught in our schools. Through this intentional reflective process, the teacher-researcher began to notice the lack of reading in students who had the ability to read, but not the motivation or desire to read. By reviewing academic literature/research, the teacher-researcher discovered that the lack of reading in students who had the ability to read, but not the desire to read was called, aliteracy. This was an academic term that the teacher-researcher, along with numerous other educators in the teacher-researcher’s school had not been familiar with. In order to make other educators familiar with the term aliteracy,
and to motivate the teacher-researchers’ student participants to continually want to read, changes in literacy instruction needed to occur.

Using a blended mixed-method design, the teacher-researcher conducted research in a third grade gifted and talented classroom over a six-week time period. Through the variation of instrumentation in a mixed-method design, the teacher-researcher utilized the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MPR-R), a Reading Attitude Survey, unstructured observations, field notes, student author journals, informal conversational interviews, and questionnaires/surveys for data collection. Serving as a participant/observer, the teacher-researcher taught mini-lessons, conferenced, observed, and analyzed student participants’ data throughout the research study. Several classroom themes emerged from the disseminated data: self-efficacy (self-concept, value, and motivation of reading) and the amount of reading during/after the author study process.

**Findings**

The research question for this study was: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom? The data collected from the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised Survey (MPR-P) indicated gain as a whole in self-concept and reading value. The Reading Attitude Survey depicted that students’ interest in reading, prior knowledge of authors, and the dislike of formalistic reading programs from previous experience. From the coding of data, the teacher-researcher was able to evaluate value and emotion associated with the author study to show motivation. Through NVivo Coding, I was able to quote student participants’ thoughts from their author journals to capture student participants’ experiences throughout the author study process.
Student participants exhibited interest and enthusiasm by repeatedly writing in their journals and answering aesthetic/critical literary response questions.

Through quantitative data, I was able to validate reading motivation by information gained from the school library’s data base and parent surveys. The triangulation of data showed the amount of Roald Dahl books voluntarily checked out of the library and Roald Dahl books logged as read on the Student Reading Logs during/beyond the author study in the classroom. This demonstrated student participants’ self-efficacy of reading.

**Interpretations**

Self-efficacy of reading motivation is influenced many times by outside reading experiences. John Dewey (1938) was cognizant of this when he spoke about “how many came to associate books with dull drudgery so that they were conditioned to all but flashy reading matter (p. 27). Dewey the philosophical founder of progressivism/constructivism believed that students constructed knowledge through their experiences and needed to be actively involved in the learning process. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) also believed that meaning did not just come from the text. She believed in the social experiences of reading and creating meaning; the Transactional Reading Theory. Through the intervention of an author study, students were able to experience the author through his life experiences and his works. Students were able to communicate through oral discussions and written responses throughout the author study experience. Student participants’ aesthetic thoughts/actions were recorded through the student participants’ author journal responses, unstructured observations, and questions/surveys throughout the author study process.
Implications

Through the implication of an authentic experience of an author study, Dewey (1938) visions of authentic literacy practices has been revitalized (Jenkins 1999). The majority of student participants surveyed indicated that they had a favorite author and wanted to study an author. The implication for teacher practitioners to utilize an author study approach is to find out student interest and thoughts about reading experiences before implementing any literacy study. By administering the MPR-R Survey and the Reading Attitude Survey, the teacher-researcher was able to see student participants’ self-concept and reading value before and after participating in the author study process. During the author study process, student participants were excited to write information down in their author study journals because they had choice on what and when to write. Student participants would be honest about their written thoughts and some students would even sketch illustrations to go along with their thoughts on the author study process. By knowing the background information on student reading interest, teacher practitioners can build the affective domain of reading by utilizing the reading experiences/background knowledge gained to create multiple author study experiences.

Another implication of an author study for teacher practitioners is to utilize parents and other colleagues to gather data. By going beyond the author study in the classroom, the teacher-researcher was able to see the impact of an author study outside of the classroom setting by the amount of Roald Dahl books checked out and read from the school library and from students’ reading logs. By knowing students’ interests and creating an enriching reading environment that invites author and literary choice as well as nurture reading discussions, teacher practitioners can increase motivation to read. By
continuing to develop intrinsic motivation, a construct related to interest, choice, and self-efficacy, students are more likely to engage in reading (Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997).

Dewey (1938) and Rosenblatt’s (1978) work reiterated the importance of interest, choice, and self-efficacy through authentic experiences in learning over the overemphasis of commercialized reading programs, test preparation and standardized reading tests that are utilized today. “Students enter schools that are test-driven, data-focused, and Lexile-leveled, learn that reading is too often simply the task of remembering information” (Beers & Probst, 2017, p. 56). Through the implication of a longitudinal research study of the impact of authors and their works on reading motivation, researchers may be able to combat the growing problem of aliteracy by educating others such as policymakers, board members, and district administrators on what aliteracy is and how it has been a growing problem since the 1950’s. According to Layne (2009), many policymakers, board members, and district administrators are unfamiliar with the term aliteracy and do not recognize that it is a problem in the educational field.

Based on the findings and interpretations of the cyclical action research process, the teacher-researcher’s action plan is to make others aware of aliteracy in the educational field and how to aid in ending aliteracy through an authentic author study approach. At the student participants’ level, the teacher-researcher will continue the study of authors by adhering to student choice authors, reading historical works by Kate Sally Palmer and studying poets and their works. The teacher-researcher’s student participants study South Carolina History in their regular third grade classrooms. The teacher-researcher will extend this knowledge by introducing her third-grade student participants
to the South Carolina historical writer, Kate Salley Palmer and her literary works:  

*Palmetto: Symbol of Courage* and *Francis Marion And The Legend of The Swamp Fox.*

By following the similar process as the Roald Dahl author study, student participants will read about Palmer’s life experiences and her nonfiction works on the history of South Carolina. To further enrich this author study process, the teacher-researcher will invite the author to come to our school and speak about the love or reading/writing or Skype with the student participants depending on the author’s availability and fee.

The teacher-participant will continue to promote studying authors and their works, through other genres throughout the remainder of the year. The teacher-participant will also introduce student participants to the classic poet, Robert Frost and his works. Through the diverse immersion of authors and their works, student-participants will be introduced to numerous authors and their literary works throughout the rest of the school year. Students will have choices throughout the genres and not be limited to a formalistic, commercialized, data driven, test preparation reading program.

To continue sharing the findings of the teacher-researcher’s study, at the school and administrative level, the teacher-researcher would like to continue to introduce authors and their works to student participants as well as the entire school. Through the years, the teacher-researcher has meet numerous children book authors and have invited them to the elementary school to inspire others in the field of reading/writing. Through these author visits, students get to experience the authenticity of reading/writing and to see that authors are people too, just like them. To further continue the knowledge gained through the author study process, the teacher-researcher will share the knowledge that she
has gained with other gifted and talented teachers across the district by aiding in creating and writing curriculum for gifted and talented students at the elementary level. By co-writing with other teachers of gifted and talented students at the district level, the author study process along with various units of study that incorporate authors and their works will be included in curriculum documents at the district level for third-grade gifted and talented students.

**Limitations**

The limitations and problems to sharing the teacher-participants action plan, is the sample size of fifteen participants were small, data may be associated with teacher pleasing, and self-efficacy (interest, value, choice, motivation, and desire-aesthetics of reading) is difficult to measurer and takes time. Students today are constantly forced to acquire information quickly that they are not interested in or will be later tested, and schools have become other places than promoting authentic reading (Gallagher, 2009; Miller, 2009). The final limitations associated with my study included changing the misconceptions associated with gifted students and curriculum taught. Many gifted students are given more work, expected to complete assignments without being taught, or adhere to curriculum that has already been mastered. I have experienced these limitations first hand when, curriculum for gifted students is not followed or changed to grade level formalistic scripted programs.

Until authentic interest is generated in teaching the reader and not just the reading, there will always be limitations to what educators can do in their classrooms. According to Gallagher (2009), due to the limitations of authentic reading practices and the overemphasis/unbalanced reading programs that adhere to state-mandated reading
tests, education is preventing the development of students in becoming lifelong readers. “We are developing test-takers at the expense of readers” (p. 7). To foster change and overcome these limitations, educators need a voice in the reading curricula taught in their classrooms. Dewey (1938), believed that a teacher should have a voice in what they teach and that their role was to provide an environment of exploration based off students’ prior experiences. He believed that the curriculum taught in schools should not focus on repetitive, rote memorization and should match the child’s interest to previous learning experience.

**Recommendations**

Even though the teacher-researcher, conducted action research on: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an authors’ life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom, the teacher-researcher believes from the disseminated data gathered that all students could benefit from the authorial study process. “Even poor readers are motivated by activities that are creative and challenging, and they generally rise to the occasion when the opportunity presents itself. What clearly does not motivate them, on the other hand, is a steady diet of worksheet gruel” (McKenna and Robinson, 2014, p. 235).

The first recommendation as a teacher-researcher would be to gather data on students’ interests and self-efficacy of reading. This will aid in teachers knowing background on their students and their author/reading experiences. From the data gathered, create unit of studies that incorporate authors and their works in all genres. Give students choice and different modalities of assessing information learned. Read aloud to students. “Researchers have amply documented the value of reading aloud to
young children” (p. 230). When read alouds are brief and are “carefully chosen to emphasize current topics, they can add variety, stimulate enthusiasm, and model the importance of literacy without diverting excessive time away from direct instruction (p. 231). Along with various read alouds, if teachers vary their teaching methods/mini-lessons by including authentic literary practices that relate to students’ lives, they will perceive it as being more significant. “When students can see how content in one area relates to the concepts and ideas of other areas, their understanding is broadened, and equally important, they are more likely to perceive its significance (p. 234). Finally, teach with student engagement. Reading curriculum should begin with student author interest or aid students in finding authors that students would like to study. Author studies should begin with many interesting texts about the author and their works. This will aid in real world interaction and knowledge that authors are real people too. Educators should have a collection of authors’ works and interesting text to elicit interest/motivation. Students should also be able to collaborate/engage with other students in the class and have choice of what author/text to experience. “Involving students in the choice of which question to investigate, which sources to read, or which projects to undertake will give them a motivating sense of empowerment” (p. 236).

Conclusion

This action research study has been enlightening, as well as a reflective educational process. The teacher-researcher became aware of the term aliteracy and wanted to further her knowledge/research on what causes aliteracy and how to aid in preventing aliteracy in her gifted and talented third grade classroom as well as in other gifted and talented classrooms across the district.

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The teacher-researcher noticed that current reading practices foster little to no aesthetic reading. “The traditional curriculum places little to no emphasis on the value of reading from aesthetic perspective (Layne, 2009, p. 12). This quote from Layne (2009), still holds to be true in reading curricula ten years later. Education today places little to no emphasis on the affective domain of reading (attitude, motivation, or other intangibles) due to not being easily measured in traditional school reading curricula.

Through the intervention of an author study, the teacher-researcher wanted her student-participants to experience reading instruction differently than the traditional scripted, formalistic, commercialized reading approach taught in a regular classroom setting. The teacher-researcher wanted to expose her students to an author/literary works, in hopes to motivate student participants to continually want to study other authors and their literary works. “We must teach our students this simple concept: If you like one book by Chris Crutcher or Barbara Park, you might like more” (p. 66).

The teacher-researcher did not want to assume that all of her gifted and talented third-grade students had the desire and will for continual reading. According to Layne (2009), “don’t just assume that because kids can read, they will read. The skill and the will are two very different things” (p. 66). Through this action research process and the data gained from the research study, the teacher-researcher will continue to be an advocate for gifted and talented learners and for the utilization of an authentic author study process. “When we, as educators, make it our business to teach not only books but also authors, we can move forward with regard to creating a more educated society” (p. 66). As an educator/teacher-researcher, I too want to create a more educated society by fostering a passion for a continual love of reading in gifted education.
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APPENDIX A: PARENT AND STUDENT CONSENT LETTER

October 10, 2018

Dear Parents of Gifted,

I am conducting a research study through the University of South Carolina to examine motivation and reading. Over the years, I have noticed a decline in reading in Gifted students. Students who used to love to read, no longer want to read. This is called aliteracy. When people have the skill and will to read, no longer have the desire to read. I want to test the theory of an author study and how reading is taught to motivate continual reading.

To test my theory, during the author study, I will use varied instruments (surveys, questionnaires, journals, interviews and observations). Every year my students do an author study. The only difference this year, would be that I would like to collect data to see if an author study motivates them to read more. My research question is: What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom?

If you or your child chooses not to participate, there will be no penalty. It will not affect your child’s grade, treatment, services rendered, and so forth. Your child’s participation is voluntary, and he/she is free to withdraw from participation at any time. The results of the research study may be published, but you child’s name will not be used. Data collection will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. I will destroy data within one year of completing the study.

If you have any questions concerning this study or your child’s participation in this study, please feel free to contact me at XXXXXX.

Sincerely,

Cherie A. Salem

Teacher of Gifted and Talented

National Board-Certified Teacher

XXXXX Elementary

Parent’s Name _________________________________

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Student’s Name__________________________________________

Parent Signature________________________________________
APPENDIX B: RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Research Proposal for XXXXXX School District

Cherie A. Salem is the Action Researcher of the Proposed Study

Research proposals must contain the sections, clearly labeled:

* Purpose and educational significance of the study, including a statement of the value of the study to XXXXXXX Schools:

  * Study hypotheses: RQ1 In order to begin to understand the nature of the students’ literacy, or aliteracy, experiences in our school, I posed the following Action Research Question as a teacher-researcher:

What is the impact of utilizing an authentic study of an author’s life and literary works to increase students’ motivation to read in a third grade gifted and talented classroom?

*Value of the study to XXXXXXX Schools: To identify the causes of aliteracy (students who have the will and ability to read, do not have the desire to read). Does this negative attitude toward reading begin through literacy curriculum taught in our schools today and are we breeding a society of young people who can read, but do not have the desire to read? “Since the 1970’s aliteracy has been a problem in education. Mikulecky stated, “Positive reading habits and attitudes seem to deteriorate with each successive year students spend in school” (Bullen, 1972 and Mikulecky, 1976). “The aliteracy rate is surpassing our illiteracy rate” (Layne, 2012, p. 8). “We have more readers who can read and don’t than we do reader who can’t read at all! Yet the focus of a nation remains almost exclusively on reading skills” (Layne, 2012, p. 9).
* Research design: For this Problem of Practice, the teacher-researcher will utilize a mixed-methods design with her fifteen Gifted and Talented students at XXXXXXXXX School. I (Cherie Salem) have taught for Horry County Schools for over twenty-five years and will be the teacher-researcher of this Action Research Study. I believe that the mixed-methods design will enable me to collect multiple forms of data throughout the research process.

* Procedures:

Data collection instrumentation, procedures, schedule, and type of data collection

The teacher-researcher will develop instrumentation and data collection protocols through the use of interviews, questionnaires, checklists, surveys and through the use of a research journal. By asking some open-ended questions and structured interview questions, I hope to gain in-depth qualitative data on the literacy programs being taught and the affects these programs have on fostering literacy experiences, and potentially aliteracy behaviors in students. For example, I will conduct an informal interview with the librarian about what she observes during student library time. Along with interviewing the librarian, I will informally interview students about their reading practices. “Interviewing students in the classroom can be a rich source of data” (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D, 2014, p. 103). “Asking students about their thinking and their learning is a natural part of lessons and instructional activities, and when related to an inquiry question, naturally occurring conversations with students can automatically become “interviews” (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D, 2014, p. 103).

The second instrumentation utilized will be a ten question survey. “Surveys can give students a space to share their thoughts and opinions about a teaching technique or
strategy, a unit, or their knowledge about particular subject matter (Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D, 2014, p. 114). “Survey research involves acquiring information from individuals representing one or more groups—perhaps about their opinions, attitudes, or characteristics” (Mertler, 2014, p. 96). The final method of collecting research, will be field notes and student artifacts (reading logs/lists/journals). The time frame for data collection will be six to eight weeks.

* A copy of the actual data collection instrument must be provided with the proposal  Actual instrumentation is not developed at this time. The Teacher-Researcher is in the beginning processes of her USC Ed.D Curriculum and Instruction Literacy Program.

* Impact on instructional time at the schools

Minimal to no impact on instructional time.

* Selection method for participants/schools and number of participants/school involved:

Convenience Sampling using the teacher-researcher’s class of approximately fifteen Gifted and Talented students.

* Potential risks and benefits to the participants

No risks to the participants.

Benefits-Value participant’s opinion/feedback to promote lifelong readers.

* Informed consent form (if appropriate)

* Method to be used for analyzing or evaluating research

Blended-Mixed Methods to triangulate data-Categorizing/Coding for common themes and tables to represent quantitative data

* Project timeline:

* Researcher’s contact information (i.e., daytime phone number, fax number, e-mail address)

Cherie A. Salem  
Csalem@xxxxxxschools.net

XXXXX Elementary  1-843-xxx-xxxx

* Date that data and study results will be given to the school district: School Year 2019-2020
APPENDIX C: READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

Reading Attitude Survey

1. Do you like to read?
   A. Yes
   B. No

2. Reading stories from the Imagine It book inspired me to want to read more?
   A. Yes
   B. No

3. Taking Accelerated Reading tests motivates me to read more?
   A. Yes
   B. No

4. Taking Accelerated Reading tests do not motivate me to read more?
   A. Yes
   B. No

5. Do you have a favorite author?
   A. Yes
   B. No

6. Do you like studying about authors?
   A. Yes
B. No
C. I do not know

7. Do you like reading the different books by the same author?
A. Yes
B. No
C. I do not know

8. Do you think studying about an author and his/her life would motivate you to read more?
A. Yes
B. No
C. I do not know

9. As you go through school are you motivated to read more or less?
A. More
B. Less
C. I do not know

10. Taking Accelerated Reading Tests motivates me to read more?
A. Yes
B. No
C. I Do Not Know
APPENDIX D: MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE-REVISED

Adapted from ASSESSING MOTIVATION TO READ: THE MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE–REVISED. The Reading Teacher Vol. 67 Issue 4 pp. 273–282
DOI:10.1002/TRTR.1215 © 2013 International Reading Association www.reading.org

Name___________________Date________________
Teacher_____________________________________

A. I am in________
2nd grade
3rd grade
4th grade
5th grade

B. I am a________
Boy
Girl

1. My friends think I am________
A very good reader
A good reader
An OK reader
A poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
Never
Almost never
Sometimes
Often

3. When I come to a word I don’t know, I can________
Almost always figure it out
Sometimes figure it out
Almost never figure it out
Never figure it out

4. My friends think reading is________
Really fun
Fun
Ok to do
No fun at all

5. I read____________________
Not as well as my friends
About the same as my friends
A little better than my friends
A lot better than my friends

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.
I never do this
I almost never do this
I do this some of the time
I do this a lot

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand______________
Everything I read
Almost everything I read
Almost none of what I read
None of what I read

8. People who read a lot are______________
Very interesting
Sort of interesting
Sort of boring
Very boring

9. I am____________________
A poor reader
An ok reader
A good reader
A very good reader

10. I think libraries are________________
A really great place to spend time
A great place to spend time
A boring place to spend time
A really boring place to spend time

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading______________
A lot
Sometimes
Almost never
Never

12. I think becoming a good reader is________________
117

Not very important
Sort of important
Important
Very Important

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read,_______________
I can never think of an answer
I almost never think of an answer
I sometimes think of an answer
I can always think of an answer

14. I think spending time reading is _________________
Really boring
Boring
Great
Really great

15. Reading is_____________________
Very easy for me
Kind of easy for me
Kind of hard for me
Very hard for me

16. When my teacher reads books out loud, I think it is_______________
Really great
Great
Boring
Really boring

17. When I am in a group talking about books I have read_____________
I hate to talk about my ideas
I don’t like to talk about my ideas
I like to talk about my ideas
I love to talk about my ideas

18. When I have free time, I spend________________________
None of my time reading
Very little of my time reading
Some of my time reading
A lot of my time reading

19. When I read out loud, I am a____________________
Poor reader
Ok reader
Good reader
Very good reader

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, ________________
I am very happy
I am happy
I am unhappy
I am very unhappy
APPENDIX E: STUDENT READING LOG

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My Reading Log
Deep Structure Questioning in Literature

Personal and Textual Connections

1. Do any of the characters remind you of someone in your life?

Setting

2. What can you hear, see, feel, or smell as you read the story? (Don’t forget to use evidence from the text to support your answer.)

Characters

3. Who is the most important character? Why?

Plot

4. How did the author begin the story to engage the reader?

Language

5. Where did the author describe something well?

Author/Illustrator

6. Would you read other books by this author? Why or why not?
APPENDIX G: STUDENT AUTHOR JOURNALS
Day 6

Today I read the Big! It was super! I want to get it for real life!!!

Day 7

- I would like to read and study Eric Carle.
- I liked doing the author study because I read all kinds of cool books.
- I would like to study another author because I am learning about all their books.

Day 8

I want to read the magic finger, and little red riding hood and wolf. I also voted for the charming crocodile! There is lots of interesting in the beginning of the story.

Day 9

I read Judy Blume, and I also read Parts! By Tedd Arnold.
APPENDIX H: PARENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Has your child talked about the author study Roald Dahl?

2. Have they been excited about Reading?

3. Have you seen them read a Roald Dahl Book?
APPENDIX I: ANONYMOUS STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Did you enjoy learning about the author Roald Dahl and his works?
2. Did you enjoy the read aloud, *Witches*?
3. Do you like studying about an author and his works better than reading the *Imagine It!* series?
4. Do you like answering questions after reading Roald Dahl extracts/abstracts?
5. Do you want to read other works by Roald Dahl?
6. Did studying an author motivate you to read more?
7. Will you continue to study other authors and their works?
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APPENDIX K: PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDENTS