Effects of Choice Reading on Intrinsic Motivation in Underperforming Sixth-Grade Students

Heather M. Henderson

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EFFECTS OF CHOICE READING ON INTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN UNDERPERFORMING SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing husband, Jared, who provided the impetus to begin this program, the support to continue it, and the motivation to complete it while keeping the house running. I also dedicate this work to my children, Everett and Ashlyn, who do not yet realize what the completion of this program means. It is my hope that, as they grow, they understand how important this process has been to me personally and that it can be a source of inspiration to them as they progress forward in life.
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I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my wonderfully dedicated major professor, Dr. Linda Silvernail, without whom I would not be where I am today. To my dissertation committee members, Dr. D’Amico, Dr. Tamim, and Dr. Kolski, your help and guidance have been instrumental in completing my research and program of study. To Lauren and Catherine, I would not have embarked on this journey as readily without the mutual support that you provided at the beginning, and to Molly, I would not have been as successful throughout the process without your emotional and moral support. Lastly, to Kyra, without your unrelenting support, your positive attitude, your flexibility, and unending access to your classroom, this entire study would not have been possible. I cannot thank you all enough for your contributions to my successful completion of these program requirements.
This single-case study was designed to evaluate the effects of autonomous text choice on reading motivation and reading comprehension in underperforming sixth-grade students. This study was built upon the theoretical framework constructed using self-determination theory, situational expectancy–value theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Study participants were asked to read a text of their choice for ten minutes each day. Once a week, study participants were observed during their reading time for off-task behaviors to frame discussions on student engagement with their chosen texts, and every other week during the course of the intervention, participants were provided with an opportunity to give feedback on their perspectives through surveys and interviews. Upon conclusion of the study, quantitative data was analyzed, and qualitative data was coded and used to evaluate emerging themes. The quantitative and qualitative data were then compared to triangulate the results of the study. These results demonstrated that autonomous text choice did increase reading motivation in general, with specific increases in intrinsic reading motivation. While some gains in reading comprehension were noted, this study was inconclusive on the effects of autonomous text choice reading on reading comprehension, although some positive gains were noted.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CET ............................................................................................ Cognitive Evaluation Theory
CRP .......................................................................................... Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
ELA .............................................................................................. English/Language Arts
ESEA ............................................................................................ Elementary & Secondary Education Act
ESSA .............................................................................................. Every Student Succeeds Act
IRB .............................................................................................. Internal Review Board
MAP .............................................................................................. Measures of Academic Progress
MRQ ...................................................................................................... Motivations for Reading Questionnaire
NCEE .............................................................................................. National Commission on Excellence in Education
NCLB .............................................................................................. No Child Left Behind
NWEA .............................................................................................. Northwest Education Association
OIT ...................................................................................................... Organismic Integration Theory
PLC .............................................................................................. Professional Learning Community
RIT ...................................................................................................... Rasch Unit
SD ...................................................................................................... Standard Deviation
SDT ...................................................................................................... Self-Determination Theory
SEVT .............................................................................................. Situational Expectancy–Value Theory
TCAP .............................................................................................. Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

High-stakes testing has become a significant source of information for analysis of student, teacher, and school performance. Districts use the data to evaluate curriculum efficacy, as well as school and teacher quality, and teachers use the information to determine student weaknesses when designing units of study and specific lesson plans for the upcoming year. One of the continued weaknesses in my school was student reading comprehension scores.

According to the 2020 census, my school’s area was within the bounds of a “low-income” socioeconomic area with a median household income of $41,864, a poverty rate of 24.6%, and a parent education level showing 86.5% with a high school education and 26.6% with a bachelor’s degree or higher (Quick Facts, 2020). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the network averaged only 16.9% of sixth-grade students performing on grade level in state-level standardized English/language arts (ELA) testing, and only 4.9% were on grade level for the 2021 school year (Nelson, 2019). These scores significantly improved for the 2022 school year with 28.1% of students achieving on-grade-level scores, unfortunately, as these statistics demonstrate, sixth-grade student performance was well below national standards (Nelson, 2022).

As of the most recent standardized testing, the Northwest Education Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Spring 2021–22 assessment, students
in our first sixth-grade cohort had a median Rasch unit (RIT) score of 208 with a standard deviation of 15.8 and a Lexile variation of 10–1165 (kindergarten to tenth grade). Our second sixth-grade cohort demonstrated a median RIT of 210 with a standard deviation of 17.8 and a Lexile variation of 25–1415 (kindergarten to eleventh grade), and our third sixth-grade cohort recorded a median RIT of 215 with a standard deviation of 12.6 and a Lexile variation of 455–1550 (second to eleventh grade) (Lexile Framework for Reading, 2018; Northwest Education Association, 2022). The combination of lack of interest and difference in capability made choosing classroom texts using standard pedagogical techniques difficult, especially when attempting scaffolding and differentiation in text rigor.

The level of deviations within comprehension capabilities also provided a specific difficulty within my charter school network. The network perspective was that students must achieve well on standardized testing like the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) as standardized test scores were a significant aspect of school score determinations used by parents to evaluate school quality. Therefore, toward the end of the year, there was a shift in learning where curriculum was supplanted by test-taking strategies, which placed lower-capability students even farther behind their on-level peers and further reduced their self-efficacy.

When I discussed reading with students within my school, I discovered that many refused to read classroom texts as the texts had become too boring or too difficult earlier in their educational progression. While not specifically addressed by the students during our conversations, the curriculum for students as they progressed through elementary school was Eurocentric, which led to a disconnect with reading interest for minority
students. Many students also reported that “pleasure reading” took too much effort and time and was not something they were interested in attempting.

Research suggests that reading is an effective way to improve critical thinking, social–emotional learning, and empathy (Danifo & Valdez, 2019). Considering the current state of society and relations across race, gender, and culture, the need for increased reading comprehension skills and willingness to see various perspectives is at an all-time high. Studies also indicate that intrinsic motivation correlates to positive reading skill proficiency and positive self-efficacy while external motivation tends to be either neutral or negative for reading comprehension development and correlates to negative self-efficacy (Clark & Teravainen, 2017). I wanted to know the motivational factors driving students to read or not read classroom text selections and how I could increase their engagement with texts, particularly those addressing social justice. Therefore, the problem of practice guiding this action research study was that lack of student engagement and intrinsic motivation to read assigned classroom texts had led to losses of skill development and self-efficacy in reading capability.

1.2 Background Literature

Students enter school at vastly different levels of preparedness, particularly in reading comprehension. Once in school, researcher estimates show that 20–30% of students experience difficulties in learning to read before third grade (Reynolds et al., 2011). If left uncorrected, these difficulties can cause struggles in job placement and social interactions in adulthood. Reading intervention provided early in student learning is more effective than that provided later; however, once a student has missed reading a substantial amount of text over two to three years, it is very difficult for the student to catch up to their peers (Reynolds et al., 2011). This lack of comprehension is pervasive as
evidenced in a 2007 study of eighth-grade readers in which 26% did not reach basic levels of literacy and only 31% were deemed proficient (McCullough, 2013).

When it comes to comprehending a text, the reader must not only be interested enough to interact with the text but also must understand the context of the text based upon their own prior knowledge and experiences (Bui & Fagan, 2013). Student culture, socioeconomic status, and linguistic background must be acknowledged and addressed during text selection as students who lack the cultural context cannot apply their own experiences to the text and therefore lack the necessary understanding to truly comprehend the text. As most teachers are from the dominant White culture, text selection often lacks the multicultural scope that provides students of color with the opportunity to connect to a text in a manner that encourages increased comprehension (Bui & Fagan, 2013; McCullough, 2013). McCullough notes that while a student might initially be interested in a text, if they lack the prior knowledge and experience with the content of the text, they might lose motivation to continue reading. Even students with above-average cognitive and comprehension ability can lose motivation to read if there is a lack of interest in the text (Wigfield et al., 2004). Once the student loses interest in reading and/or believes they are “not good” at it, then the lack of self-efficacy begins a negative spiral of performance throughout the student’s educational career.

A new and increasingly important aspect to consider regarding student interest is the overwhelming surge in societal technology use and its effect on student reading. As McVicker (2013) notes, schools have been adjusting to the new technical norms by adopting technology into the classroom, sometimes at the expense of traditional paper copy texts. Of note with this significant shift in reading delivery is that “research
conducted on reading electronic print had asserted that it was different and may require ‘new literacies’ to comprehend” (McVicker, 2013, p. 732). Teachers must now be aware that not only the text itself but also the manner of textual delivery could affect student engagement and must be evaluated when determining text efficacy.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

In the development of this action research study, three theories guided the design of both the research questions and study methodology: self-determination theory, situated expectancy–value theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Either alternatively, or in conjunction with the expectancy–value factor, the inclusion of culturally relevant texts could spark intrinsic motivation, leading to a positive expectancy–value association. As students gain a positive perspective on reading, their position on the self-determination theory tends toward autonomous increasing the likelihood of intrinsic motivation to read and thereby increasing reading comprehension skills.

Self-determination theory, first introduced in 1985 by Ryan, Connell, and Deci, states that motivation is differentiated along a continuum that ranges from “controlled to autonomous” and is “particularly concerned with how social-contextual factors support or thwart people’s thriving through the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 3). Subsequently, the more autonomy a student has in the material they are using, the more motivation the student has to utilize the material chosen. From a reading perspective, if the student can choose the text with which they would like to interact, intrinsic motivation to engage with the text rises, increasing reading comprehension with increased reading skill development.
Similarly, the expectancy–value theory developed by Eccles et al. in 1983 identifies that motivation is driven by the expected value or return on effort (as cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). Where Ryan and Deci (2017) focus on the development of intrinsic motivation, Eccles and Wigfield evaluate motivation from the perspective that the value of task completion, whether internal or external, provides the level of motivation, whether intrinsic or external, to complete the task, including cultural and sociological inputs. Essentially, the greater the perceived reward (value), the greater the motivation to complete the task.

The final theory that provided support for this study was Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings utilized studies indicating that students of color did not perform as well in school as White students and that students of color who did well academically within a standard Eurocentric classroom were often ostracized by their peers, which led to a decrease in academic performance to fit in to their social environment. However, when students of color were introduced to a classroom where teachers included aspects of their culture, significant advancements in academic performance were noted. Ladson-Billings suggests that the trend of ignoring or minimizing the needs of students of color to be represented within their classroom text material continues as a pervasive curricular ideology.

Essentially, students require motivation, whether internal or external, to read, a motivation that is driven by an expectancy–value factor that either encourages or discourages their continued growth. Students must be provided with opportunities to create/encourage positive expectancy–value factors related to reading, subsequently increasing student motivation. By establishing student reading motivation sources and
preferences determining student self-efficacy regarding reading, these theories lend
themselves to providing guidance for curriculum modifications to increase student
engagement.

Acknowledging that many students need external motivation to begin reading a
text, the theory of expectancy–value provided the impetus for the development of student
motivation (Eccles et al., 1983). By determining an external value that promotes external
motivation, students were encouraged to choose a text of interest to them and continue
reading a text to provide time for the external value to diminish and be replaced by
internal values with a coincidental shift from external to intrinsic motivation.

As students lose intrinsic motivation, their engagement with the text decreases,
which leads to a loss of skill development, resulting in a loss of self-efficacy in reading
capability and subsequently poorer performance on reading comprehension measures. By
identifying the necessary requirements to shift the students’ perception of the classroom
text from a controlled task to an autonomous one in accordance with Ryan et al.’s (1985)
self-determination theory, there is an increased opportunity to spark intrinsic motivation
and prevent the downward spiral of motivation caused by controlled environments.
Additionally, if a teacher offers a student a choice of novels centered on culturally
relevant texts aligning with Ladson-Billings’(1995) theory of culturally relevant
pedagogy, they can increase the autonomous choice options provided as well as the
positive expectation–value perspective of the student, sparking inherent interest and
developing intrinsic motivation for the student to continue reading. This combination of
theory application should result in increased intrinsic motivation that, in turn, leads to
increased reading comprehension capabilities.
1.4 Research Questions and Rationale

This action research mixed-methods single-case study was undertaken to assess student reading motivation and the potential for changes to the development of intrinsic motivation and subsequent changes in reading comprehension after implementing text and curricular changes based on Ryan et al.’s (1985) self-determination theory, Eccles et al.’s (1983) situated expectancy–value theory and Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. During the study, students were provided with the opportunity to choose their own texts across a wide variety of cultures, genders, genres, and capability levels, giving students a level of autonomy that is absent from most current middle school English classes. To achieve pertinent and accurate results for this study, three research questions were presented:

1. What do students self-report as motivation to read?

2. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation to read?

3. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?

These questions were chosen to establish the limits of this study while providing the maximum amount of relevant data for analysis. The first question attempted to monitor the response to Eccles et al.’s (1983) expectancy-value theory through surveys containing Likert scales, while the second question established growth measurements of intrinsic motivation and levels of autonomy based upon Ladson-Billings’ (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy and Ryan et al.’s (1985) self-determination theory. The final question required the use of standardized testing data to determine how text autonomy affected reading comprehension scores over the duration of the study.
Although the reading time was required by the teacher of record, allowing students to choose texts of interest to them should have transferred reading motivation from external to intrinsic according to Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory and Eccles et al.’s (1983) model. As motivation internalized and amplified through the autonomy the text choice created in class, self-efficacy would increase, thereby supporting continued intrinsic motivation per Ryan et al. (1985). This increased positive reaction to reading, with increased intrinsic motivation to read, should have increased student reading comprehension and self-efficacy, leading to continued engagement with texts of interest.

1.5 Researcher Positionality

It was necessary, prior to commencing a successful study, to identify the researcher’s positionality to establish biases and potential issues that may have affected the results of the study. Maher and Tetreault (1993) define positionality by noting that “gender, race, class, and other aspects of our identities were markers of relational positions” (p. 118). Therefore, the researcher’s positionality is important as “knowledge was valid when it includes an acknowledgment of the knower’s specific position in any context because changing contextual and relational factors were crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation” (Maher & Tetreault, 1993, p. 118). As the researcher, I acknowledge that I am an upper-middle-class, heterosexual, Caucasian woman with four years of classroom teaching experience. I also acknowledge that I was a dedicated student who loved to read, and I firmly believe that everyone should read to continue their personal growth and social understanding. As a teacher, I worked to include multicultural literature into my classroom, and as an administrator, I continue to push my school for cultural representation in our available texts, but as an
individual, I gravitate toward Eurocentric texts with female protagonists. Each of the factors that define my positionality are also factors that affected the students I observed as well as the novels they chose. Therefore, I needed to ensure students had fair and equitable access to a variety of materials based on their preferences/positions without attempting to steer their choices toward my own personal preferences, which could have skewed the study data and results.

As a teacher, I might best have been described as “warm demander” as defined by Kleinfeld (1972), meaning that I was approachable but still maintained high performance expectations. Admittedly, I often tended toward the “demander” side, which could have been daunting for many students. This, compounded by me being White, added a significant impact to a classroom that was 97% students of color. Further, as the dean of academics, I was concerned that increased pressure of observation from an authority figure could affect student choices, behaviors, and performance and lead to skewed study data. I understood that there was a possibility that students would attempt to achieve a positive response from me as an authority figure, or conversely in a manner designed to elicit a negative response from me as the authority figure.

To counteract these concerns, I worked with the teacher of record and requested that she present much of the material to limit the authoritative effect of my presence in the classroom. I also worked with students inside and outside of the classroom to normalize my presence and encourage relationship building to minimize the impact my presence had on typical student behaviors.

Another aspect of positionality discussed by Herr and Anderson (2015) is the idea that the researcher is not an “insider” or “outsider” to the study but falls somewhere on
the continuum between the two extremes. For the purposes of this study, as I served as observer–researcher and an occasional co-teacher for the study group focusing on the development of my own practice, my positionality fell close to the “observer” line of the spectrum. Because the teacher of record for the students involved in this study was a first-year, sixth-grade ELA teacher, I served as both a mentor and an administrator to her. Lesson plans were designed by the teacher, with my input regarding any material that might have affected study results, and classroom curricula were maintained according to school and network curriculum maps. Occasional input was provided from the ELA instructional coach regarding lesson plan design and content, but those changes were limited to specified curriculum presentation and did not affect study parameters.

1.6 Research Design

The purpose of this action research mixed-methods single-case study was to evaluate student motivation levels, attempt to modify reading behavior toward intrinsic reading motivation, and evaluate subsequent reading comprehension changes in a specific student subpopulation. To meet the evidentiary requirements for this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were required, making this study a triangulated design, mixed-methods approach. When using this approach, “the qualitative and quantitative databases were given equal priority” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 212).

The setting for this study was Hilltop Secondary School (pseudonym), a small but expanding charter school in the suburbs of a large city in the southeastern U.S. that serves 300 students from sixth through tenth grade. For the 2022–23 school year, I served as the dean of academics and focused my study on sixth-grade ELA, with a total of 84 students of varying capabilities. This group of students was selected as I had previously taught the
eighth-grade cohort and so was concerned that this could skew study results and because the seventh-grade ELA teaching position was vacant at the start of this study, which could also have affected overall results. This group of sixth-grade students served as my initial convenience sample of students as they were already within my purview (Efron & Ravid, 2013). As my primary focus was to identify how to affect change in reading motivations and reading comprehension in lower-performing students, I chose to reduce the convenience sample to a representative sample small enough to be used for a single-case study approach.

To evaluate student growth over the course of the school year, my school required all students to take a fall NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment during their first week returning to school. These results provided quantitative reading comprehension baseline scores to evaluate changes in reading comprehension over the course of the study and assisted in identifying students with below-grade-level reading comprehension skills. According to the initial results, my target population averaged below the 50th percentile and at or above the tenth percentile on NWEA MAP. Due to the compressed timeline of the study, all sixth-grade students were given a study permission form during the first week of school prior to taking the MAP.

To determine a motivation baseline for this study, and with the permission of both the principal and network executive director, I then provided all sixth-grade students with the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) developed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), a well-known and widely respected pre-intervention survey that determines reading motivation type and level. Results from the MRQ both provided quantitative baselines to chart changes in motivation over the course of the study and assisted in
identifying students with low intrinsic reading motivation. My focus for determining potential participants was to evaluate the MRQ’s intrinsic motivation factors, evaluate the median grade-level score, and find participants that were at or below the median intrinsic motivation score in at least two of the four domains, which would provide students with lower self-identified intrinsic motivation.

I then evaluated the potential participants from both the MAP and MRQ and identified students that were both below the 50th percentile on MAP and below the median intrinsic motivation scores on at least two of the four domains. No other cultural or gender requirements were delineated as necessary for study results. The students that met both of these performance requirements were provided with another parent permission form if the initial form was not received for inclusion in the study. Five of the students returned the form with parent agreement to study participation. All five students were Black, with one participant being female and the other four participants being male. These results were not consciously diversified but resultant of the returns of parent permission forms. These five students narrowed the convenience sample to a representative sample as they demonstrated the characteristics that were being studied and provided a smaller, more comprehensive opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the interventions (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Once the study began, several interventions were used on a weekly and biweekly basis. Upon selection of choice texts, students were provided with the opportunity to read silently in class for ten minutes each day. Once a week, I recorded the reading time and tracked student engagement using an observation log, particularly focusing on the time students engaged in the reading and the number of times they were distracted or
distracted themselves from the text. This observation record provided quantitative data for student engagement with their chosen text as well as data indicating issues with reading motivation.

Each week students also had the opportunity to collect in small groups and discuss aspects of their texts with their classmates, using prompts provided through non-study-related grade-level classroom learning material. This grouping provided an opportunity for students to form external motivation through “peer pressure” to continue reading until intrinsic motivation could form and an opportunity for me to conduct observations to provide qualitative measurements of student engagement with the text.

Each week during the study, I alternated between student reflections and student interviews about the text they were reading. The student reflections were short surveys consisting of open-ended questions pertaining to interest levels in the text, engagement with the text, and opportunities to present their thoughts on the reading (see Appendix C). The surveys were used to follow up on student answers to the student reflections and to clarify any incongruencies visible in previous observations and provided further mixed-methods data.

At the conclusion of the study, a post-intervention MRQ survey was given to the students as well as a second iteration of the NWEA MAP. Using the exact same materials provided a direct comparison between pre- and post-intervention performance. Further, the quantitative data provided by these interventions established objective results that were used to triangulate data provided by the qualitative data received throughout the duration of the study.
Once I compiled the data points, I charted each participant’s pre- and post-intervention quantitative motivation scores individually and compared the results to the quantitative data from the observations. The quantitative results from both aspects of the study provided further feedback and guidance and confirmed or refuted the numerical results. As motivation was purely subjective, student perspectives provided through qualitative measures had the potential to outweigh the quantitative results, so I constructed the questions for both the interviews and reading reflections in a manner that elicited as truthful a response as possible from the student participants.

Ethically speaking, I ensured that I had the necessary IRB and school/network approval before approaching potential participants. Once students were assigned to the sixth-grade classroom, parents were fully informed about the research involvement and had the opportunity to provide consent or refuse participation for their child. I ensured that all parents were aware that there were no repercussions for refusing to participate, but I understand that my position as the dean of academics with parental concerns for their child’s success placed me in a position of perceived coercion. I attempted to mitigate this response by sending the consent letters home through the classroom teacher simultaneously with the teacher’s syllabus. To encourage honest answers to the surveys, I ensured that students understood that their participation was voluntary and that my expectation of their performance was not the success of the study but the development of necessary literary skills for them.

1.7 Significance and Limitations

As Herr and Anderson (2015) state, “The real issue for action researchers was less ‘getting it right’ than ‘making it meaningful’” (p. 72). This action research single-case
study was significant for me personally and for my pedagogical growth, and the results of this study were more broadly significant in two ways. The first broad way that this study was significant was that it could encourage other English teachers within my school to examine their students’ motivations and evaluate how their current curriculum helps or hinders student self-efficacy. This would potentially foster both intrinsic motivation in reading and growth in literary competencies over a larger demographic area and provide further comparative results.

Within my charter network, if this study provided positive correlational results, a significant argument could have been made for shifting away from “teaching to the test” into a student motivation focus. From a broader research perspective, this study could provide data or impetus for longer-term studies to evaluate this study’s results and limitations. Further research into whether any changes in motivation were retained over time and whether or not those potential changes led to sustained statistical differences in literary competencies as measured through high-stakes testing may be needed.

For the population in general, this study had the potential to be significant as, if it proved successful in long-term habit retention, significant changes to overall national literacy were achievable. Within the United States, 21% of working adults between the ages of 16 and 65 lack the basic literacy skills needed to complete everyday tasks, and roughly 20% of that population is deemed functionally illiterate (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). If this study demonstrated the potential to shift students’ intrinsic motivation to read and correlated to increased reading competency, broader-scale interest in both the results of this study and potential implications for adult literacy rates might have been expected.
Additionally, according to Vespa et al. (2020), the population of children who identify as non-Hispanic White will drop below 50% in 2020; children who identify as two or more races will have more than doubled by 2060; and beginning in 2030, the immigrating population will have overtaken the natural population in growth within the United States. The rapidly diversifying student population means that we as educators must act to ensure all students’ needs are met within their literary curricula. As it highlights the inclusion of multicultural literature, this study provided the foundation for further studies on the positive implications of diversifying standard Eurocentric “classic” literature in the classroom setting.

While the time limitations of this study focused on the adaptation of my own pedagogical knowledge and curriculum development, if positive changes were noted in the short-term using simple and low-cost techniques, then the opportunity to advance this study into one that provided the opportunity for broader-reaching significance was itself significant. I felt confident that, at least for my own growth as a teacher and administrator, it was vital to understand student motivation and discover ways we could transition from external to internal motivation in all aspects of learning.

1.8 Organization

This dissertation is divided into five separate chapters. Chapter 1 provides the overview of the study, including background information, the problem of practice, an introduction to the research questions guiding the study, an overview of the three theories used as the theoretical framework for this study (situated expectation–value theory, self-determination theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy), and a brief discussion of the research design and methodologies that were used. Chapter 2 focuses on providing a
thorough study of relevant existing literature on the problem of practice. Chapter 3 explains the methodology that was used in this action research study. Next, Chapter 4 presents the data collection and analysis results from the study, as well as a discussion and statement of findings and results. The final chapter, Chapter 5, specifies an action plan and implications for future research.

1.9 List of Definitions

The following terms are directly related to the research conducted for this study and are provided here for clarification:

**Action Research** – any research conducted by a school employee in an educational role or other stakeholder within the learning environment that collects data specific to their school’s operation, their own pedagogy, or the learning methodology of their own students (Mills, 2018).

**Coding Scheme** – a system in which qualitative data is grouped into categories in order to provide similar data for comparison (Mertler, 2020).

**Computer-Adaptive Assessment** – an assessment administered by a computer that adjusts the next question or question set presented to the student based upon the student’s prior responses to provide an accurate measure of a student’s capabilities in a particular area (Brookhart & Nitko, 2019).

**Convenience Sampling** – a sample that is based on a matter of convenience for the researcher, such as time, money, availability, or location (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy** – the idea of using student culture to show appreciation for different cultures and to transcend any negative effects of focusing teaching on the dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 2009).
**Expectancy–Value Theory** – a theory of motivation according to which an individual’s motivation for any given task is dependent on the individual’s expectation for success as well as the perceived value of completing the task (Leaper, 2011).

**Extrinsic Motivation** – motivation derived from positive or negative consequences outside of the activity itself (“Intrinsic Motivation,” n.d.).

**Intrinsic Motivation** – motivation derived from pleasurable feelings of interest and/or enjoyment that accompany and are linked to the activity taking place (“Intrinsic Motivation,” n.d.).

**Likert-Type Scale** – a statement that requests individuals to respond on a continuum representing something other than the extent of the individual’s agreement with the statement (Mertler, 2020).


**Median** – the midpoint of a distribution, or the point of a distribution at which 50% of the scores fall above and 50% fall below this point (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

**Mixed-Methods Design** – a study that employs both qualitative and quantitative research data (Mertler, 2020).

**Motivations for Reading Questionnaire** – a tool developed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) to assess student motivations regarding reading (Motivations for Reading Questionnaire [MRQ], 2019).
Northwest Education Association – a not-for-profit, research-based organization that provides students and educators with precise growth and proficiency assessments to provide insights and assist with tailoring instruction (NWEA.org, 2022).

Observation – a method whereby the researcher carefully watches and records what is seen and heard in a specific setting (Mertler, 2020).

On Grade Level – the median RIT score for a grade level; represents the median competency expected for a grade level; students achieving this level of RIT or higher are deemed to be on or above grade level (Fleming, 2021).

Qualitative Data – the use of words as data to describe and evaluate individual experiences and examine world perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Quantitative Data – data that is gathered when a variable that is being studied is measured using a scale that provides a numerical value for the amount of the variable that is present; typically reported as a score (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Rasch Unit – an equal-interval measurement scale designed for the MAP to simplify test score interpretation across national/international test administration locations and allow for the mapping of student growth year over year (Marion, 2021).

Representative Sampling – selected participants were chosen for demonstrating or possessing the traits, characteristics, and/or behaviors under investigation (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Self-Determination Theory – a framework for studying human motivation that defines and develops the roles of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and focuses on social and cultural factors that could affect initiative and performance quality. SDT posits that there are three main conditions that support an individual’s experience—autonomy,
competence, and relatedness—and the degree to which these needs are supported or unsupported affects the individual’s wellness within the setting in which the needs are required (“Theory Overview,” 2020).

**Standard Deviation** – a number that represents a distribution’s spread; the variability of individual scores in a distribution (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

**Survey** – a series of techniques used to gather quantitative data that requires the administration of a collection of questions or statements to a specified population (Mertler, 2020).

**Triangulation** – the process of using multiple data sources to establish reliability and/or validity of data (Mertler, 2020).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The problem of practice for this research study revolved around student motivation for reading. Multiple studies have demonstrated that student reading comprehension capacity and performance on standardized assessments improve when intrinsically motivated to read (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Unfortunately, as students progress through middle school, motivation to read decreases (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Studies have demonstrated that, using MRQs, motivation drivers can be evaluated, and classroom methods and interventions can be utilized to increase engagement with reading (Guthrie & Klouda, 2014; Mucherah & Ambrose-Stahl, 2014; Neugebauer, 2017; Shaffer et al., 2013). However, there has been no direct evaluation of the impact of student autonomy in text choice and culturally relevant texts on intrinsic motivation development.

Therefore, the purpose of this mixed-methods action research single-case study was to evaluate how increased autonomy of text choice and access to culturally relevant materials affected the development of intrinsic motivation in underperforming student reading within a sixth-grade classroom. To provide this evaluation, the following research questions were identified:

1. What do students self-report as motivation to read?
2. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation to read?

3. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?

Answering these questions provided insight into whether autonomy within the classroom has the potential to increase perceived value of reading and subsequent engagement with reading according to situated expectancy-value theory, leading to increased intrinsic motivation for reading according to self-determination theory. Additionally, the final question provided data on how reading autonomy within the classroom impacts reading comprehension. The results furthered my understanding of student motivation and preferences, as well as demonstrated comprehension, providing significant feedback for future pedagogical decisions.

This review of existing literature is organized into six sections. The first section provides the background on the development of reading comprehension testing and analysis, followed by a look at the research conducted on the effects of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on reading comprehension. Next, I review research pertaining to the importance of culturally relevant texts in student comprehension and subsequent motivation and then provide background and relevant material about the theoretical framework that underpins this study. Then, I discuss previous research studies about attempts to increase student intrinsic motivation as well as gaps in existing bodies of research that were used to develop the problem for this study. Lastly, the review concludes with a summary.
2.2 Purpose and Methodology of Literature Review

The purpose of a complex literature review is to both establish the current level of knowledge pertaining to a problem and understand how the current knowledge led to a question requiring new research (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). Thus, the purpose of this literature review was to determine the historical record of research pertaining to reading motivation in middle school students, with a focus on sixth grade, as well as records of classroom interventions and procedures that had already been attempted to identify gaps in potential classroom-level intervention strategies. To evaluate both theoretical and field-based knowledge, this literature review was based on primary sources including reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and books related to the research topic. The methodology for selection was primarily searching the University of South Carolina’s online academic network, which included the use of EBSCO, JSTOR, and Sage Journals Premier.

2.3 Historical Perspective

History of Standardized Testing

Evaluation of reading practices and comprehension began in the early 1900s, focusing on reading speed versus efficiency (King, 1916, 1917), reading speed versus reproduction capacity (Whipple & Curtis, 1917), reproduction skills in oral reading versus silent reading (Mead, 1917), and an initial investigation into reading comprehension through question and answer on textual content (Cameron, 1918; Thorndike, 1917). This was the start of the quest to determine the “phenomenological act of comprehension” (Sarroub & Pearson, 1998) utilized during reading. The difficulty with indirect reporting of comprehension results, however, remained that the indices used
were a mere indicator of the comprehension process instead of the actual process itself, a shortcoming that continues through modern research (Sarroub & Pearson, 1998).

The rise in interest in measuring reading comprehension paralleled the increased desire to create analytical statistics to measure student and school performance. With the spread of the ability to compare school performances, the early measuring tool technology evolved as well, with the first multiple-choice format standardized test presented in 1914 through the Kansas Silent Reading Test (Mooney, 2015). Mooney explains how, as the technology to make standardized testing became more accessible, the prevalence of local or state-level standardized testing increased, although the significance of the results was muted until the space race of the 1950s and 1960s. In this era, according to Mooney, President Kennedy announced that we, as a nation, must step up our academic and educational rigor to compete with international powers in the race to space, and in 1965 President Lyndon Johnson signed the first law requiring standardized testing, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

ESEA was designed to provide equitable learning opportunities to disadvantaged students by providing financial assistance to schools that served underprivileged children and was one of the largest federal fiscal expenditures to assist academically vulnerable students conducted (Thomas & Brady, 2005). ESEA was expanded over time to include specific at-risk groups, including English-language learners, women, and Indigenous students, and provisions requiring demonstrated improvement in student performance up to, and including, proficiency in schools that accepted ESEA funds were included (Thomas & Brady, 2005). While many states determined that students that did not pass the ESEA test could not graduate as they had not demonstrated basic proficiency, there
was no accountability or consequences tied to student performance (Mooney, 2015). As time progressed, a social consensus was reached that the ESEA test was too simple and that international schools were surpassing the United States’ school system in academic achievement (Mooney, 2015).

This perception was brought to the educational forefront in 1983 with *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) (Mooney, 2015). With the release of *Nation*, the NCEE stated that academic performance on ESEA testing was decreasing and that the future of the United States’ economic success rested on raising academic standards. The NCEE cited declining test scores and data indicating that over 23 million people in the country were functionally illiterate with only 20% of high school seniors able to write a persuasive essay to support the notion that the technological prowess of the country was going to be surpassed by the international community, which was demonstrating stronger academic performance results (as cited in Mooney, 2015). Academic reform advocates used the results of this publication to apply pressure to increase school and teacher accountability measures, particularly in the form of increased standardized testing, according to Mooney.

These accountability measures were included with the adoption of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act signed into law in 2002 by President George W. Bush (Dee & Jacob, 2011; Mooney, 2015). NCLB dictated that states would conduct an annual performance assessment for all students in grades three through eight tied to state standards to identify schools that were failing to make adequate progress in yearly academic gains and provided consequences and rewards to schools based upon the
standardized assessment data (Dee & Jacob). NCLB also provided a $1-billion-per-year initiative called Reading First to assist in achieving the goal of having all children be at or above grade level in reading proficiency by third grade (Gamse et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, in its final mandated programmatic review, results from Reading First indicated that although teachers significantly increased the amount of lesson time provided for the required topics, the program did not produce a significant increase in overall student reading comprehension scores (Gamse et al., 2008), and no significant changes in reading scores were noted within the NCLB construct (Dee & Jacob).

The final significant change to educational policy came in 2015 when ESEA was significantly modified and re-titled as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Black, 2017). The purpose of the ESSA was to relieve much of the negative pressure received from the accountability and consequence measures within NCLB, and while maintaining a federal presence within education, it returned much of the responsibility for student education to the states, removing much of the ESEA’s mission for equitable education (Black, 2017). ESSA did, however, maintain the standardized testing requirements established in previous educational acts (Klein, 2018).

**Effects of Standardized Testing**

The increased use of standardized testing stemming from educational policy changes over the last 50 years has had a profound effect on K-12 public education. As the importance of standardized tests increased, the emergence of high-stakes testing—or those standardized exams that were used to create policy design decisions that affect students, teachers, administrators, and schools (Au, 2007)—also increased. This created an effect whereby, according to a qualitative synthesis of 49 studies focusing on the
effects of high-stakes testing, curriculum content was narrowed to focus on the skills being tested, the subjects were fragmented into only the information required to be successful in testing, and the use of teacher-centered, lecture-based instructional practices increased (Au, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2017). In one study, 79% of the observed classrooms utilized predominantly lecture-based, whole-class instruction with the focus of instruction being the textbook and associated workbooks (Neugebauer & Blair, 2020).

Also inherent to the learning standards evaluated in standardized testing is the idea that students should develop post-reading analytical and decoding skills, including being capable of breaking the entirety of the text into smaller units, analyzing and arguing relationships among the individual variables, and providing evidence to justify and support their decisions and interpretations (Jensen, 2020). To accomplish this, according to Jensen, many teachers turn to “classics” (historically utilized complex novels) and spend an inordinate amount of time analyzing the literary elements, losing student engagement in the process.

2.4 Motivation Effects on Reading Comprehension

Due to the stratified nature of ELA instruction, a delay in growth in any of the necessary skills for successful reading—such as decoding words, increasing vocabulary, and creating cognitive strategies for inference—can cause significant difficulty and eventually negative consequences for children’s achievement as they progress through schooling (Wigfield et al., 2016). To practice the skills needed to gain mastery, students must be willing to put both time and effort into reading, meaning that they must have the motivation to read to be successful (Wigfield et al., 2016). However, with the increased requirement for close reading strategies within the ELA classroom and the common use
of “classic” texts that lack cultural diversity, student engagement with and subsequent motivation to read classroom texts diminish over their school experience (Jensen, 2020). Intrinsic motivation has a documented positive correlation with reading comprehension and academic achievement over time (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Wang & Guthrie, 2004; Wigfield et al., 2016), and while extrinsic motivation can positively affect reading grades in the short term, there is no correlation between extrinsic motivation and increased reading comprehension skills (Wang & Guthrie, 2004; Wigfield et al., 2016), so development of intrinsic motivation to read is necessary for reading success.

2.5 Role of Culturally Relevant Texts

One of the many goals identified in educational reform, particularly in the last 30 years, is educational equity. However, even after the educational reforms provided through 2015 with ESSA, there is still a significant gap in reading comprehension scores between White students and students of color. Recent literacy scores indicated that 17% of Black students and 22% of Latinx students in eighth grade scored a grade of “proficient” in reading comprehension compared to 40% of their White classmates (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017), and students of color are significantly more likely to report disengagement and marginalization within the classroom and ELA curriculum (Neugebauer & Blair, 2020).

Broadly speaking, reading comprehension is a necessary skill required across all learning domains (Wigfield et al., 2016). More specifically, Common Core, when applied to ELA and reading, focuses on targeting the students’ abilities to read, analyze, and interpret challenging grade-level texts, as well as inferring meaning based upon previous knowledge or cultural understanding (Olson et al., 2017). Research has demonstrated that
cultural background and perception of the world based upon experiences affects reading and in particular that the use of culturally relevant texts increases engagement and overall comprehension (Ebe, 2010). Unfortunately, the current curriculum and text choices provided to students create sources of language subordination and reading and writing skills that are subject to the dominant ideologies (Williamson et al., 2020), and with classroom libraries averaging only 22% of their content as multicultural literature (Harmon et al., 2019), students of color have not had equitable access to literary content that demonstrates their culture, significantly and negatively impacting their ability to develop reading comprehension.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The purpose of a theoretical framework is to define the lens through which a research study’s analysis is viewed and to narrow the focus of the data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Self-determination theory provided the foundation for this action research study, and situated expectancy-value theory and culturally relevant pedagogy provided additional analytical perspectives.

Self-Determination Theory

In numerous studies performed from 1980 through 2009, Deci and several colleagues (Deci, 1980; Deci & Moller, 2005; Deci & Ryan, 1991, 2008; Grolnick et al., 2002; Reeve et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2009; Ryan et al., 1985) hypothesized that one of the basic human needs imparted at birth is the intrinsic motivation to be both competent and self-determined (Schunk, 2012). As children develop, those needs separate into various interests and social requirements, such as academics and athletics, with social interactions influencing the needed differentiation direction. One of the major points of this theory is that social values are internalized for each individual based on
society’s extrinsic rewards and controls, which, while not typically aligning with typical child behaviors, can be used through development to internalize part of children’s self-regulation (Schunk, 2012). There are six sub-theories that comprise self-determination theory: cognitive evaluation theory, organismic integration theory, basic psychological needs theory, causality orientations theory, goal content theory, and relationship motivation theory (Ryan & Deci, 2019). While titled “sub-theories,” these theories add substance and relevance to one another, as well as consolidating into the overarching main theory of self-determination. Two of these sub-theories were used to provide further examination for this study:

*Cognitive Evaluation Theory:* Built on the principle that intrinsic motivation is established when people do something because they desire to do it, therefore achieving an internal reward for the task’s completion and subsequently encouraging future repetition of task completion, cognitive evaluation theory was designed to explain variances in intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). The specific impetus for this theory was to determine whether rewards negatively affected intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Research evaluating the applicability of this theory has demonstrated that there are two forms of external motivation that do affect intrinsic motivation: controlling and informational.

Controlling rewards are those rewards that, when offered, an individual deems an attempt to control their behaviors, which leads to a perceived locus of causality (de Charms, 1968) and loss of autonomy, decreasing levels of internal motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Along the same lines, motivational strategies such as controlling praise, threats of punishment, controlling language, grades, and evaluations, and even the tones
used when providing control or autonomy impact perceived autonomy, significantly decreasing intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). On the other hand, informational rewards are those perceived by the individual to be supportive of their perceived competences and are accepted as effectance relevant (White, 1959), therefore increasing intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

With this in mind, cognitive evaluation theory states that an individual’s perception of both autonomy and competence directly affects their intrinsic motivation, particularly when a person’s internal frame of reference (Koestner et al., 1984) is utilized (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Further, positive feedback that provides an authentic feeling of increased competence also increases intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Therefore, in the most simplistic form, intrinsic motivation is affected by autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

**Organismic Integration Theory:** Organismic integration theory focuses on external motivation, identifying three different forms that affect behavior: external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified and integrated regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). External regulation is extrinsic motivation that is completely dependent on external controls, drastically decreasing the likelihood of significant transfer or internalization, while introjected regulation is motivation that develops internally due to external reactions such as those created by ego, self-perfectionism, and the attachment of self-worth to competence (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Introjected regulation may appear to be a part of intrinsic motivation; however, due to the fragility of self-efficacy related to social involvement in task internalization, this is moved to the extrinsic motivation category. The final category noted in organismic integration theory is that of identified and
integrated regulation, which means that the task is internalized but not enjoyed—instead, the individual completes the task because the value of the activity makes task completion worthwhile (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Organismic integration theory then posits that individuals internalize external motivators, within social constructs, which supports the previously mentioned tenants of intrinsic motivation: autonomy, competence, and relevance.

In self-determination theory, the idea is that motivation is spread across a continuum with intrinsic motivation acting as one endpoint and extrinsic motivation acting as the countering endpoint. Behaviors that are found in the middle are considered to be internalized and self-determined (Schunk, 2012). A brief example of this is when a student is given an academic task that they do not want to complete. Wanting the reward of a good grade and hoping to avoid punishment, the student does the work. As the student’s task competence increases, their sense of ownership and control of the work increases, positively affecting their self-determination. With the increase in self-determination, there is a corollary rise in intrinsic motivation with continued positive social reinforcement (Schunk, 2012).

Self-determination theory forms the basis of this action research study as it provides a roadmap for increasing intrinsic motivation. As the overarching goal was to increase student intrinsic motivation to read, using the framework including self-determination theory through increasing student autonomy, competence, and relatedness could have directly translated to an increase in student intrinsic motivation.
**Situated Expectancy–Value Theory**

Situated expectancy-value theory began with the work of John Atkinson (1957) and continued to develop with several of his colleagues (Atkinson & Birch, 1978; Atkinson & Feather, 1966; Atkinson & Raynor, 1974, 1978), resulting in the development of the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation (Schunk, 2012). This theory was further refined (Eccles et al., 1984) and then updated and renamed to accommodate advances in associated sciences related to the theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Situated expectancy-value theory is related to general expectancy–value constructs; however, the focus has been adapted to evaluate individual motivations in areas where expectations or standards for performance have been created, particularly in an academic setting (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Expectancy–value theory is predicated upon the idea that an individual’s behavior is based upon their expectancy of achieving an identified outcome and that the outcome has enough value to the individual as to be worth the effort of attainment (Schunk, 2012). To complicate the theory, individuals’ expectancies and values are influenced by their beliefs regarding their own self-efficacy, task difficulty, self-schema, and goals, as well as by affective memories of previous similar tasks (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). These perceptions are also subject to the individual’s perceptions of social attitudes and expectations, cultural factors, beliefs and behaviors, and cultural milieu (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020).

According to situated expectancy-value theory, when determining whether a task will be accomplished, an individual weighs the perceived value against the perceived cost. Within perceived value, situated expectancy-value theory identifies three
components that provide overall value to the individual: attainment value, intrinsic value, and utility value (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020).

Attainment value considers how important task success is personally for the individual and is present subject to analysis based upon different criteria such as self-schema, social identity, and task characteristic, while intrinsic value is the personal enjoyment an individual gains from completing the task (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Utility value is comparable to extrinsic motivation in that it is based upon how the task fits into the individual’s current or future goals, but it may also play into deeply personal goals, which could make it difficult to differentiate from attainment value (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Utility value has also been further broken down into five areas or components of usefulness: education utility, career utility, day-to-day utility, social utility, and general future utility (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020).

In opposition to value, perceived cost refers to what one loses, gives up, or suffers during the completion of the task (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Perceived cost can be broken down into various types of costs, including effort cost, engagement cost, and emotional or psychological cost. Effort cost relates to how much effort must be expended to accomplish the task, engagement cost is the evaluation of how much engagement in the task reduced engagement in other opportunities, and emotional or psychological cost typically denotes the emotional and psychological impact of potential failure (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). This is important as, if an individual perceives the cost of the task to be too high, they will not attempt the task, no matter the value associated (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020).
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy was introduced by Ladson-Billings (1995) as a combined response to increasing research material on the inequality of African American student performance when compared to their White counterparts and observations of teachers that were considered exemplary in their instruction of African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Up to the 1995 publication, cultural referents and educational perspectives on culture were limited to culturally appropriate (Au & Jordan, 1981), culturally congruent (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), and culturally responsive (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982) forms of pedagogy, all of which revolved around linking to or explaining the dominant culture. Ladson-Billings created a three-dimensional approach emphasizing academic achievement, creating, maintaining, and supporting cultural competence, and providing a critique of social inequities that were designed to be embedded into the curricula (Grant et al., 1997).

Defined as an approach to pedagogical practices that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, pp. 17–18), culturally relevant pedagogy encourages teachers to focus on the cultures of the students in their care, recognize the existence of social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and modify curricula to reflect the cultures of the community (Grant et al., 1997). Teachers must believe that successful academic performance is achievable by all students, understand and see themselves as part of the community they serve, and see their role as a way of giving back to the community (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Further, teachers are encouraged to create fluid relationships with students, connect with all students, create an environment
Culturally relevant pedagogy posits that a student is more likely to be successful if their culture is recognized, accepted, and celebrated. Paired with research that demonstrates students’ reading comprehension decreases if they do not understand the cultural background of the text (Bui & Fagan, 2013), then the obvious step was to include texts that were culturally relevant to the student. Culturally relevant pedagogy also ties into cognitive evaluation theory as culturally relevant pedagogy increases information relevance for students. As part of cognitive evaluation theory, if relevance is increased, so is the likelihood of development of intrinsic motivation. For the purpose of this study, culturally relevant pedagogy was applicable in that, if students lacked the background to understand a text, then they were not fully capable of comprehending the text. If they were less than successful in comprehension, their self-efficacy decreased. As self-efficacy decreased, student motivation to read might have decreased, sending the student into a lower reading performance category than necessary based upon cultural differences.

**Theoretical Framework Summary**

The purpose of this action research study was to attempt to increase intrinsic motivation levels of sixth-grade students regarding reading. The three theories discussed combined in layers to provide the maximum opportunity for student engagement and comprehension with their choice text.

First, self-determination theory proposes autonomy as the key to increasing intrinsic motivation, so students were provided with the opportunity to choose the text
That interested them. This autonomy with text selection provided the first of the three requirements for intrinsic motivation established by self-determination theory. Then, situated states that the student must believe that they have some reasonable chance of success in comprehending the text that has been chosen, so students were able to choose any level of text that suited their comprehension needs, thereby providing an opportunity for self-scaffolding with the notion that, as competence and comfort level with the texts increase, so will self-efficacy and the desire for more challenging texts. This idea provided the competence and initial external motivation needed within organismic integration theory under self-determination theory and provided the second of the three factors needed for intrinsic motivation development.

Lastly, reading comprehension is not complete if the student does not understand the cultural implications of a text. As students were able to choose their text from any genre and in any language in accordance with their needs, the students were able to choose a culturally relevant text. This should have increased the relevance of the text to the reader. The requirement for relevance linked culturally relevant pedagogy with cognitive evaluation theory and provided the third factor that affects intrinsic motivation.

2.7 Relevant Research

Beginning in the late ’80s and continuing through ESSA, reading comprehension and literacy have been an important focus within the public education domain. With the growth of motivational theories in respect to both behavior and education, there has been an increase in research into different aspects of reading motivation of students. Significant research was conducted before and after NCLB that focused on reading motivation and its relationship with reading comprehension, but the focus of most
research was conducted in elementary or early reading classrooms, where interventions had potential to create significantly larger increases in reading comprehension achievement compared to later years. As research into student reading motivation outside of early elementary education tapered significantly, earlier research is provided as a foundation for current studies.

One of the significant early studies related to education and goal setting was conducted by McInerney et al. (1997). In this early research, the aim was to determine if different cultures had different goals regarding student performance and whether the goals affected student motivation and academic achievement (McInerney et al., 1997). With the recent passing of the ESEA, the results of this study are important for viewing academic motivations over cultures and identifying potential weaknesses and strengths of the reform bill. Using Maehr’s (1984) personal investment model and framing their research using achievement goal theory (Ames, 1992), McInerney et al. hypothesized that academic motivation was affected by cultural values. The qualitative study using Maehr’s model was conducted using five cultures—Anglo-Australian (n=1,173), Aboriginal (n=496), Australian immigrant (n=487), Navajo (n=529), and Betsiamite (n=198)—combining for a total participation of 2,883 students, with an approximately equal distribution of males and females (McInerney et al., 1997).

The results of this study indicate that stereotypes of learning motivation based upon culture are inaccurate due to data inconsistencies, and, in general, the motivational profiles across the cultures evaluated were very similar (McInerney et al., 1997). The study self-identified its limitations, noting that the data collection created an overall picture of each demographic identified but did not show individual differences, and there
was a lack of demonstrated relationship between the evaluated cultures on the variance and multiple regression analysis (McInerney et al., 1997). However, due to the methodology employed and the strength of the data analysis, when peer-reviewed, this study retained its credibility and became the starting point for follow-on studies.

Another study that analyzed motivation differences between cultures was conducted by Unrau and Schlackman (2006), who also evaluated the effect of gender and middle school grade level on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels. Using self-determination theory as the theoretical framework for their study, Unrau and Schlackman studied a primarily Hispanic urban middle school, with student participants consisting of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, most of whom were from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, over a two-year period. Their mixed-methods study was based upon both student-reported MRQ data and results from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1989; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Two different samples were required to meet the study needs. The first required students to complete both the MRQ and Gates-MacGinitie Reading test in the second year of the study, which provided a sample size of 768 Hispanic students and 244 Asian students. The second required students to have completed the MRQ questionnaire in both the first and second year of the study, resulting in a total of 470 students (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006).

Their results indicate that the higher the grade level in middle school, the lower the presence of both intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation, although the higher the grade level, the higher the score on reading achievement tests (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Gender did not play a role in intrinsic motivation; however, girls were found to be significantly more affected by extrinsic motivation when compared to their male
counterparts (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Boys scored slightly higher in reading achievement, and culture had a small but significant impact on intrinsic motivation but no effect on extrinsic motivation (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006).

The study also notes a specific decline in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as students progressed through the middle school grades, regardless of which grade they moved from and their gender (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). The identified limitations of this study include a lack of English-language learners (though the study acknowledges that some of the participants, while not officially classified as English-language learners, may have had difficulty with comprehension due to limited reading proficiency), a failure to address the range of learning experiences that could have affected student motivation prior to entry into middle school, and the lack of random sampling, which prevents generalization of results (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). While this study failed to examine some of the variables that could affect student motivation and learning, the methodology and analysis were credible and provided work upon which other studies could be based.

One of the avenues next evaluated was whether there was a relationship between reading motivation type and performance on standardized testing. As NCLB increased the use of standardized testing and graduation exams, Mucherah and Yoder (2008) set out to determine if students that had an increased level of reading motivation outperformed those students with lower levels. Utilizing the MRQ developed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), and widely utilized as the standard for evaluating K-12 motivation levels, Mucherah and Yoder evaluated reading motivation across grade level, gender, and culture and compared results to student standardized testing performance. The mixed-methods study evaluated 388 students in two schools with the following makeup: school
one consisted of 90 sixth-grade students and 130 eighth-grade students, with a cultural
makeup of 71% White, 20% Black, and 9% other ethnicities, while school two consisted
of 104 sixth graders and 64 eighth graders, with a cultural demographic of 76% White,
14% Black, and 10% other ethnicities (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008).

The results indicate that eighth graders reported that the categories of “efficacy”
and “challenge” drove their motivation, while sixth graders reported “recognition” and
“grades” as motivational categories; females were generally more motivated across five
of the categories than males, while male students of color claimed the highest level of
efficacy of all the genders and cultures studied (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). Of specific
note, while male students claimed efficacy as their motivator, females maintained higher
reading efficacy and read more challenging material, as well as reading more often than
their male counterparts (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). When compared to the results of
standardized testing, White students outperformed students of color, and females
outperformed males in overall performance (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). This tenuously
suggests that, as the females had higher overall levels of motivation to read and increased
difficulty in the material they chose, there may have been a causal relationship between
reading motivation, reading amount, and reading comprehension performance.

The major limitation presented in this study is an inability to account for the effect
of socioeconomic status on student motivation and performance as the top-performing
single group of participants was male students of color from a predominantly low-income
neighborhood, which runs contrary to previously held hypotheses (Mucherah & Yoder,
2008). The results of this study, particularly the females outperforming the males over
broad-group analysis and White students outperforming students of color, support
previously conducted studies, although the divergence of results on socioeconomic status reported provides an interesting topic for further study to determine if this situation was an outlier or if educational reforms are increasing student performance in traditionally underserved populations.

Returning to the previously identified potential link between reading motivation, amount, and comprehension (Becker et al., 2010; McInerney et al., 1997; Wang & Guthrie, 2004), Schaffner et al. (2013) set out to find conclusive evidence of a relationship between the reading elements. The researchers theorized that there should be a link between motivation and the components of reading based upon the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and situated expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Schaffner et al, 2013). This study utilized the Reading Motivation Questionnaire developed by Schaffner and Schiefele (2007) but referenced the MRQ (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) to evaluate student motivation (Schaffner et al., 2013). This qualitative study was conducted using 159 fifth-grade students—95 male and 64 female—with above-average reading competence (Schaffner et al., 2013).

Schaffner et al.’s (2013) findings are definite in that intrinsic motivation positively relates to reading amount, which proves a significant predictor of reading comprehension performance, while extrinsic motivation either neutrally or negatively affects reading amount and reading comprehension performance. The one outlier for this finding was that extrinsic motivation through competence-oriented reading did positively affect reading amount (Schaffner et al., 2013). Gender analysis showed that females outperformed the males only in passage-level comprehension, although they demonstrated significantly higher intrinsic motivation levels (Schaffner et al., 2013).
Subsequently, Schaffner et al. confirmed the positive associations between intrinsic motivation, reading amount, and both higher- and lower-order reading comprehension, even when controlling for lower-order skill competence, as well as detrimental effects of extrinsic motivation on reading amount and comprehension.

The limitations for this study note that, due to the cross-sectional data, causality could not be determined, and again, the conclusions were likely to overestimate the relationship between motivation and the reading components, and the bidirectional relationships noted by Morgan and Fuchs (2007) between reading motivation, amount, and comprehensions should also be considered when reviewing study findings. While this study failed to prove causality, it added to the growing body of literature identifying significant relationships between intrinsic reading and reading components.

Accepting that intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in student reading comprehension, Guthrie and Klauda (2014) then attempted to determine if a change in instruction supports through the application of Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) would affect student motivation and comprehension capability over traditional instruction. Focusing on the use of self-determination theory (Zhou et al., 2009) to affect behavior engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2009), situated expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), and socio-cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001), the researchers hypothesized that increasing autonomy support with the classroom with shared control between student and teacher and linking student interests to their learning activities should increase student motivation, engagement, and, subsequently, academic achievement (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014). The mixed-methods study consisted of a combination of researcher-created student surveys and results from reading
comprehension assessments and was comprised of 615 seventh graders from four separate rural middle schools with a cultural breakdown of 78.9% White, 16.7% Black, 3.4% Asian, and 1.7% other/unknown, with 47% of the study group reporting as male (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014).

The results of Guthrie and Klauda’s (2014) study indicate that when students utilized CORI, there was a statistically significant gain in informational text comprehension versus traditional instruction. Intrinsic motivation and perceived competence also increased, while the impact on reading fluency was inconclusive. Specifically identified was the increased motivation attributed to emphasizing importance and providing choice to students in their academic settings (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014).

The limitations of this study are identified as the short duration of one month, the age group of the middle school students, the use of a constrained set of constructs to bound the study, focused supports within the intervention program, lack of mediation analysis, and study topic (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014). While these were identified, they did not necessarily detract from the validity of the study, instead providing alternate avenues of study moving forward.

Following on the heels of Guthrie and Klauda (2014), Bråten et al. (2017) also focused on the CORI program, specifically the hands-on activities and activation of prior knowledge of the program and their effect on intrinsic motivation and reading comprehension. The researchers in this study conducted a mixed-methods study using a combination of the Word Chain Test (Høien & Tønnesen, 1997) for quantitative analysis and Swan’s (2003) adaptation of the MRQ (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) as a qualitative student survey to report changes in intrinsic motivation (Bråten et al., 2017). The study
consisted of 70 females and 60 males from six mixed-ability classrooms in three separate public schools, with 73 of the students reported as speaking Norwegian, Dutch, or Swedish and the remaining students reporting a language other than those as their primary language (Bråten et al., 2017).

The results of this study are interesting in that there is no significant difference between hands-on activities and activation of prior knowledge as both related to a significant increase in reading comprehension. However, neither intervention had a significant effect on intrinsic motivation (Bråten et al., 2017). The limitations noted in this study are a relatively small sample size, the fact that specific data pertaining to student participation in the prior knowledge activation groups was not recorded, the fact that a significant portion of the total sample variation was not explained by the principal component analysis pertaining to reading motivation, and the fact that the estimated reliability scores were lower than desirable (Bråten et al., 2017). However, this study’s results did align with previous studies and provided groundwork for further research regarding potential combinations of hands-on activities and activation of prior knowledge regarding reading comprehension.

Within the last couple of years, the research shifted direction from focusing on whether motivation plays a role in reading comprehension capabilities to determining whether the methods utilized to conduct motivational analyses could be modified to demonstrate further understanding of student motivations and the effect of texts outside of the curriculum being provided. Neugebauer and Fujimoto’s (2020) study evaluated the overlapping concepts of the MRQ, the MRP (Gambrell et. al., 1996), and the reader self-perception scale (RSPS) (Henk & Melnick, 1995). The mixed-methods study included
222 students from three Northeastern middle schools—43% sixth graders, 20% seventh graders, and 32% eighth graders, of whom 57% were White, 14% were Black, and 27% were identified as other races (Neugebauer & Fujimoto, 2020).

The results from this study indicate that the MRP and MRQ shared 64% of the variance in motivational results and that the MRQ and RSPS provided distinctly different results, indicating that, while they were similar, evaluative differences and separate utility remained (Neugebauer & Fujimoto, 2020). Limitations for this study included a limited sample size with a specific demographic, removing generalizability of the study (Neugebauer & Fujimoto, 2020).

On a separate but related note, Bright and Loman (2020) conducted a three-year study on how a Reading Foundation Grant and increased professional development for staff in literacy affected student reading motivation in a large urban middle school. The school-wide effort consisted of (1) the inclusion of a 50-minute daily period set aside for reading development, (2) teacher professional development, and (3) a $125,000 Reading Foundation Grant to purchase necessary texts (Bright & Loman, 2020). The grant money ensured that classroom libraries could be created, providing students access to choice reading of a variety of texts throughout the day (Bright & Loman, 2020).

This study was a mixed-methods study, again using MRQ (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) as the baseline determinant for student motivation in years one and two and follow-up interviews with reading participants in year three. The participants of this study were randomly selected sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students within the school; the study began with 141 students that took the MRQ in year one, 202 students that took the second MRQ administered, and 24 students that participated in follow-up interviews in year
three (Bright & Loman, 2020). Students were randomly selected for participation at all levels of the study.

The results for this study indicate that there was a significant shift in MRQ results focusing on Reading Efficacy, with the majority of students reporting increased reading capabilities in year two over year one, and 20 out of 24 interviewees believed that their reading competence had grown significantly (Bright & Loman, 2020). Of specific note, while Reading Efficacy increased over the study period, there was still a noticeable decline between sixth and eighth grade, supporting previous studies (Bright & Loman, 2020). The study also demonstrates that with an increased modeling of the importance of reading through the school’s actions, the students’ belief in Importance also increased between the two MRQ administrations, as did the students’ ability to increase the level of challenge in their text choices and the social motivation aspects of reading (Bright & Loman, 2020). Limitations of this study were not strictly noted, but the data collection methods led to a lack of generalizability moving forward as there was a relatively small sample size, and a breakdown determining the proportion of culturally relevant texts to the student body makeup was absent.

Another study along similar lines conducted by Torppa et al. (2020) evaluated the relationships between pleasure reading and reading comprehension of 2,525 students followed from kindergarten to ninth grade. This mixed-methods study relied upon group administered tests to determine reading fluency using the Test of Silent Reading Efficiency and Comprehension (Wagner et al., 2010) and the Salzburger Lesse-Screening Test (Mayringer & Wimmer, 2003) to determine silent reading efficiency in lower grades, while seventh and ninth graders utilized the standard Finnish reading test for
those grades, and reading comprehension was evaluated using the nationally normed reading test battery (ALLU; Lindeman, 2000; Torppa et al., 2020).

Overall results of the study demonstrate a positive association between voluntary pleasure reading and reading comprehension, although a simultaneous negative association was found with digital reading, and results were inconsistent with magazines and comic books (Torppa et al., 2020). Interestingly, the data suggests that, in lower grades, reading fluency and comprehension led to leisure reading; however, that reverses in upper grades, and the significance of the link between fluency and leisure reading declines (Torppa et al., 2020). Additionally, pleasure reading does not increase reading fluency at any point, although there is a correlation between fast readers and increased numbers of texts read (Torppa et al., 2020).

Among the limitations of the study are the fact that, due to the collection methods, it could not prove causal effects, merely suggest them; the fact that assessment of reading was provided by parental reports in the early grades and self-reporting in the later ones; and the fact that researchers were unable to eliminate measurement error from the data analysis. Overall, the length of the study, the large sample size, and the results that coincided with previous studies verify the validity of this research, which provided a new avenue of research for future reading comprehension development.

The most recent study shifted back to the original idea of motivation and focused on the relationship between self-efficacy and growth mindsets on reading comprehension. Cho et al. (2021) evaluated 303 sixth-grade students for their self-efficacy and reading mindsets at the beginning of sixth grade and then completed bi-monthly reading comprehension assessments before finishing the year with a multiple-choice
comprehensive reading comprehension assessment. Focusing their study on Bandura’s (1986) self-efficacy and the socio-cognitive theory of achievement motivation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), the researchers developed a mixed-methods study reviewing both student input and quantitative data to measure results (Cho et al., 2021). The 303 participants were 64% White, 14% Black, and 15% other ethnicities (Cho et al., 2021).

The overall results of the study confirm prior studies indicating that self-efficacy is positively associated with initial reading comprehension but does not affect comprehension growth, while mindset relationships to reading comprehension growth varied based upon the measured domains (Cho et al., 2021). One specific item of interest was the findings indicating that when students believed intelligence and capability to be malleable, their reading comprehension gains increased, which was in line with previous studies (Cho et al., 2021).

Limitations for this study include the low level of variance with one-year growth, treatment of the Likert scales within the data analysis as continuous, and a failure to examine complex explanations for self-efficacy and mindsets (Cho et al., 2021). As the research provided here supports data from previous studies, and as the analysis was conducted in line with research norms, the study still provided a viable resource for further study.

2.8 Summary

Throughout the last 50 years, education has experienced a significant series of reforms intent on providing equity for disadvantaged populations and increasing rigor to keep pace with international academic achievement scores. These reforms have led to increased accountability in the educational system and, consequently, increased use of
standardized testing. As standardized testing became the norm, research into increasing student reading comprehension scores became more centrally focused, and the number of studies pertaining to reading motivation increased. The preponderance of evidence from these studies suggests a significant positive link between increased intrinsic motivation, reading amount, and gains in both lower- and higher-order reading comprehension skills.

What had not been evaluated, however, were simple classroom interventions that teachers could use without the requirement of an instructional program or significant curricula overhaul to meet the needs of a diverse student population. According to the literature, using self-determination theory as an overarching theoretical framework with situated expectancy-value theory and culturally relevant pedagogy used to meet self-determination theory’s component requirements should increase student intrinsic motivation through autonomous and culturally relevant text choice, thereby increasing student comprehension scores on standardized assessments. No studies had evaluated sixth grade reading motivation and comprehension through this framework; thus, there was an existing need to evaluate whether increasing student autonomy through culturally relevant text choice increases intrinsic motivation and, subsequently, reading comprehension scores.
CHAPTER 3

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this action research single-case study was to identify how increasing student autonomy in text choice and delivery method affected student motivation to read. As schools have increased standardization of classroom and curricular content, student autonomy has decreased, thereby causing a decrease in feelings of competence and self-efficacy in students. A negative self-efficacy, particularly regarding reading comprehension, had been identified as a significant deterrent for future reading development and, consequently, for academic achievement.

As this study aimed not only to identify the type of motivation students were currently using regarding reading but also to influence motivation type and increase intrinsic motivation in underperforming students, the study was approached from two perspectives. First, serving as an umbrella theory for which the two subsequent theories added additional support, was Ryan and Deci’s (2017) self-determination theory. Under this theory, adjusted classroom content to allow for more autonomy encourages students to choose texts that interest them and that they believe they can complete, stabilizing or increasing self-efficacy and increasing intrinsic motivation.

The second theory in this framework that worked to supplement self-determination theory as part of the sub-theory organismic integration theory was Eccles et al.’s (1983) expectancy-value theory. Situated expectancy-value theory helped to
determine why students choose to read or not to read. To accomplish a task (in this instance reading a text), a student has to believe that they can achieve the goal and has to want to achieve the goal. In order to provide reading experiences that positively reinforce student performance, establishing whether student motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic is necessary. My expectation was that if students perceived a positive response to their autonomous reading choices, they would be more likely to continue the behavior, shifting from an extrinsic to an intrinsic motivation. Situated expectancy-value theory was also leveraged to construct external motivation for students until intrinsic motivation could be developed.

The third theory, and the final complement to self-determination theory, was Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. As student participants were primarily students of color, the availability of culturally relevant texts was necessary to ensure that students had the choice to access texts that provided them with a more thorough and culturally accurate repetition of their background knowledge and current life experiences. Access to culturally relevant materials may have affected student willingness to engage with texts, therefore affecting student motivation, and was, therefore, a necessary theory for inclusion. As part of self-determination theory’s sub-theory of cognitive evaluation theory, culturally relevant pedagogy also provided the third leg of self-determination theory by including relevance into student reading options, completing the components required for self-determination theory, and providing the last piece of encouragement for student development of intrinsic motivation.
To evaluate student motivation and the effect that my pedagogy had on potentially developing intrinsic motivation, I developed three research questions to guide my study:

1. What do students self-report as motivation to read?
2. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation to read?
3. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?

Studies have shown that students with intrinsic motivation are more likely to be successful in reading comprehension over their academic careers (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Wang & Guthrie, 2004; Wigfield et al., 2016), so noting which students were intrinsically motivated, externally motivated, and unmotivated provided a basis for understanding the students’ beliefs about their capabilities. This provided the impetus for the first question. Student motivation was delineated as either intrinsic (meaning that the student chose to read based upon their own desire to do so) or extrinsic (meaning that the student only read because of grades, parents, or other external pressures).

Many of the students I talked to about reading said that reading was boring or too hard, so by allowing the students to choose the texts that were more interesting to them, the potential to shift external motivation to intrinsic motivation was present. Again, if the student learned that they could enjoy reading, then the possibility of positive development of intrinsic motivation leading to the opportunity for future comprehension growth was established. This was the theory behind both questions two and three.

Within this chapter, I discuss a quick background on the reasons behind this study, before progressing into the methodology for the study. The remainder of the chapter discusses the research design, the framework that guided the study, the setting of
the study, and the demographics of the study participants. Next, the various intervention steps and processes highlight the associated data collection processes and provide specific data types and collection measures. The final section discusses specifics on how data was coded, categorized, and analyzed, and the chapter ends with a summary.

3.2 Research Design

This research study was a mixed-methods action research single-case study that used a combined qualitative design and mixed-methods triangulation design. As I was the dean of academics overseeing the sixth-grade ELA teacher, I collaborated slightly insofar as I evaluated her lesson plans as they affected study results. Further, as this teacher is a first-year teacher, input from the instructional coach into lesson plans was provided, although lesson plan modification centered around curriculum presentation and did not affect study design. While my school did encourage the use of professional learning communities, the design of this study was to be conducted as a part of the student enrichment versus the curriculum presentation classwork, and my ability as dean to oversee lesson plan development prevented collaboration infringement into study design. Therefore, I acted as a sole researcher within the classroom study environment. This study focused primarily on student-reported information and documentation, so developing student trust in me as an observer and occasional co-teacher was necessary for accurate data reporting.

Considering that changes in student motivation were being evaluated, a mixed method approach was the most logical. In this study, I tracked student perception of motivational shifts using a combination of Likert-type scale bounded questions (quantitative data), statistical standardized testing data results (quantitative data), and
open-ended questions to determine participant perspectives and reasoning (qualitative data). Further, the use of the mixed-methods approach allowed for a more conclusive research study, allowed for integration of data for a more accurate interpretation and analysis, and provided a deeper understanding of the study content (McKim, 2017).

As this study evaluates a small subgroup of students over time using an intervention, a single-case study design was the most applicable. This study design allowed each participant to be their own comparison, increasing the internal validity of the study and providing a stronger basis for causal inferences and generalizability (Lobo et al., 2017). As the setting and participants that I had selected were considered a bounded system, a qualitative case study design applies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While the bounded system and overarching goal of the study tended toward qualitative research, I simultaneously layered my qualitative data with quantitative data using Likert-type scale closed questions, comment and behavior tallying during observations, and standardized reading comprehension scores. This “systemic triangulation of perspectives . . . [provided] a methodological framework for using mixed-methods in a constructivist approach” (Flick et al., 2012, p. 101). To maximize the validity of this study, both quantitative and qualitative data sets were utilized to ensure both the personal perspectives and the measurable changes were recorded for integration and analysis.

The theoretical framework that guided this study revolved around three distinct theories: Eccles et al.’s (1983) expectancy-value theory, Ryan and Deci’s (2017) self-determination theory, and Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy with framework inclusion as delineated in the Table 3.1 below.
Table 3.1

*Study Theoretical Framework Application*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study week #</th>
<th>Study documentation</th>
<th>Data type</th>
<th>Supporting theory</th>
<th>Research question #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1. Initial MAP Test</td>
<td>1. Quantitative</td>
<td>1. Situated expectancy-value theory (SEVT)</td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Initial MRQ</td>
<td>2. Quantitative</td>
<td>2. Self-determination theory (SDT)</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
</tr>
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<td>1. Student Reading Observation</td>
<td>1. Quantitative</td>
<td>1. SEVT</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. SDT</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>1. Quantitative</td>
<td>1. SEVT</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Student Reading Reflection</td>
<td>2. Qualitative</td>
<td>2. SDT</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. CRP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1. Student Reading Observation</td>
<td>1. Quantitative</td>
<td>1. SEVT</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Initial Interview</td>
<td>2. Qualitative</td>
<td>2. SDT</td>
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<td>3. CRP</td>
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<td>1. Student Reading Observation</td>
<td>1. Quantitative</td>
<td>1. SEVT</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
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<td>2. Qualitative</td>
<td>2. SDT</td>
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<td>3. CRP</td>
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<td>2. SDT</td>
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<td>3. CRP</td>
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<td>1. SEVT</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2. Concluding MAP Test</td>
<td>2. Quantitative</td>
<td>2. SDT</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.3 Research Setting and Participants**

This research study took place on the grounds of a small but expanding charter school in the suburbs of a large metropolitan area in the southeastern United States that will be referred to as Hilltop Secondary School for the purposes of this study. As I was specifically looking to analyze my school’s students and their reactions to our
pedagogical approaches, I used a combination of convenience and typical sampling based on the capabilities and motivational propensities of the students enrolled at Hilltop. The sixth-grade ELA class consisted of 84 students divided into three cohorts with 90-minute classes. The demographics from this class demonstrated that the class was 58% Black students, 15% Hispanic students, 14% unlisted race students, 7% two or more races, and 6% White students. Further, 54% of the class were female, 46% were male, and 8% identified as English as a second language students. Academically, only 19.5% of the sixth graders were on grade level when they entered the classroom this year based upon their 21–22 TCAP results obtained at the end of their fifth-grade year (Nelson, 2022).

To evaluate students for motivation, all 84 sixth-grade students were provided with the baseline MRQ consisting of 53 questions, each with a randomized number that would result in their participant number should they become a participant, and 72 were fully completed and returned. The results were broken down by categories per the MRQ scoring directions (Wigfield et al., 1996), and the four separate categories determined to reference intrinsic motivation, Reading Efficacy (RE), Reading Challenge (RC), Reading Curiosity (C), and Reading Aesthetics (A) were scored. Reading Efficacy is defined as “the belief that one can be successful at reading” (Wigfield et al., 1996, p. 2), Reading Challenge is the “satisfaction of mastering and assimilating complex ideas in a text” (Wigfield et al., 1996, p. 2), Reading Curiosity is a student’s desire to learn about a particular topic, and Reading Aesthetics is “the enjoyment of experiencing different kinds of literary or informational texts” (Wigfield et al., 1996, p. 3). To identify students with lower-than-average intrinsic motivation, a mean was established for all four categories with the following results: RE 3.0, RC 2.6, C 2.675, and A 2.857. Students who scored at
or below the resulting means on two out of the four categories met the first step of participant selection, reducing the number of possible participants to 34.

The class was then given the NWEA MAP fall assessment as part of the school’s normal assessment calendar. As I was specifically looking to analyze the growth of lower-performing students, all participants needed to fall below the 50th percentile in performance but above the 10th percentile, which is the cutoff for placement in reading assistance programs. This reduced the potential study participant list to 23. All 23 students that had not returned the initial permission forms were provided with a second letter of consent to participate in the research study for parent signature, and five were returned approved. This population allowed me to achieve a two-tier sample, providing for deeper analysis of the data gathered on specific students to either more fully develop or provide specific data for analysis. The five participants retained their randomized numbers from their initial MRQ distribution but were identified as students 24, 33, 34, 47, and 62 for the duration of the study to retain anonymity in data collection, although for ease of discussion they are referred to by the pseudonyms Adam, Bailey, Charlie, David, and Eli, respectively. The five single-case study participants were 100% Black, 80% male, and 20% female. One student had an individualized education program for math only, one was provided with math intervention, and one had a 504 for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, but no reading disabilities or limitations were present.

With the significant number of students of color, my positionality as a Caucasian female that gravitated toward Eurocentric texts with female protagonists reduced my familiarity with and easy access to multicultural texts that may have been desirable to my study participants. Further, my view of texts appropriate for my student body was drawn
from an educator perspective and not that of a person of color, affecting student text choices. As the sixth-grade teacher is Black, much of this concern is mitigated; however, the classroom library materials were limited in multicultural diversity, increasing reliance on external library and internet-provided texts to meet those requests. While students had the opportunity to use any text from any source, the readily available classroom library may have been reduced in its capacity to meet student reading needs based upon my own inherent biases and experiences as the researcher.

Further, as an avid reader myself, my perspectives of reading could have colored my perception of student responses to text material and study results, skewing data accuracy. However, this study was designed with established quantitative data collection methods to be used in correlation with qualitative data methods, which added validity to the study and significantly reduced any inherent biases presented. Subsequently, my role as an authority figure in the classroom may have skewed motivational data as students potentially answered motivation-related questions in a manner they believed would be the most likely to provide positive response from me as the authority figure, thus skewing initial and subsequent motivational data.

3.4 Intervention

I utilized several strategies in this study to identify student engagement more accurately with autonomously selected texts and to note and analyze potential shifts in student motivation regarding reading. This study took six weeks to allow time for motivation changes to occur and present within the study data.

As my school assessed all students for reading proficiency using a baseline NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test within the first week of returning,
the first step in the intervention was to analyze the initial MAP data. The MAP test is created annually by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and is usually conducted at Hilltop in the beginning of the fall semester to determine student capabilities and provide a starting point in curriculum and intervention design. The MAP test is a widely used computer-adaptive test that evaluates up to five goals in reading comprehension, making it a standard tool in student evaluation (Brookhart & Nitko, 2019).

The second step in the intervention was to use the MRQ (Appendix A) created by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), with acknowledgment of open-source status and specific permission for use from Dr. Wigfield and Dr. Guthrie, respectively (A. Wigfield & J. Guthrie, personal communications, 2023), which leverages a Likert-like scale to determine reading motivation. This intervention has been proven accurate in several research studies, establishing itself as a successful tool to evaluate student reading motivations (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999; Pressley, 2002). This evaluation provided an initial baseline in student motivation sources (intrinsic or extrinsic) for reading.

The next step was to allow study students to autonomously choose a text with which to interact over the next several weeks and allow them time in class daily to read their selected text. Students were able to select a text from the classroom library, our online text library, a local library or bookstore, or any other hard copy or digital text appropriate for the student. During the daily reading, single-case study participants were observed weekly using the Recording Sheet for Student Reading Engagement observation tool (Appendix B). This observation tool modified from the Charles Darwin University School of Education Observing Student Engagement Form (Charles Darwin University,
n.d.) allowed me to track the amount of time a single-case study participant spent reading their chosen text, as well as any off-task behaviors the participant demonstrated. Data from this tool established context regarding participant engagement with their choice text and provided insight into how motivated the student was to read the text on any given day.

Concurrent with step three, step four was to develop weekly small group “book clubs” where the whole class group gathered with peers to discuss the texts that they had chosen to read using prompts provided through non-study-related grade-level classroom learning material. Groups were sometimes selected randomly, sometimes assigned by the teacher of record, and sometimes selected by students themselves. The teacher of record used each “book club” to help reinforce lessons from that week and to provide an opportunity for free discussions related to the texts the students were reading. As part of the situated expectancy-value theory development, this was intended to increase the value of the reading, as the students would only be able to complete the discussion if the reading had taken place, and to serve as a way to encourage peer pressure for continued reading.

Next, step five was to use biweekly student reflection forms (Appendix C) and interview reports (Appendix D), which were used alternatingly each week. Student reflection forms adapted from the University of Minnesota Duluth (n.d.) asked single-case study participants to provide generalized information and feelings regarding the texts that they were reading, followed by more in-depth interviews to determine the participants’ interest in their texts. Level of interest both in their chosen texts and overall motivation in reading were noted and tracked for ongoing development. Interviews were
used to validate respondent information, clarify any incongruence within the data, and verify participant perceptions on study questions.

At the conclusion of the study, step six was to provide participants with a reassessment using the MRQ to determine any changes in motivation over the duration of the study and a retake of the MAP fall test to note any changes in reading comprehension performance. These results provided quantitative data that was combined with the qualitative data to create a thorough evaluation of the effects of student reading choice on reading motivation and subsequent reading comprehension.

3.5 Data Collection Measures

To maximize the validity of the data collected in this study, I used a combination of methods to triangulate accurate participant responses to the research questions (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Specifically, I employed standardized test data, surveys, small-group observations, student artifacts in the form of reflections, and interviews to evaluate participant responses to the study.

Data Security

The first consideration for study data was to ensure the security of the data that was collected. All students who participated in the study were assigned a numerical value to replace their names for anonymity in survey results and associated alphabetical references for discussion purposes. All study-related files were kept on a password-protected computer, and all paper, video, and audio files were kept in a locked desk within a locked office. File transfer between study location and analysis location was conducted via the password-protected computer located in a secured bag. Upon arrival at the analysis location, all study documents, video, and audio files were held in a locked
safe for the duration of the study. Audio files were transcribed into files on the password-protected computer and were erased from the recording device. Video recordings of the silent reading were used to verify behavior tracking and were erased promptly after data transfer. At no point was identifying information pertaining to any student participant available for viewing or discussion, and all documents and paperwork were completed in such a manner that, should there be a compromise in the study security, student identifying information remained confidential.

**Reading Comprehension Data**

Baseline reading comprehension data was taken from the NWEA MAP testing results conducted prior to the start of the study and at the completion of the study. Changes in reading comprehension scores provided significant insight into student growth and, when compared alongside any potential changes in reading motivation, were used to identify a potential causal relationship. The MAP test specifically measured growth in reading comprehension by comparing student performance across national norms that were created using data from 1.5 million students and more than 5.5 million test opportunities (NWEA, 2018). The student scores were normalized, and student capabilities were identified as a percentage based upon their peers’ scores. Student performance was then tracked through each subsequent administration of the MAP test to determine comprehension growth. The analysis of this quantitative data yielded results that provided insight into research question three.

**Surveys**

Throughout the course of the study, I used two distinct types of surveys: the MRQ and a researcher-generated survey to determine student motivation development through
reflection (Appendix C). The MRQ was used at the beginning and end of the study to evaluate student motivation changes over the course of the autonomous text choice period. The MRQ presented 53 short Likert-scale questions that assisted in determining student reading motivation. While presented as a valid and reliable measure of reading comprehension in middle school students (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999; Pressley, 2002), validity results were not confirmed when evaluated by Watkins and Coffey (2004), indicating that while evidence suggests that the MRQ is a reliable tool on its own, additional data to confirm findings is required.

The student reading reflection form (Appendix C) consisted of open-response questions used to assist in determining and clarifying student perceptions of reading motivations and was validated through peer and supervisor review. The open-response questions were limited in scope in order to assist single-case study participants in being specific in their responses and to assist in focusing on individual questions. As middle school student writing skills were limiting for some participants regarding writing capabilities, biweekly interviews were also used to clarify answers provided on survey results. Both the MRQ and researcher-created surveys were designed to provide qualitative and quantitative data that was analyzed to answer research questions one and two.

**Observations**

Every day, students had the opportunity to read their choice novel, and once a week, the whole class group participated in “book club” discussions where they discussed various literary aspects of their chosen texts with a small group of their classmates based upon learned topics each week. These topics were chosen by the teacher of record based
upon the standards taught that week or to reinforce previous concepts and were used to assist the student in applying classroom concepts to chosen texts. One book club might have asked students to discuss the actions of the main character in the text and how those actions help to develop the plot, while the next week might cover themes. Once a week, I observed and video-recorded during the student reading time to note how long each study participant read and how often in each reading period they distracted themselves or were distracted from the reading. The video recordings were used to verify observation records and then were deleted. These observations assisted in the evaluation of research questions one and two, combined with the quantitative results from the MRQ and qualitative results of the reading reflections and interviews, and provided a level of triangulation to ensure accuracy in the surveys and other forms of data acquisition.

Interviews

To ensure that my data analysis was correct, and to create a more personal place for single-case study participants to voice their responses to data inquiries, I conducted biweekly semi-structured individual interviews. While I had nine questions planned for initial interviews, and three to five planned questions for subsequent interviews based upon the initial data results for participant validation, I also provided the opening for additional questions based upon single-case study participant responses for clarification and/or deepening understanding of participant perspective. The purpose of the interviews was to further my understanding of participant reactions to their chosen texts and primarily served to strengthen data points provided via other methods in response to research questions one and two.
3.6 Data Analysis Strategies

As a mixed-methods approach was used for this study, the strategies through which I analyzed the data required different analytical designs. For the qualitative aspect of this study, I employed a combination of open coding and axial coding (Saldaña, 2012), while for the quantitative portion of the study, I chose a combination of descriptive statistics including frequency analysis, measures of variability, and measures of central tendencies.

Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative data analysis, I employed a combination of Saldaña’s (2012) coding strategies: open coding, and axial coding. Because this study occurred over several weeks and the data covered different answers over various periods of time, coding by time period was necessary to monitor the changes in participant perspective and engagement over time. The time lapse coding allowed me to track participant responses over the course of the study to see if patterns in engagement developed. Additionally, the use of open and axial coding provided me with the opportunity to code my qualitative data in a manner best suited for the results of research questions. While I anticipated relatively noticeable patterns of data within my results, providing myself with the flexibility to identify those patterns in an open manner significantly increased the aperture for analysis.

Open coding was used in two different manners in order to extract as much data as possible from my qualitative sources, one specifically for the reading reflections and another for the interview data. For the reading reflections, an initial round of a priori coding was conducted to evaluate references to culturally relevant texts, and general
attitudes towards reading. The second round of coding consisted of open coding to identify themes emerging on participant attitudes toward anything that was or could have been related to reading value or engagement. For the interview data, the first round of coding was open coding through three different rounds of evaluation, with the first round being for themes denoting reading importance, the second round analyzed for themes regarding participant attitudes toward reading, and the final round used to evaluate data for themes regarding reading efficacy.

Upon completion of initial open coding, the use of axial coding to categorize study data reduced the overall amount of data to a more reasonable level for pattern discernment, allowing for a more thorough analysis between qualitative and quantitative data at the conclusion of the data analysis. For this round of coding across both the reflections and the interviews, axial coding was used to identify themes and for broader analysis and triangulation with quantitative data.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

When researching options for quantitative data analysis, the notion that this study was best served through descriptive statistics became apparent. Within the umbrella of descriptive statistics, I focused my quantitative analysis on frequency analysis, measures of variability, and measures of association.

During this study, the use of close-ended questions in Likert-type scales made measures of variability necessary to analyze shifts in patterns of responses over time. Shifts in scores and positions on the response spectrum were reviewed and compared to quantitative responses revolving around the same material to triangulate and validate information. To analyze the small-group observations, frequency analysis was used to
calculate and study participant engagement with texts through noting the number of off-task behaviors demonstrated by each participant to evaluate the level of engagement with the text as part of situated expectancy-value theory. While this analysis spanned both quantitative and qualitative data, the qualitative data was used to support the evidence provided in the numerical responses to the quantitative data collections methods previously described.

3.7 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to define the frameworks, participants, and methodologies that I applied to conduct and analyze the research for this study. As the participants were sixth-grade students under my purview, understanding how to efficiently improve student intrinsic motivation for reading and its effects on reading comprehension had the potential to significantly impact my future pedagogical approach, as well as how I require other ELA teachers in my school to approach reading instruction. Viewing resulting data through the varied lenses of situated expectancy-value theory, self-determination theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy provided a holistic evaluation of student motivation regarding reading and how that motivation changes when autonomy is provided regarding reading choice. Students were analyzed using mixed-methods consisting of well-known quantitative instruments, specifically MRQ and MAP test results, combined with researcher-created qualitative surveys, observations, and interviews, to triangulate how student reading motivation was affected through increased reading autonomy. Qualitative motivational data was then analyzed in conjunction with the MAP data to identify existing correlation between changes in reading motivation and any reading comprehension changes.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The problem of practice that this study targeted was that a lack of student engagement and intrinsic motivation to read assigned classroom texts has led to losses of skill development and self-efficacy in reading capability. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to evaluate how offering students choices in their reading texts affects their intrinsic reading motivation and subsequent reading comprehension. The following research questions were identified:

1. What do students self-report as motivation to read?
2. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation to read?
3. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?

The theoretical framework guiding the analysis of this study used self-determination theory, situated expectancy-value theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Self-determination theory established that intrinsic motivation is built upon the idea that providing autonomy, developing competence, and establishing relevance of a topic or event will increase the subject’s intrinsic motivation to complete the action (Ryan & Deci, 2019). In this instance, the goal was to develop intrinsic motivation to read, which translated into allowing students to choose a text that met their competence and self-efficacy levels and was relevant to their interests or lives.
Notionally, this freedom to choose texts met self-efficacy and relevancy requirements and should have increased student intrinsic motivation to read. To measure intrinsic motivation for reading levels, the MRQ (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) was used at the beginning and end of the study to evaluate changes in reading motivation.

The situated expectancy-value theory expanded on by Eccles and Wigfield (2020) posits that motivation is also developed based upon the expected returns on investment of time and energy. The less effort or greater the reward, the more likely someone is to complete an action or activity. Therefore, in conjunction with self-determination theory, situated expectancy-value theory reinforces the concept that self-efficacy plays a significant role in motivation but also notes that with the proper external initial rewards or motivators, intrinsic motivation can be developed as self-efficacy increases and the task difficulty decreases (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). To encourage the development of self-efficacy through situated expectancy-value theory, partner and small-group book clubs were used to provide external motivation to continue reading to build comfort in the chosen texts and subsequently increase self-efficacy. Further, leveraging off previous dissertation work by Jenna Cambria (2014) noting that when students perceive a task to have value, levels of engagement increase along with motivation, participant engagement behaviors (Appendix B) were tracked to evaluate any changes in perceived value to compare and validate student self-reported values through reading reflections (Appendix C) and interviews (Appendix D).

The final theory used to ground this study was culturally relevant pedagogy introduced by Ladson-Billings (1995). This theory posits that if a student is provided with culturally relevant material, they are more likely to engage with the material as they have
the background knowledge necessary to comprehend the meanings (Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2019). Acknowledging the large percentage of students of color in my school, the availability of culturally relevant texts from which to choose their desired text was important to consider as cultural relevancy plays a significant role in both overall relevancy and self-efficacy through background knowledge. Student choice regarding culturally relevant materials was tracked through the Student Reading Reflection Form.

The study was conducted in a small but expanding charter secondary school outside of a large urban center. As previous studies suggested that increased text autonomy would increase motivation, the focus for this single-case study was to further narrow the scope to see how text autonomy would affect reading motivation and comprehension growth in underperforming sixth-grade students. To provide a baseline of motivation and reading comprehension skill changes over the course of the study, all sixth-grade students were given pre- and post-intervention MRQs (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) and the NWEA MAP. The pre-intervention MRQ and NWEA MAP assessment results were used to narrow the convenience population to a sample population for a single-case study of five participants using the mean results from the intrinsic motivation identifiers from the MRQ and percentiles from the MAP to identify students with lower-than-average intrinsic reading motivation and ability levels between the 10th and 50th percentiles in reading comprehension.

The intervention consisted of the sixth-grade English teacher of record creating a 10-minute dedicated reading time daily for each class. Students were allowed to choose a reading text that appealed to them, either a book that they brought to class, a book chosen from the classroom library, or an online text of any genre through school-provided free
access software. After students had chosen their texts, the 10-minute counter was activated, and students were allowed to read throughout the duration. Single-case study participants were tracked during individual reading times over a period of six weeks using the Reading Engagement Tracker to measure their engagement and suggested value of reading. Additionally, the use of surveys and reflection forms allowed study participants to provide perspective and feedback throughout the course of the study.

Data analysis is broken down based upon data needed to answer each research question based upon the theoretical framework. The first research question, “What do students self-report as motivation to read?” was answered using pre- and post-MRQs. The second research question was answered through a combination of tools and theoretical frameworks. The pre- and post-MRQ were used to compare differences in student-reported motivations to determine if autonomy had increased reported intrinsic motivation. Additionally, participant reading engagement observations, reflection forms, and participant interviews were used to triangulate self-reported motivation changes and changes in reading importance to evaluate how situated expectancy-value theory and culturally relevant pedagogy influenced motivation changes. The final research question was answered using pre- and post-intervention NWEA MAP testing.

This chapter will discuss the results of the research study and is divided into four separate subsections. The first section will present the quantitative data from the MRQ, NWEA, and observation form as well as the student reading reflection and interview qualitative data. The second section will discuss general findings based upon the presented data, and the third section will discuss single-case study specific findings by
participant as they relate to the research questions. The final section will provide a summary of the chapter.

4.2 Data Presentation

Due to high rates of transitions and transfers, of the 84 sixth-grade students that took the pre-intervention MRQ and MAP, only 45 completed the post-intervention assessments and returned study permission forms, so grade-level results were limited to those 45 students. These students are identified as the whole-class group and their results serve as a comparison for the single-case study group results. The five single-case study participants were analyzed individually for the MRQ, MAP, observations, reading reflections, and interview responses. The individual results from single-case study participants were then compared and analyzed for single-case study group results. The single-case study group results were then compared to the whole-class group for a two-tiered evaluation, and findings reflect both the single-case study group results and the comparison to the whole-class group results.

Participant-Reported Motivation Data

To answer my first research question, “What did students self-report as motivation to read?” the MRQ was used to evaluate reading motivation. The first set of data presented is the whole-class group MRQ data. The MRQ is a Likert scale from one to four, so all presented data was compared to a maximum value of 4.0. The top five scores from the whole-class group results from both the pre- and post-intervention MRQ assessment are provided in Table 4.1 below. Full MRQ score results can be found in Table E.1 and E.2 in Appendix E.
Table 4.1

Whole-Class Group Pre- and Post-Intervention Top Five Reading Motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Intervention MRQ (n=45)</th>
<th>Post-Intervention MRQ (n=45)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Score</td>
<td>Grades (3.083)</td>
<td>Grades (3.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Score</td>
<td>Reading Efficacy (2.933)</td>
<td>Reading Efficacy (3.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Score</td>
<td>Compliance (2.883)</td>
<td>Reading Curiosity (2.994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Score</td>
<td>Reading Importance (2.861)</td>
<td>Reading Aesthetics (2.992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Score</td>
<td>Reading Aesthetics (2.816)</td>
<td>Reading Importance (2.950)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the pre-intervention MRQ, the highest-scoring motivational factor regarding reading in the pre-intervention MRQ was Grades, which had a median score of 3.250, average of 3.083, and standard deviation of 0.657. The next two highest-scoring motivators were Reading Efficacy with a median of 3.000, average of 2.933, and a standard deviation of 0.677 and Compliance with a median of 2.800 but a higher average of 2.883 and lower standard deviation at 0.594. Compliance’s standard deviation was the lowest across the motivational components, indicating a more uniformed agreement across the grade level in Compliance’s score value. Next was Reading Importance which also scored a median of 3.000 but had a lower group average at 2.861 and higher standard deviation of 0.878, indicating a broader divergence of student-identified reading importance value. The next highest-scoring component, Reading Aesthetics, contained a group median of 2.857 and an average of 2.816 with a standard deviation of 0.645, and Recognition immediately followed with a median of 2.800, average of 2.706, and with a standard deviation of 0.792. The next two components, Reading Challenge and Reading Curiosity were the lowest-scoring intrinsic motivational factors, both with a group median of 2.600 but diverged in group average and standard deviation with Curiosity.
averaging 2.628 and 0.633, respectively, and Challenge averaging 2.593 with a 0.672 standard deviation.

The final three motivation components, all external motivators, Work Avoidance, Competition, and Social, came in at medians of 2.500, 2.333, and 2.000, respectively, indicating that reading for social impact was the lowest-reported motivator for the sixth-grade population. Of interest, the averages for Work Avoidance and Competition were similar, with averages of 2.537 and 2.522, respectively, although the standard deviation for Competition was significantly higher than Work Avoidance at 0.769 versus 0.641, indicating a larger spread of responses to the Competition component. The Social component’s average was similar to its median with a 2.058 average and a standard deviation of 0.704.

In the post-intervention whole-class group results, only one component decreased, Grades, which dropped from a median of 3.250 to 3.000, an average of 3.083 to 3.077, and increased in deviation from 0.657 to 0.694, indicating that students saw a decrease in their motivation to read due to grades, although the standard deviation shows that the change may be limited to certain students or subpopulations. Three medians remained the same, Reading Importance, Compliance, and Work Avoidance at 3.000, 2.800, and 2.500 respectively—although the average for Reading Importance increased by 0.089, and the standard deviation decreased by 0.039; and the average for Compliance decreased by 0.020, and the standard deviation increased by 0.044.

The component with the largest gain was Competition, which scored an increase in median of 0.500 to 2.833, an increase in average of 0.236 to 2.758, and a decrease in standard deviation of 0.177 to 0.946, which indicates a wider response to this question
but with an overall increase in reported scores. The next two scores with the highest gains are *Reading Challenge* and *Reading Curiosity*, both with 0.400 gains to their median scores, bringing them from a 2.600 to a 3.000. *Curiosity’s* average also increased by 0.176 to 2.994, while *Challenge* increased by 0.283 to 2.876, and while both *Curiosity* and *Challenge* scored a standard deviation of 0.713, this was an increase of 0.080 for *Curiosity* and 0.041 for *Challenge*.

*Reading Efficacy* had the next highest median gains at 0.333, with an increase of 0.141 in the group average and an increase in 0.065 in standard deviation. *Recognition* takes the highest gains with a change in median of 0.200 to 3.000, an increase in average of 0.127 to 2.833, and an increase in standard deviation of a mere 0.004. Both *Reading Aesthetics* and *Social* increased in median by 0.143, to 3.000 for *Aesthetics* and 2.143 for *Social*, and with an average increase of 0.176 and standard deviation increase of 0.033 for *Aesthetics* and an average increase 0.109 and standard deviation increase of 0.010 for *Social*.

For the single-case study group, in the pre- and post-intervention MRQ results are provided in Table 4.2 below with full scores available in Appendix E, Tables E.3 and E.4.

**Table 4.2**

*Single-Case Study Group Pre- and Post-Intervention Top Five Reading Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Intervention MRQ (n=5)</th>
<th>Post-Intervention MRQ (n=5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Score</strong></td>
<td>Compliance (2.640)</td>
<td>Reading Curiosity (3.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd Score</strong></td>
<td>Reading Aesthetics (2.600)</td>
<td>Grades (3.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Score</strong></td>
<td>Grades (2.550)</td>
<td>Reading Aesthetics (2.829)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4th Score</strong></td>
<td>Work Avoidance (2.550)</td>
<td>Reading Challenge (2.760)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5th Score</strong></td>
<td>Recognition (2.400)</td>
<td>Work Avoidance (2.700)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the pre-intervention MRQ, the highest scoring motivator was *Compliance* which had a median of 2.400, a mean of 2.640, and a standard deviation of 0.727, followed by *Reading Aesthetics* which scored a median of 2.714, an average of 2.600, and a standard deviation of 0.584. Next were *Grades* and *Work Avoidance* with a median of 2.250 and tied means at 2.550 but with standard deviations of 0.542 and 0.737, respectively, followed by *Recognition* with a median of 2.600, an average of 2.400, and a standard deviation of 0.872. *Reading Importance* scored a median of 2.500, an average of 2.200, and a standard deviation of 0.671, followed by *Reading Efficacy* with a median score of 2.333, an average of 2.200, and a standard deviation of 0.558.

In the bottom half of the motivational components, *Reading Challenge* and *Reading Curiosity* both achieved a median of 2.200, with *Challenge* averaging 2.040 with a standard deviation of 0.767 and *Curiosity* averaging 2.040 with a standard deviation of 0.415. The final two components, *Competition* and *Social* achieved means of 1.833 and 1.429, respectively, with *Competition* averaging 1.933 with a standard deviation of 0.224 and *Social* averaging 1.571 with a standard deviation of 0.678.

With these scores, the top five identified reading motivation components by mean for the study participants were *Compliance, Reading Aesthetics, Grades, Work Avoidance*, and *Recognition*. While *Reading Aesthetics*, an intrinsic motivation component, was the second highest scoring motivational factor for the participant group, the overall low score indicated a generally low motivation to read overall, and with notable standard deviations in *Compliance, Importance, Social*, and *Work Avoidance* scores, individual assessment was necessary to evaluate individually divergent trends.
The results of the participant group’s post-intervention MRQ scores showed that *Curiosity* took the highest score with a median increase of 0.800 to 3.000, an average increase of 1.080 to 3.120, and a standard deviation that decreased by 0.135 to 0.415. Next was *Grades* which demonstrated an increase in median of 1.250 to 3.500, an increase in mean of 0.500 to 3.050, and an increase in standard deviation of 0.276 to 0.818, indicating a broad difference in participant levels of motivation within this component. The next two components were *Reading Aesthetics* and *Reading Challenge* with median increases of 0.143 for *Aesthetics* to 2.857 and 0.600 for *Challenge* to 2.800, with corresponding average increases to 2.829 and 2.760, respectively, and with standard deviations that increased by 0.126 to 0.710 for *Aesthetics* and by 0.2083 to 0.385 for *Challenge*. This data indicated notable increases in these two intrinsic motivation components, although the increase in standard deviation also demonstrates continued divergence in participant responses. Next was *Work Avoidance* with a median increase of 0.750 to 3.000, an increase of mean score by 0.150 to 2.700, and a decreased standard deviation by 0.090 to 0.647. These scores indicated that student curiosity toward reading increased, and the preference of reading over doing other work also notably increased, indicating an increased reading interest.

*Reading Efficacy* and *Compliance* were the next two scores, with *Efficacy* demonstrating an increase in median of 0.334 to 2.667, an average increase of 0.200 to 2.400, and a standard deviation decrease of 0.123 to 0.435 and *Compliance* increasing median score by 0.200 to 2.600, decreasing average score by 0.040 to 2.600, and decreasing standard deviation by 0.111 to 0.616. The increased reading efficacy indicated a rise in reading self-efficacy, and the decreasing standard deviation indicated a leveling
with regard to participant perceptions of their capabilities, which could have meant either
growth of reading confidence or increased comfort with appropriate level text.

*Competition* and *Recognition* took the next two scores, with *Competition*
increasing median value by 0.500 to 2.333, increasing average score by 0.234 to 2.167,
and notably increasing standard deviation by 0.473 to 0.697 and *Recognition* decreasing
in median score by 0.400 to 2.200, decreasing in average by 0.240 to 2.160, and
decreasing standard deviation by 0.118. The final two scores were *Reading Importance*
and *Social*, with *Importance* decreasing median value by 0.500 to 2.000, but with an
increase in average of 0.200 to 2.400 and a notable increase in standard deviation of
0.354 to 1.025. *Social* increased its median score by 0.408 to 1.857, increased its average
score by 0.143 to 1.714, and decreased standard deviation by 0.249 to 0.429.

The decrease in *Importance* was concerning as value is a notable driver of
motivation within situated expectancy-value theory, but the notable standard deviation
presented a large divergence in student perceptions on this motivation component. Also
of note was a general increase of *Social* motivation for reading as that increase was in
conjunction with a decrease in standard deviation, indicating that a broader portion of the
participant group increased their motivation value in this component.

MRQ results were also evaluated from the single-case study individual participant
perspective. Adam’s pre- and post-intervention MRQs were compared (Table 4.3), and
were found to have changed order, with an intrinsic motivation component taking the top
motivator position by the end of the intervention and *Compliance* and *Grades* decreasing
in relative importance. Interestingly, Adam also had three external motivators as their
primary drivers in the pre-intervention MRQ, which changed to three intrinsic motivators
as the primary drivers in the post-intervention MRQ, suggesting a slow trend toward intrinsic reading motivation.

Table 4.3

*Adam’s Identified Reading Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial MRQ</th>
<th>Final MRQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Motivator</td>
<td>Grades (3.500)</td>
<td>Curiosity (3.800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Score</td>
<td>Compliance (3.400)</td>
<td>Grades (3.750)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Score</td>
<td>Aesthetics (3.286)</td>
<td>Compliance (3.600)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Score</td>
<td>Recognition (3.0000)</td>
<td>Challenge (2.800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Score</td>
<td>Curiosity (2.608)</td>
<td>Efficacy (2.667)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bailey’s self-reported motivations also changed notably over the course of the study (Table 4.4). This participant started the study with four of the five motivators being intrinsic motivation factors and ended with the same four motivators, just in a different order. Where *Reading Challenge* had been the pre-intervention top motivator, *Reading Aesthetics* took the top spot in the post-intervention MRQ.

Table 4.4

*Bailey’s Identified Reading Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial MRQ</th>
<th>Final MRQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Motivator</td>
<td>Challenge (3.200)</td>
<td>Aesthetics (3.571)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Score</td>
<td>Importance (3.000)</td>
<td>Curiosity (3.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Score</td>
<td>Aesthetics (2.714)</td>
<td>Efficacy (2.667)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Score</td>
<td>Efficacy (2.667)</td>
<td>Challenge (2.600)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Score</td>
<td>Curiosity (2.400)</td>
<td>Importance, Compliance, &amp; Work Avoidance (2.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charlie’s results to the pre- and post-intervention MRQ are provided in Table 4.5. As with previous participants, notable shifts in motivations were demonstrated. Pre-intervention, two of the top five motivators are components of intrinsic motivation, while the post-intervention results increased to three intrinsic motivation components. Further, *Reading Aesthetics*, which is associated with the pleasure of reading went from off the motivational chart in the pre-MRQ to the second position overall in the post-MRQ, increasing by 0.857 points.

**Table 4.5**

*Charlie’s Identified Reading Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial MRQ</th>
<th>Final MRQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Motivator</td>
<td>Recognition (3.200)</td>
<td>Importance &amp; Grades (3.500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Score</td>
<td>Work Avoidance (2.750)</td>
<td>Aesthetics (3.286)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Score</td>
<td>Social (2.714)</td>
<td>Work Avoidance (3.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Score</td>
<td>Efficacy (2.667)</td>
<td>Challenge &amp; Curiosity (3.200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Score</td>
<td>Importance &amp; Grades (2.500)</td>
<td>Recognition (3.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David’s responses to the pre- and post-intervention MRQ are noted in Table 4.6 and showed that this participant’s top motivator changed from *Work Avoidance* in the pre-intervention to *Grades* in the post-intervention, with a 1.250 change in reported value. Within the results of the pre-intervention MRQ, only one indicator of intrinsic motivation was identified, while in the post-intervention MRQ, two were identified. Another notable change is that *Competition* was not identified as an important motivator in the pre-intervention MRQ but jumped to tie for the second highest motivational score in the post-intervention MRQ.
Table 4.6

*David’s Identified Reading Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Motivator</th>
<th>Initial MRQ</th>
<th>Final MRQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Score</td>
<td>Aesthetics (2.857)</td>
<td>Competition &amp; Work Avoidance (3.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Score</td>
<td>Recognition (2.600)</td>
<td>Aesthetics (2.857)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Score</td>
<td>Compliance (2.400)</td>
<td>Curiosity (2.800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Score</td>
<td>Grades (2.250)</td>
<td>Recognition (2.600)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final participant, Eli, also demonstrated notable changes in identified motivations when using the pre- and post-intervention which can be found in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

*Eli’s Identified Reading Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Motivator</th>
<th>Initial MRQ</th>
<th>Final MRQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Score</td>
<td>Challenge (2.800)</td>
<td>Work Avoidance (3.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Score</td>
<td>Importance (2.500)</td>
<td>Challenge (3.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Score</td>
<td>Efficacy (2.333)</td>
<td>Curiosity (2.800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Score</td>
<td>Work Avoidance (2.250)</td>
<td>Compliance (2.600)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This student’s pre-intervention MRQ identified that their primary motivator for reading at the start of the study was *Compliance*, which finished in fifth position in the post-intervention MRQ, with a decrease in score of 0.800. Further, in the pre-intervention MRQ, two of the identified motivators are components of intrinsic motivation (*Challenge* and *Efficacy*), while in the post-intervention MRQ the two remaining intrinsic motivation components were *Challenge* and *Curiosity*, indicating that the student lost confidence in
their reading abilities, but increased their curiosity regarding reading. Another interesting aspect of these results is that *Work Avoidance*, the fifth highest-scoring motivator on the pre-intervention MRQ, increased in score by a full point to take second place on the post-intervention MRQ. This notable change may indicate that while not a source of pleasure, reading has become more pleasurable than work for this participant. Finally, *Compliance*, which took the top motivator position in the pre-MRQ, decreased by 0.800 points to the fifth position in the post-MRQ.

**Intrinsic Motivation Change Quantitative Data**

To answer my second research question, “How does providing autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation to read?” four measures were used. The first measure was a quantitative analysis of MRQ scores at the whole-class group level, the single-case study group level, and at the individual single-case study participant level. The second measure was a single-case study group and individual single-case study participant evaluation of observation scores, and the third and fourth measures were the qualitative analysis of the single-case study participant reading reflections and interview responses.

To evaluate intrinsic motivation changes, the MRQ scores were again used to analyze how the choice of reading affected intrinsic motivation. For this analysis, only the four components of intrinsic motivation were evaluated, although *Reading Importance* was also provided to determine if perceived value played a role in motivation development in accordance with the theoretical frameworks guiding the study.

The whole-class group data was the first presented to provide a baseline for single-case study group and individual participant data evaluation. The average scores
for the whole-class group (n=45) for the pre- and post-intervention MRQ are provide in Table 4.8. These results indicate the whole-class group reported increases in all four intrinsic motivation domains and in Reading Importance over the course of the study.

**Table 4.8**

**Whole-Class Group Intrinsic Motivation Component Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>2.933</td>
<td>2.593</td>
<td>2.628</td>
<td>2.816</td>
<td>2.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (n=45)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>3.074</td>
<td>2.876</td>
<td>2.994</td>
<td>2.992</td>
<td>2.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (n=45)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>0.089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The single-case study individual participant scores were also averaged and presented for analysis (Table 4.9). Here, too, all four of the intrinsic motivation domains and Reading Importance indicated an increase in score. Most notably, there was a full point increase in the Curiosity domain, suggesting an important change in how students perceived their level of interest in reading and their overall curiosity towards available texts.

**Table 4.9**

**Single-Case Study Group Intrinsic Motivation Component Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2.240</td>
<td>2.040</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (n=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>2.760</td>
<td>3.120</td>
<td>2.829</td>
<td>2.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (n=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.520</td>
<td>1.080</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>0.200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When compared at single-case study individual participant levels, results are similar, with minor exceptions. Adam’s motivation increased in three out of the four
intrinsic motivation domains, with a notable full point increase in *Reading Curiosity*, and a large decline in *Reading Aesthetics* (Table 4.10). This would indicate that while motivation to read based upon curiosity was increasing, overall enjoyment of reading decreased. This student also did not see any change in the *Reading Importance* measure, indicating a lack of change in perceived value of reading.

**Table 4.10**

*Adam’s Post-Intervention MRQ Score/Motivation Changes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.286</td>
<td>1.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>2.667</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>3.800</td>
<td>1.714</td>
<td>1.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>0.600</td>
<td>1.200</td>
<td>-1.572</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluating Bailey’s MRQ score changes (Table 4.11), this student increased motivation scores in *Curiosity* and *Aesthetics*, declined in *Challenge*, and showed no change in *Efficacy*. Increases in *Curiosity* and *Aesthetics* indicate increased intrinsic motivation, which is counteracted by the decrease in *Challenge*, although this could note a shift in intrinsic domain importance versus a decrease in specific intrinsic motivation. The full point rise in *Importance* indicates that this student had an increase in perceived value of reading over the course of the study.
Charlie’s MRQ score results (Table 4.12) showed an increase in three of the four intrinsic motivation domains, no change in Efficacy scores, and an increase in Importance. This would indicate that overall motivation to read increased, particularly intrinsic motivation. The most notable changes in Charlie’s scores are the full point increase in Importance, as well as the 1.600 and 1.400 increases in Challenge and Curiosity respectively. These relatively large increases demonstrate important increases in this participant’s intrinsic motivation development over the course of the study.

David’s responses to the MRQ indicated similar intrinsic motivation growth to the previous participants (Table 4.13). This single-case study participant demonstrated growth in three of the four intrinsic motivation domains and maintained their score in Aesthetics and Importance. Notably, David increased their score a full point in Efficacy.
and made important gains in both *Challenge* and *Curiosity*. This indicates intrinsic motivation growth, although no change in the perceived value of reading or perceived enjoyment of reading.

Table 4.13

*David’s Post-Intervention MRQ Score/Motivation Changes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention Average</td>
<td>1.333</td>
<td>1.400</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>1.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention Average</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>1.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.600</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final single-case study participant, Eli, demonstrated results similar to their peers, with scores provided in Table 4.14. This participant demonstrated gains in three out of the four intrinsic motivation domains and in *Importance* but showed a notable decline in *Efficacy*. The full point increase in both *Importance* and *Aesthetics* are noteworthy, although the most notable gain was in *Curiosity*.

Table 4.14

*Eli’s Post-Intervention MRQ Score/Motivation Changes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention Average</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>1.200</td>
<td>1.714</td>
<td>2.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention Average</td>
<td>1.667</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>2.714</td>
<td>3.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>-0.667</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>1.600</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These changes indicate growth in both the participant’s perceived value of reading and in their interest in possible text choices. The decrease in *Efficacy* is also
notable as this indicates that, while the participant is curious about texts, their belief in their ability to read and comprehend them has decreased.

The second measure that provided input into my second research question on how autonomy in text choice affects student intrinsic reading motivation was an observation form that tracked the number of times single-case study participants were off-task during their 10-minute reading time (Table 4.15). Bailey had the least number of off-task behaviors, with an average of 3 off-task behaviors per observation and a maximum of 7 off-task behaviors noted in Observation 3. Charlie had the next fewest off-task behaviors with an average of 8 off-task behaviors per observation and a maximum observed value of 14 during Observation 5. Next was Adam with an average of 12.8 off-task behaviors per observation and a maximum value of 17 during both Observations 2 and 4. David had the second highest number of off-task behaviors with an average of 15.4 per observation and a maximum of 30 off-task behaviors during Observation 2, and Eli demonstrated the highest number of off-task behaviors with an average of 26.2 off-task behaviors per observation and a maximum of 30 off-task behaviors during Observation 2.

**Table 4.15**

*Single-Case Study Participant Observed Off-Task Behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observation 1</th>
<th>Observation 2</th>
<th>Observation 3</th>
<th>Observation 4</th>
<th>Observation 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the trends from this input indicated that participants were on their best behavior during Observation 1 as they were not used to having an administrator in the
classroom but adapted to the researcher’s presence in subsequent weeks. Additionally, Bailey and David demonstrated declines in off-task behavior in the last two weeks of observation, indicating an increase in engagement and interest in their chosen texts. Adam, Charlie, and Eli demonstrated relatively stable behaviors after Observation 1, although Charlie had an unexpected increase in Observation 5 that appears to be an outlier as significant negative changes toward reading motivation were not established through other methods to correlate the change. The stagnancy in behaviors in Adam and Eli would indicate that no significant changes in reading engagement or motivation occurred over the course of the study.

**Intrinsic Motivation Change Qualitative Data**

The last two measures for answering my second research question, “How does autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation?” were qualitative measures to evaluate single-case study participant perspectives. For presentation purposes, initial reading reflection data is presented first, followed by final reading reflection data, then initial interview results followed by final interview results with a general discussion of the trends and identified themes provided at the end of the section.

To effectively triangulate results, single-case study participants were provided with two reading reflections, one at week two and the second during week five. In the first round of analysis of qualitative data, data was coded to identify changes over time, and the second round consisted of open coding to identify participant text choice to evaluate whether the availability of culturally relevant texts affected text choice. A third round of open coding was then conducted to evaluate attitudes toward reading, specifically anything that was or could have been related to reading value or engagement.
Upon conclusion of the three rounds of coding, a fourth round of axial coding was conducted to identify major themes across the study participants.

The initial round of Student Reading Reflections reported that four out of the five participants had chosen graphic novels over chapter texts, and none of the chosen texts included authors or main characters of color, which was significant under the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. When it came to attitudes, Adam’s initial reflection demonstrated a positive attitude with comments such as, “the book is interesting,” references to “the funniest character,” and a response of “yes” to interest in continued reading of similar texts. Bailey continued a positive trend regarding attitude, stating, “I injoy [sic] reading,” clarifying that there were “a lot of things I really enjoyed,” and replied “of cours [sic]” to the question involving continued interest in reading similar texts. The one negative attitude related was that “nothing much” surprised, interested, or challenged this student with the chosen text. Continuing with Charlie, generally positive comments were noted with statements like, “It looked interesting,” while clarifying that “I like comics,” and a response of “yes” when asked if continued reading of similar texts would interest them. Eli’s responses continued the positive trend with words like “fun” used to describe reading, noting an interesting aspect of the text as “pictures” and saying that they “enjoyed the pictures,” and responding “yes” when asked if interested in reading more texts like the one they were reading. Of note with this student, while positive in overall attitude, the positivity appeared linked to the presence of pictures within the text instead of the overall text itself, which was a noted difference between this student and other positive responses from the participants.
David’s response to the initial reflection took a different attitude as no positive or negative comments pertaining to attitude were noted. Although the student responded “yes” to a desire to continue reading similar texts, the focus for this student was on the subject of the text, and no emotional reactions were noted, which suggested that this student was merely complying with the reading requirements.

The final round of Student Reading Reflections also showed that four out of the five continued to choose graphic novels over chapter texts, although the one student reading chapter texts had chosen a culturally relevant text. Adam’s attitude remained positive in the second reflection with comments such as “my favorite book,” noting changes in efficacy with “I’ve enjoyed that it makes sense,” before finally responding with “yes” when asked about continued reading of similar texts. Similarly, Bailey continued the positive attitudes, stating, “I enjoy scary things,” as the reason for their choice of text before expounding, “I enjoy that the main character is Black,” and noting, “I would love to read more like Dread Nation,” when asked if there was continued interest in reading similar texts. Of note with this student’s responses, this student stated that there was “nothing mush [sic]” different between the chosen text and their standard classroom reading material.

Charlie’s attitude also tended toward positive, specifying that their text was from their “third favorite author,” and responding, “yes, of course,” when asked if they would like to read similar topics, but the remaining responses tended to be neutral, with no emotional responses. David’s attitude was also positive with the association of reading and the word “fun,” identifying reasons for enjoyment such as the story’s “adventure” combined with the fact that it was an “interesting story,” and responding “yes” when
asked if they would like to continue reading similar stories. Lastly, Eli’s attitude showed a slight positive association with statements describing their text as “fun to read,” saying that they “enjoyed” their text, and also responding “yes” when asked if they were interested in reading more texts like it. Eli did note that the most interesting thing about the text was the presence of “pictures” and also specifically noted a negative emotional response in that “reading all the pages” was the most challenging aspect of the text, indicating a lack of reading efficacy.

To gain further participant insight, two interviews were conducted, with one at week three and one at week six, and were used to evaluate changes in reading value and motivation with answers provided in Appendix F. As with the reflections, data was first coded to identify changes over time but then diverged to meet the data requirements. The second round of open coding looked to evaluate the level of importance students placed on reading, the third round of open coding attempted to identify participant attitudes toward reading, the fourth round of open coding looked to evaluate participant perceptions of their reading efficacy, and the final round of coding was axial to look for trends and themes across study participants.

In the first interview, participants were asked about how important they perceived reading to be and/or how it impacted their lives. Three of the five participants stated that it was not important or did not impact their lives, with the first participant noting, “It doesn’t really,” the second saying, “it doesn’t impact my life,” and the third noting, “I don’t think it impacts because reading doesn’t teach you as much, now we read, so it’s not as important.” The other two participants had the opposite view, with the first stating that reading is “really good, helps me get smarter,” and the second participant saying, “It
does because . . . like . . . what if you can’t read . . . but if you read you can learn bigger words. Important because in the future you have to read out loud and you can’t, or you don’t know what a word is.”

When looking at the attitude toward reading, Adam demonstrated a positive attitude as they described their text as “interesting,” and stated that they “wanted to read the whole series.” Further, they stated that reading is “actually fun,” although they caveated that statement with, “when you get better at it.” Bailey’s responses were devoid of emotion, making analysis of attitude difficult, although the student did acknowledge that they read outside of school, which indicated some level of reading enjoyment. Charlie tended toward a positive attitude, noting that they “like the author” of the text they were reading and specifically stating that they “like to read,” but also specifically noting that they “don’t like chapter books,” indicating that their attitude to reading may be affected by self-efficacy. Eli’s responses were contradictory, short, and lacking emotion and specific responses. While Eli noted that their chosen text was “a fun book to read,” they said that reading is “sometimes boring.” No other emotions were demonstrated during the interview, indicating that this student may also base their attitude on reading according to their level of self-efficacy. Lastly, David took a very negative attitude toward reading, noting that reading is “boring,” which was stated twice within the interview, and that there is “not much interaction.”

When the same interviews were coded for self-efficacy, there was an interesting division on how students rated their ability to read. Students tended toward answering this in two ways, with the first being their ability to read the words and the second being the ability to comprehend the reading. Adam noted that they “were pretty good at
reading, just have trouble with some words,” indicating a relatively high efficacy in reading itself, but combined this with a lower self-efficacy in comprehension as they noted they were “not that good because [they] don’t get the gist sometimes.” Bailey maintained similar responses for both reading and comprehension, noting that they were “about a sixth [grade reading level]” and “pretty good” at comprehension. This student was the only participant reading chapter texts, so perceived grade-level reading and chosen texts aligned, suggesting an accurate perspective on self-efficacy. Charlie again noted the divergence between reading efficacy and comprehension efficacy, stating that they were “pretty good” at reading, but comprehension efficacy was decreased in the student’s perception to “kinda [sic] good, but if I read a passage, I get half [the] questions right because I misread.” This lack of comprehension efficacy is supported by the student’s choice of graphic novels and hesitancy toward chapter books. David rated themselves fairly high in both reading efficacy and comprehension efficacy, with a 7.5 out of 10 and 8 out of 10, respectively, although the student noted comprehension difficulties as “[with] themes and main ideas, I’m meh.” The scored perception does not align with the descriptive elements, and the choice of graphic novels over chapter texts indicates alignment with the verbiage and suggests a significantly lower actual efficacy. The final participant, Eli, did not elaborate on their perspectives on their abilities, noting that they were “okay” at reading and “okay, too” at comprehension. The lack of interest in these responses aligns with the perception of a lack of interest in general reading topics for this participant.

In the second interview, the two participants that initially stated that reading was important, Adam and Charlie, maintained their position. Two of the students that had
previously stated that reading was not important, Bailey and David, did not specifically identify that their perception of reading importance had changed but did specifically note that they found positive aspects of the reading, which indicates a change of position, either in value or motivation, regarding reading that may have affected their position on reading importance. The last participant, Eli, explicitly stated that there had been no change in their perspectives on reading, indicating no change in reading importance for that student.

When looking at attitudes regarding reading, Adam used no emotional words to indicate attitude shifts from the initial interview; however, the student noted that they had “bought a [copy of] *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* so I just started reading it.” As this student had previously said they were too busy to read outside of school, the fact that they now chose to read indicated either a greater estimation of the value of reading or a greater interest in reading, suggesting a positive change in attitude over the course of the study. Similarly, Bailey did not have any emotion tied to their responses, although this student indicated a positive relationship with reading during their initial interview and noted that that had not changed, so a continued positive relationship was established. Charlie also did not use any emotional words to assist in attitude determination, but their word choice and answers did. This student stated they were reading “a little more” at home and that they were “on [their] laptop” to read, which was significant as they had either stopped reading the children’s books to their sister or had increased their reading at home as they were now reading their own choice texts as well. This added at-home reading indicates an increase in either value or motivation, suggesting a more positive attitude toward reading.
David’s responses demonstrated an increased positive attitude toward reading. This student’s comments included that they “now [have] a goal to read the last seven books [of the series they started],” mentioning that “I love adventure” and specifically stating, “I love reading more,” which depicts a positive trend in reading attitudes compared to their initial interview responses. The specific idea here that the student went from finding reading “boring” in the initial interview to wanting to finish a multi-volume series demonstrates a significant shift in their attitude toward reading. Lastly, Eli’s responses indicate only one emotional word, when describing their book as “interesting,” although the student was unable to explain why the book was interesting, making the response questionable. This student more likely chose the word “interesting” in this situation as they perceived it to be an acceptable reason to choose a text and they had no better response. Interpreting this student’s response, their attitude did not change from the generally negative perspective on reading discovered in the initial interview.

The fourth round of open coding involved evaluating student perceptions of their reading efficacy. Here, Adam noted that they felt about the same with reading, saying, “I been [sic] feeling okay reading . . . about the same,” indicating no change in their perceptions of their reading efficacy. Bailey, however, noted an increase in perceived reading efficacy, stating, “Yes, it’s . . . like . . . kinda [sic] helped me improve my reading . . . like . . . I went to read one sentence and now I can go to more.” Charlie took efficacy one step further, not by acknowledging that they felt like better readers but by stating that they were now reading Zeke Meeks, which has “some pictures, but [is] not a graphic novel,” meaning that this student had increased their comfort level somewhat with text material to the point that they had broadened their reading outside of the graphic
novels they had chosen so far to a text-based novel. This student’s choice of a novel with primarily written text over graphic depictions demonstrates an increase in self-efficacy and comfort level with their reading ability. David’s responses did not provide specific data to suggest an increase in self-efficacy; however, due to the late shift in their attitude toward reading, increased self-efficacy may not have had time to develop to the point that they noticed enough of a difference in their reading ability to note the shift. Here, Eli again did not provide any insight into their perceptions of reading efficacy, which was interpreted as a lack of change in the student’s perceptions of this aspect of reading.

**Qualitative Data Emerging Themes**

During the axial coding of the initial Student Reading Response Form, several themes became apparent. Of the four participants that selected graphic novels, three of them related their enjoyment of the text they were reading to the idea of “pictures,” with pictures being referenced three times and comics being referenced an additional three times. One of the participants noted that they chose their text “because of the cover,” which was a picture depicting football. This strong theme of pictures instead of, or in addition to, text indicated a lower reading self-efficacy as pictures were relied upon to translate the text and/or the pictures were the preferred method of relating the story. Another theme was that all five participants chose a text style or genre that is atypical for the classroom environment including graphic novels and horror stories, and all of them indicated a willingness to continue reading if similar texts were provided.

The axial coding for the second reading reflection was similar to the first. One common theme was the highlighting of pictures, with eight references overall and two additional references to comics. While this demonstrated an engagement with the text, it
also indicated a lack of self-efficacy with reading longer texts that do not provide picture supports. The overall positivity found within the responses also demonstrates that the participants found enjoyment in at least some aspect of their text, with the one student who chose a culturally relevant text highlighting the impact of the character of color on their enjoyment of the text.

While conducting the final round of coding for the initial interviews, axial coding for themes, several themes emerged. The first theme was that there is a relatively low value of reading within the participant group, which must be overcome to increase intrinsic motivation. This directly correlated to a mixed participant response to their attitude with reading. The second theme that presented itself was that participants that noted a higher reading importance also indicated a more positive reading association and overall positive attitude toward reading. The third theme was that participants had an average to above-average perception of their reading efficacy but appeared to have an overinflated perception of their comprehension self-efficacy. Responses to those interview questions may be hampered by student pride and an understandable unwillingness to admit to weaknesses. The general lack of comprehension efficacy was supported by participant tendencies to gravitate toward graphic novels over chapter books.

The final round of axial coding for the final interviews supported the themes noted in the first round of interviews. The first theme to emerge was an overall increase in positive responses and willingness to discuss their chosen texts, indicating increased enjoyment with the choice texts. Next, students that indicated a higher value of reading or reading importance, whether directly or indirectly, demonstrated significantly more
positive reading habits and attitudes, which was especially noticeable in the two participants who demonstrated an increase in reading value over the first interview. The final theme that appeared to be developing but would require more study time to fully support was the link between reading attitude and reading self-efficacy. The students that demonstrated positive reading attitudes tended to report increased reading efficacy, both in reading and comprehension. While this theme was not universal, the emergence needed to be noted as the trend could be relevant to future research.

**Reading Comprehension Data**

To answer my final research question, “How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?” quantitative data evaluating comprehension performance was needed. The quantitative data used in this study to evaluate reading comprehension was the NWEA MAP assessment results. The two aspects of MAP that were collected for data comparison was the participant’s RIT score, or estimated reading level, and their percentile, which is their ranking within national results. Results from the whole-class group and single-case study participant group were evaluated.

The pre-intervention MAP results demonstrated a whole-class group average RIT score of 207.467 and an average percentile of 45.689. When broken down into quartiles, the first quartile scored an average RIT of 188.500 and percentile score of 11.333, the second quartile scored an RIT of 206.429 and percentile score of 41.143, the third quartile scored an RIT of 216.077 and percentile score of 63.692, and the fourth quartile scored an RIT average of 229.167 with a percentile score of 86.000 (Table 4.16).
Upon completion of the intervention, the whole-class group was again provided with the NWEA MAP assessment to gauge changes in reading comprehension scores. The post-intervention RIT average was 207.356, a decrease of 0.111, and the percentile score was 45.667, a decrease of 0.022. However, when evaluating the MAP scores by quartiles, a slightly different result emerges. The first quartile post-intervention RIT score increased by 4.083 to 192.253, and the percentile score increased by 5.833 to 17.167. The second quartile RIT score increased by 1.357 points to 207.786, and the percentile increased by 4.214 points to 43.357. The third and fourth quartiles were the only ones to have score declines, with the third quartile RIT decreasing by 3.692 points to 212.385 and the percentile decreasing by 3.692 points to 212.385 and the fourth quartile average RIT decreasing by 4.167 to 225.000 and the percentile score decreasing by 6.000 points to 80.000 (Table 4.16). This data indicated that the lower-performing half of the sixth-grade student body increased their reading comprehension scores by a significant margin, while the higher-performing half decreased their scores over the study duration.
Single-case study participants were also individually assessed using the pre-intervention NWEA MAP assessment. Their initial score averages were an RIT score of 201.400 and an average percentile of 31.600. In terms of individual scores, Adam scored an RIT of 206.000 and percentile of 40.000, Bailey scored an RIT of 205 and percentile of 38, Charlie earned an RIT score of 189 and the 10th percentile, David scored an RIT of 209 and percentile of 47, and Eli’s RIT score was a 198, placing them into the 23rd percentile (Table 4.17 and 4.18).

**Table 4.17**

*Single-Case Study Participant NWEA MAP RIT Changes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Bailey</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Eli</th>
<th>Group Average (n=5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>201.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIT Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>199.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post-intervention results of the NWEA MAP assessment for single-case study participants (Table 4.17 and 4.18) reflected similar results to the overall class average in that the participant RIT average decreased by 2.200 points to 199.200 and the percentile score decreased by 1.6 points to 30.000. However, when individual participant scores are evaluated, Adam increased their RIT score by 5 points to 211, and their percentile increased by 12 points to 52. Bailey also increased their RIT score by 11 points to 216, which translated to a 26-percentile point gain to 64. Charlie, David, and Eli decreased their scores, with Charlie decreasing their RIT by 5 points to 184 and decreasing their percentile by 4 points to a 6, David’s RIT decreased by 15 points and their percentile by
31 points, and Eli decreased their RIT by 7 points to 191 and their percentile by 11 points to 23.

**Table 4.18**

*Single-Case Study Participant NWEA MAP Percentile Changes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Bailey</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Eli</th>
<th>Group Average (n=5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentile Change</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-31</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Comparisons**

With the availability of data from both the whole-class group, the single-case study group, and the single-case study individual participants, data result comparisons on quantitative measures could be compared for a two-tiered evaluation for each of the research questions. Beginning with the first research question, “What do students self-report as motivation to read?” the whole-class group results for the top five reading motivators (Table 4.1) indicated that reading motivation scores changed over the course of the study with the original top five motivators being *Grades, Reading Efficacy, Compliance, Reading Importance,* and *Reading Aesthetics* and the final top five motivators reported as *Grades, Reading Efficacy, Reading Curiosity, Reading Aesthetics,* and *Reading Importance* with the notable replacement of *Compliance* from the initial list with *Curiosity* in the final list.

This shift in motivation scores is also seen in the single-case study group results (Table 4.2) with the initial top five list of motivators containing *Compliance, Reading*
Aesthetics, Grades, Work Avoidance, and Recognition, and the final list noting the new motivation order of Reading Curiosity, Grades, Reading Aesthetics, Reading Challenge, and Work Avoidance. Of particular interest is that both lists show Compliance being removed from the top five motivators and replaced with the intrinsic motivation domain Reading Curiosity.

With the second research question, “How does providing autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation to read?” the whole-class group indicated increases in all four intrinsic motivation domains and in Reading Importance (Table 4.8), which is mirrored by the single-case study group (Table 4.9). The single-case study individual participants demonstrated different motivation growth patterns in their results (Tables 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, and 4.14), however all individual participants showed increased scores in at least three of the five measured domains, suggesting intrinsic motivation growth.

The final research question, “How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?” was answered using NWEA pre- and post-intervention results. Here, the whole-class group, when broken down into quartiles for analysis with single-case study participants, shows both RIT and percentile increases in the first and second quartiles, and RIT and percentile declines in the third and fourth quartiles (Table 4.16). As all single-case study participants were within the first and second quartiles, increases similar to the whole-class group in those quartiles should have been similar. However, the actual data from the single-case study group (Tables 4.17 and 4.18) did not align with the whole-class group and, instead, demonstrated an average decline. Single-case study individual participant performance showed two participants increased their RIT and
percentile, while the three remaining decreased theirs, which did not align with the whole-class group performance.

4.3 Findings

This study found that autonomy in text choice altered the reported motivations for reading throughout the grade level and study participant populations. While the top-scoring motivational component for the grade level remained Grades throughout the study, the score value decreased, while the other top five motivational component scores increased, suggesting that Grades were decreasing in relative importance to the intrinsic motivation components that followed immediately after Grades in the rankings.

When compared to study participants, Grades were not the top-ranked motivation, which was likely related to the fact that participants were underperformers in reading and therefore were not used to receiving above-average grades for reading coursework. This is supported by the participants scoring Compliance as the highest motivation component prior to the intervention. The participant MRQ scores demonstrated even more notable changes than the grade-level results, with Compliance moving from the top position in the pre-intervention MRQ to outside of the top five scores in the post-intervention MRQ and three intrinsic motivation components being identified among the top five motivators in the post-intervention MRQ. These scores demonstrated a notable shift in reading motivations between both the grade level and study participant groups, signaling a more generalized effect of autonomy in text choice.

Further, the MRQ data also demonstrated increases in all four components of intrinsic motivation components for the grade-level students as well as in Reading Importance. This result was also found with the study participants as not only were
increases across all four intrinsic motivation components noted, but also significant
changes occurred. With many of the study participants noting in their reflections and
interviews that they either were uncomfortable with chapter texts, had difficulty reading
and understanding longer texts, or both, being able to choose texts that they felt better
suited their capabilities is likely responsible for the increased motivation to read.

Themes discovered through the qualitative data support the quantitative data
described as the overarching theme noted within the reflections and interviews was that
the study participants gained reading self-efficacy and enjoyment when allowed to select
texts at their reading capability level and within their preferred genres. As their texts were
more aligned with their preferences, study participants were more willing to read and
enjoy the texts, developing an increased positive association with reading, which
translated to continued reading motivation for all but one of the study participants.
Additionally, the qualitative data suggests that the value a student places on reading
affects their overall motivation, although that value can be created either externally or
through intrinsic motivation changes as noted by some participant Reading Importance
values in the MRQ declining as intrinsic motivation components increased.

The final findings of this study revolve around how the intervention affected
reading comprehension performance on a standardized assessment. Overall, the
performance of the grade level was dependent upon the quartile established during the
pre-intervention NWEA MAP assessment. Both the first and second quartiles
demonstrated comprehension performance gains in their post-intervention assessment,
while the top two quartiles saw declined performance. As the single-case study
participants were taken from the bottom two quartiles, similar performance was expected;
However, the results for the participant group did not align to the large group results. Study participants demonstrated a decrease in score on their post-intervention MAP on average, with only two participants increasing their MAP scores. Therefore, this study could not make an effective determination on the effects of choice reading on reading.

To answer the first research question, “What do students self-report as motivation to read?” the list of top five motivators for the sixth-grade group was provided in Table 4.9, with Grades taking the top position, although the score value decreased over the course of the study, indicating that it played a decreased role in reading motivation as other motivation factors increased. The participant group identified Compliance as its top motivator in the pre-intervention MRQ, although Compliance was not within the top five scores at the conclusion of the study, indicating that student motivation had shifted based upon the intervention experience.

As the study participants had noted average to below average reading comprehension efficacy in their reading reflections and interviews, decreased emphasis on Grades and intrinsic reading motivation components based upon student reading experiences was justified. Therefore, this study determined that reading motivation changed over the course of this study, both in the general group scores and in the participant scores based on student perceptions of reading value, comprehension, self-efficacy, and aesthetics based upon genre.

The second research question, “How does autonomy in text choice affect student intrinsic motivation to read?” was also addressed using pre- and post-MRQ data. Grade-level data was presented in Table 4.10, focusing on the four intrinsic motivation components and Reading Importance evaluating the data through self-determination
theory and situated expectancy-value theory. Grade-level data indicated an increase across all four intrinsic motivation components and the Reading Importance component. Combined participant data was presented in Table E.4 and demonstrated increases in all four intrinsic motivation components as well as the Reading Importance component. Individual participant trends did not align with the participant average as none of the participants increased all four intrinsic motivation components. Four participants demonstrated increases in scores across three components, and the only component that increased in all participant scores was Reading Curiosity. Reading Importance also increased in three of the five participants, and of specific note, the increase or decrease in Reading Importance mirrored increases and decreases in Reading Aesthetics suggesting a link between importance and enjoyment.

The general increase in motivation to read is supported by the themes generated by the qualitative elements. These themes included increase in positive attitudes regarding reading that mirrors the group trends in intrinsic motivation. Themes finding a link between the importance of reading in the qualitative measures did not align when compared to individual participant responses but did align with group averages, suggesting that increased value links to increased motivation in alignment with situated expectancy-value theory and self-determination theory. Overall, the combination of this data suggests that autonomy in text choice does increase intrinsic motivation to read.

The final question evaluated in this study was, “How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?” This question was addressed using the NWEA MAP assessment as my school required an initial assessment, and a post-intervention assessment was given to evaluate changes in reading comprehension
performance over the course of the study. While grade-level scores depicted a small
average decline, evaluation of scores by quartile indicated comprehension increases in the
lower two quartiles and decreases in the upper two quartiles (Table 4.2). Study
participants were expected to match this performance but did not, with only two of the
five participants increasing their reading comprehension scores. Therefore, the
conclusion of this study is that reading autonomy does not affect reading comprehension
as evaluated by standardized assessment.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the data received from the study tools and analyzed that
data to evaluate general and specific patterns and trends that could be used to answer the
study questions using the previously identified theoretical framework. The purpose of this
study was to determine if allowing students autonomy in text choice, a relatively simple
intervention that could be easily applied to any ELA classroom, affected student
motivations and reading comprehension.

The findings of this study noted that student-identified motivations to read varied
by the student and each individual’s attitude toward reading; however, a general and
specific shift toward intrinsic motivation was noted. Further, the data and subsequent
analysis identified that autonomy in text choice did have a positive impact on both
intrinsic motivation and the value of reading across both the general and participant
populations. Finally, this study set out to determine if the same autonomy affected
reading comprehension scores as measured by a standardized assessment. The findings
for this research question were inconclusive, indicating that autonomy did not impact
comprehension scores.
While this chapter presented the data, the findings, and the conclusions for this study, it is still necessary to interpret and discuss the results. To assist with ease of reading and organization of this study, discussion and interpretations are presented in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5
SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a potential solution for a lack of student engagement with and intrinsic motivation to read assigned curriculum texts, which has led to decreases in reading comprehension skill development and student reading self-efficacy. To mitigate this problem of practice, students were provided autonomy in choosing a text to read, and the effects of this autonomy were evaluated to analyze the impact of choice reading on student intrinsic reading motivation and their reading comprehension. The following research questions were identified:

1. What do students self-report as motivation to read?

2. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect student motivation to read?

3. How does providing autonomy in text choice affect reading comprehension?

To evaluate these findings, an initial MRQ and school-mandated NWEA MAP assessment were provided to the entire sixth-grade cohort to both establish baseline performances and evaluate students for prospective study participants. Once participants were selected, students were provided 10 minutes each day at the beginning of class to read their choice novels, and once a week, students paired up in “book clubs” to discuss their books with a peer. Once a week the researcher observed the single-case study participant group using a student reading engagement tracking form (Appendix B), and at the end of each week, students were asked to complete a reading reflection or participate in an interview to evaluate student perspectives on the autonomous reading. After six
weeks, students were provided with another MRQ and NWEA MAP assessment to evaluate changes in intrinsic reading motivation and reading comprehension.

This study found that allowing students to choose their own texts and read those texts for 10 minutes a day did on average increase intrinsic motivation to read in both the whole-class group and the more academically challenged single-case study group as measured by the MRQ. This increase in intrinsic motivation was supported in four out of five single-case study participants’ comments in their reflections and interviews, with one participant’s comments being counter to their MRQ results. However, this increase in reading motivation did not translate into higher reading comprehension skills as only the bottom two quartiles of the whole-class group increased their NWEA MAP assessment score post-intervention, and only two of five single-case study participants increased their score. Thus, this study notes that autonomy in text choice is effective at changing student motivation but does not appear to impact reading comprehension as measured by a standardized assessment.

This chapter begins with the results of the study as they compare to the relevant literature. Then, the chapter will shift to recommendations to practice and pedagogy that were identified in this study. Next, an implementation plan regarding the outcomes of the study is outlined and discussed, followed by the researcher’s reflection on the research process. This reflection leads to a discussion on the study limitations and suggestions for improvements that could potentially provide significant outcomes, which then transitions into a discussion on the recommendations for future research. This chapter concludes in a summary that provides an overview of the chapter.
5.2 Results

Results from the MRQ data demonstrate average gains across all four intrinsic motivation domains measured by the MRQ. The data from this study suggests that allowing students autonomous choice in their reading selections increases their average intrinsic motivation to read. This is consistent with the frameworks used to develop this study (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020) as well as previous studies (Unrau & Shlackman, 2006). This makes sense as students are more likely to choose texts on their reading capability level and of interest to them, thereby increasing their enjoyment of reading, which increases their likelihood of repeating the task.

When evaluating this study for the effects of culturally relevant pedagogy, while one student did engage with a text that contained a protagonist of color, none of the other students specifically chose a text with that characteristic. This may be due to the disproportionate number of texts available representing the dominant culture and ideologies, consistent with previous studies (Harmon et al., 2019), or a lack of available graphic novels written by people of color or depicting protagonists of color which was the predominant text type preferred by single-case study participants.

This study also found that only the bottom two quartiles of the whole-class group increased their reading comprehension scores, and only two of the three single-case study participants increased their post-intervention NWEA MAP assessment scores. The lack of generalized increase in reading comprehension counters previous research study results (Becker et al, 2010; McInerney et al., 1997; Mucerah & Yoder, 2008; Schaffner et al., 2013; Torppa et al., 2020; Wang & Guthrie, 2004). This divergence in study results
may be due to the close presentation of the NWEA MAP to network-scheduled curriculum progress testing, which led to decreased testing motivation and a lack of concern for performance results. Moreover, the short duration of the study may not have provided enough time for comprehension growth in higher performers, and the results may finally have been affected by the small number of study participants.

5.3 Conclusions

As this study was looking to increase underperforming students’ motivation to read in order to improve reading comprehension skills, the fact that the results demonstrated increased intrinsic reading motivation across the study population was encouraging. As motivation growth is necessary for longer-term reading enjoyment and efficacy development, a positive correlation between reading choice and motivation shifts is notable regarding classroom practices. This study demonstrated that intrinsic motivation can be developed within the classroom setting, providing an easy-to-implement and relatively inexpensive option for reading growth that can be added to any classroom across the curriculum. Therefore, the addition of choice reading texts and dedicated reading time is highly recommended for incorporation into the ELA curriculum as well as other content areas.

Additionally, even though there was not a consistent demonstration of growth within the single-case study participant group, the study suggests that reading comprehension development can occur in conjunction with the growth of intrinsic motivation. As this study was of short duration, the development of reading comprehension skills likely did not have time to develop and would have resulted in different data should the study have been conducted over a substantially longer period of
time. While positive growth is not guaranteed, the opportunity for growth should not be overlooked. Any opportunity for growth in underperforming students should be leveraged as a support opportunity for those students to build confidence and self-efficacy in reading. Further localized research is necessary to effect change across all student performance levels; however, the demonstrated gains in reading comprehension noted by this study provides the impetus to continue this reading intervention program. Therefore, continued use of the autonomous text choice is also recommended to provide student opportunity for growth in reading comprehension.

5.4 Recommendations

As these findings demonstrate increases in student intrinsic reading motivation based upon student autonomy in text choice, the first recommendation is to continue the practice of choice reading within the sixth-grade ELA classroom and expand it to all ELA classes within the school. As an administrator, I recommended to my principal and network curriculum coordinator to establish policies that encourage autonomous text choice at any and every opportunity and potentially make a dedicated reading time for choice texts.

As a corollary recommendation, as the teacher of record for the students that have been part of this study plans to continue the choice reading time, those students should continue to be evaluated over the course of the year to monitor reading engagement and comprehension growth. Further, the sixth-grade cohort could be used as a test class, and final scores could be compared against grade levels that did not implement choice reading to determine if there is a difference in performance across grade levels based on access to choice reading time and options.
5.5 Implementation Plan

The first step to implement my recommendations was to suggest to the host teacher, who concurred on continuing choice reading opportunities and in-class reading time, that they mark books by Lexile or reading level and, for upper-quartile students, limit choice reading to at or above their recognized reading level to encourage continued growth in reading efficacy. Notionally, this would be an easy way to provide autonomous choice while still encouraging growth in all levels of student capability levels.

The next step in the implementation of my recommendations was to provide verbal feedback to my principal on the results of the study and the host teacher’s desire for continued use of the autonomous reading time and to convince them to permit continued research and study on the sixth-grade cohort as they progress through the rest of their regularly scheduled assessments. With the results presented, the decision was made to include choice reading during our homeroom period and to encourage the use of choice reading in any classrooms that supported the practice.

The third step was to write a short recommendation to the network ELA instructional coach, presenting a summary of the findings of the study and requesting extra funding for classroom library texts. Simultaneously, a similar recommendation was written to the network curriculum coordinator supplying early result data and requesting latitude within the sixth-grade curriculum to provide text choice within the curriculum assigned reading texts.

Upon formal completion and publication of the study results, the findings were submitted to my principal with the recommendation to add choice reading time and opportunity to all middle-school-level ELA classes, to evaluate performance, and
potentially to increase the scope of the program to the high school classes as well. The teacher of record planned to continue the choice reading time, and normally scheduled reading comprehension assessments throughout the year were expected to provide comparative results for continued analysis of changes in student reading comprehension capabilities. Additionally, a copy of the finalized study was sent to the network director, with a request for funding of a school library to further student reading options, particularly should the choice reading be expanded to other grade levels, and a recommendation for expansion of the reading program to include all middle school grades across the network with potential expansion into the high school pending the results of the recommended implementation.

Outside of my local school network, I plan on scheduling a meeting with our local public school district ELA curriculum coordinators to present my findings and evaluate inclusion of choice reading within the urban district. As the local district serves an urban area with high numbers of underperforming students, this intervention could significantly impact student performance and growth at a significantly lower cost than many resources they are currently evaluating. Additionally, I plan on submitting my published dissertation to the National Council of Teachers of English for potential distribution or inclusion in their online presentation, and I hope to be invited to speak at their annual convention.

5.6 Reflection

The results of this study were both expected and surprising on various levels. The reported motivations depicted in the MRQ results indicated a higher intrinsic reading motivation within the sixth-grade population than I had anticipated, although an external
motivation component *Grades* took the highest motivation position in both the pre- and post-MRQ results, which was also not surprising. Within the single-case study participants, broad-spectrum low reading motivation culminated with the highest reported score in *Reading Aesthetics* in the pre-intervention MRQ, which was surprising, as was the shift to emphasize intrinsic motivation components in the post-intervention results. Again, while *Grades* took the final top spot, this made me wonder if the students’ self-efficacy had grown to where they now believed reading could assist with their grades.

The other surprising aspect with the participant group was the shift of *Reading Importance* from the third-highest position in the pre-intervention MRQ to almost the bottom in the post-intervention MRQ. This shift in mindset from “do it because it’s important” to reading out of *Curiosity* is notable.

When looking at the shifts in intrinsic motivation demonstrated by the changes in MRQ scores, overall gains in intrinsic motivation were expected based upon prior research. What I did not expect, and what became very apparent in the reading reflections and interviews, is how the value of reading affects the student’s ability to develop motivation. While this notion is supported by situated expectancy-value theory, the impact of reading value and impact to motivation and reading behavior has been understated. While this study was able to demonstrate that intrinsic motivation generally increases with the addition of autonomy, a more nuanced requirement moving forward will be to identify ways to increase intrinsic value of reading prior to working on motivation development.

The final aspect of the study that both did and did not surprise me were the results of the pre- and post-intervention NWEA MAP assessment scores. Previous literature had
indicated that with the increase in intrinsic motivation, increases in reading comprehension should be observed. The findings of this study within the grade-level results demonstrated this to be true only for the bottom two quartiles, with the top two quartiles decreasing in their scores, a pattern that was also seen, although not to the same extent, within the study population. I was not surprised by the increase in comprehension scores, as those were in alignment with previous research, but the decreased performance of the upper quartiles in the grade-level results was unexpected. I had anticipated a much greater across-the-board comprehension increase. Specifically looking at the participant group, I found myself wondering if the value placed upon reading translated into value of a standardized test. While some of my participants demonstrated notable gains in Reading Importance and intrinsic motivation components within the MRQ, the lack of performance on the reading comprehension assessment indicates either a lack of skill transference or a lack of value regarding the assessment.

When looking at the study itself, there are a couple of changes that could have been made to strengthen the study results. While the MRQ and NWEA MAP provided solid quantitative data, this study could have been better supported through more extensive qualitative opportunities. First, the book clubs could have been used as a source of qualitative data to analyze student interest in the topics they were discussing and could have used that information to better support themes developed in the reading reflections and interviews. The interviews could also have been strengthened with regard to question type and specificity to draw a better response from the participants, which could have provided additional information and theme support. Additionally, I did not expect graphic novels to be the primary text type for participants, so a lack of options within that genre,
particular culturally relevant graphic novels is a source for growth. While I did look to add culturally relevant graphic novels to the classroom library over the course of the study, the selection of available texts was narrow, and indicative of a broader social lack of appropriate culturally relevant material.

Even without those changes, however, the results of this study were personally enlightening. Personally, I learned how to balance my research with both professional and pedagogical requirements, and I was able to experience the joy of students rushing to the bookshelf to pick their book. Standing in the classroom watching the students read just to read and watching them enjoy the time in a manner that cannot be quite captured outside of the experience itself was enough to make me want to expand the choice reading program to the entirety of the school’s ELA classes, and potentially to the other subjects as well.

On the professional side, the demonstrated changes in reading motivations presented in this study cannot be ignored and should, instead, be fostered and expanded. The verification that simple changes such as choice texts affect reading motivation further establishes the necessity of school libraries, or at least access to texts outside of the standard curriculum. More, this study provides me leverage to approach my school and network with ideas allowing student choice within the curriculum to maintain or further develop student reading motivation within the bounds of the required instructional guidance. This study also demonstrates the importance of tailoring the classroom in both materials and content to the needs of the student and reinforces the idea that we need to reevaluate our approach to reading within our school to capture these motivational changes. This study also provides data to support a separation between the value of
reading and the value of standardized testing and a reminder that one does not necessarily indicate the relative value of the other.

5.7 Limitations

The limitations for this study include a short study duration, a limited number of participants, and limited access to text types and levels. As this is a research action study, the overall duration of the study was a short six weeks. This compressed timeline limited habit formation and potential skill transferability, which could have impacted the reading comprehension scores. Further, my school does not have a school library, and the classroom library was limited to what I had previously purchased to stock my classroom. All other texts were found using “MyOn,” a database of free online texts that does not include current popular texts. This severely limited student options with respect to types and genres of texts and diversity of protagonists. Should a full library be available, more significant gains could be expected over a broader representation of the student population.

The population of the study was also a limiting factor. Due to the transient nature of our student population, and a lack of returned permission forms, the grade-level data included a relatively small sample size for generalized data, and the five single-case study participant population was also lower than anticipated. A larger sample size across both the generalized population and the sample participants would provide more generalizable results.

Another limitation is the access to reading comprehension measures. NWEA MAP was the only one offered by my school for standardized assessment purposes; however, a better approach for a short-term study may be to use a different form of assessment, such
as EasyCBM, which provides a shorter reading comprehension assessment that is standardized for the grade level. This may provide more accurate results over the short-term duration, saving MAP scores for a longer-term study.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Research

This study introduced several ideas that warrant further evaluation. The first recommendation for future study is to evaluate student perceptions of values associated with standardized testing and how to affect both the value and motivation relative to those assessments. As there does not seem to be a desire to decrease the amount of testing students face, understanding how to increase intrinsic value of the testing will be necessary for true performance increases.

The next recommendation for future research would be to conduct a longer study over the course of no less than one school year, maintaining the autonomous text choice and reading time in class. This would allow for a significantly better evaluation of the development of intrinsic motivation over time as well as its effects on reading comprehension. A corollary study, or a separate study, could be on how long it takes for intrinsic motivation to begin affecting reading comprehension, if the two correlate. This study could then be implemented in coordination with the intrinsic motivation study to determine correlation.

The third recommendation for future study would be to determine how long the intrinsic motivation developed through autonomous text choice lasts as students progress through school. Does autonomy in text choice continue motivational growth throughout student development, or is there a limitation on its utility as a tool for intrinsic motivation development? Another potential course of study would be to evaluate how long the
intrinsic motivation to read lasts if the autonomy is removed. Is intrinsic motivation something that the student will maintain on their own once it has developed, or once the immediate opportunity to continue motivation development is removed, does the student choose to let it lapse?

Another potential study could evaluate student preferences regarding text delivery methods. As districts continue to look for ways to cut costs, many schools are reducing or eliminating hard-copy books and replacing them with online libraries or digital text options. Providing students the opportunity to voice their preferences regarding text delivery methods, and balancing that with motivation development or comprehension development, could provide important insight into the efficacy of current library policies.

The final recommendation for potential study would be to evaluate how much autonomy is needed to affect student motivation. In this study, students were provided with free choice of available texts. What happens to student motivation to read if the text choice is narrowed to an assigned Lexile or reading level to maintain a level of challenge? What happens if students are provided with a choice of five texts within the curriculum for that portion of class? How much autonomy is required to maintain motivation development?

5.9 Summary

The purpose of this action research dissertation was to determine how autonomous text choice affected development of student intrinsic motivation for reading, how presentation style and culturally relevant texts played a role in student choice, and how the autonomy affected reading comprehension based upon the theories of self-determination theory, situated expectancy-value theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy.
Overall, autonomous choice in reading materials increased student intrinsic motivation to read. Text presentation style was student-preference dependent, and text choice provided limited options for culturally relevant texts within students’ preferred reading genre. Reading comprehension was not affected by increased intrinsic motivation.

This study demonstrated that the simple act of allowing students the autonomy to select their preferred reading texts for short periods of free reading increased their intrinsic motivation to read. This implies that continued access to choice texts may continue to increase student interest and engagement in reading, altering the current reports of declines in reading motivation. Further, this adjustment relies purely on existing materials, although increased access to culturally relevant texts and graphic novels is recommended, so it is easily adapted to any classroom environment. The idea that autonomy plays a role in motivation is a concept that could be far-reaching in the educational realm and is one that should be more fully explored in a time where standardization is becoming the more common practice.

If ELA classes switch from class texts to choice reading novels to teach concepts, there may be significant gains in both understanding and retention as students are more likely to be engaged in the texts with which they are working. These gains could be demonstrated in end-of-year assessments or standardized tests. If this is true, then the implication is that significant growth can be achieved through minimal financial investment and a release of teachers from the confines of standardized curricula toward a more student-centered and choice-driven material presentation style.
REFERENCES


Danifo, J., & Valdez, J. (2019). Building social emotional learning in youth through humanities-centered activities: Learn how a reading-based library program builds teen social emotional skills. Young Adult Library Services, 17(2), 27–31.


Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motivation* (pp. 75–146). W. H. Freeman.


APPENDIX A

MOTIVATIONS FOR READING QUESTIONNAIRE

Motivations for Reading Questionnaire

We are interested in your reading.

The sentences tell how some students feel about reading. Listen to each sentence and decide whether it talks about a person who was like you or different from you. There are no right or wrong answers. We only want to know how you feel about reading.

For many of the statements, you should think about the kinds of things you read in your class.

Here are some ones to try before we start on the ones about reading:

I like ice cream.

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If the statement was very different from you, circle 1. If the statement was a little different from you, circle 2. If the statement was a little like you, circle 3.

If the statement was a lot like you, circle 4.
I like spinach.

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If the statement was very different from you, what should you circle? If the statement was a little different from you, what should you circle? If the statement was a little like you, what should you circle?

If the statement was a lot like you, what should you circle?

Okay, we are ready to start on the ones about reading. Remember, when you give your answers, you should think about the things you were reading in your class. There are no right or wrong answers. We just are interested in YOUR ideas about reading. To give your answer, circle ONE number on each line. The answer lines are right under each statement.

Let’s turn the page and start. Please follow along with me while I read each of the statements, and then circle your answer.
1. I like being the best at reading.

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2. I like it when the questions in books make me think.

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3. I read to improve my grades.

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4. If the teacher discusses something interesting, I might read more about it.

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5. I like hard, challenging books.

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6. I enjoy a long, involved story or fiction book.

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7. I know that I will do well in reading next year.

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8. If a book is interesting, I don’t care how hard it is to read.

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9. I try to get more answers right than my friends.

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10. I have favorite subjects that I like to read about.

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11. I visit the library often with my family.

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12. I make pictures in my mind when I read.

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13. I don’t like reading something when the words are too difficult.

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14. I enjoy reading books about people in different countries.

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15. I am a good reader.

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16. I usually learn difficult things by reading.

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17. It is very important to me to be a good reader.

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18. My parents often tell me what a good job I am doing in reading.

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19. I read to learn new information about topics that interest me.

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20. If the project was interesting, I could read difficult material.

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21. I learn more from reading than most students in the class.

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22. I read stories about fantasy and make believe.

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23. I read because I have to.

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24. I don’t like vocabulary questions.

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25. I like to read about new things.

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26. I often read to my brother or my sister.

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27. In comparison to other activities I do, it is very important to me to be a good reader.

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28. I like having the teacher say I read well.

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29. I read about my hobbies to learn more about them.

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30. I like mysteries.

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31. My friends and I like to trade things to read.

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32. Complicated stories are no fun to read.

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33. I read a lot of adventure stories.

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34. I do as little schoolwork as possible in reading.

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35. I feel like I make friends with people in good books.

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36. Finishing every reading assignment is very important to me.

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37. My friends sometimes tell me I am a good reader.

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38. Grades are a good way to see how well you are doing in reading.

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39. I like to help my friends with their schoolwork in reading.

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40. I don’t like it when there are too many people in the story.

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41. I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends.

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42. I sometimes read to my parents.

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<th>A Little Like Me</th>
<th>A Lot Like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
43. I like to get compliments for my reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Different</th>
<th>A Little Different</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. It is important for me to see my name on a list of good readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Different</th>
<th>A Little Different</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45. I talk to my friends about what I am reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Different</th>
<th>A Little Different</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46. I always try to finish my reading on time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Different</th>
<th>A Little Different</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47. I am happy when someone recognizes my reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Different</th>
<th>A Little Different</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48. I like to tell my family about what I am reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Different</th>
<th>A Little Different</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

49. I like being the only one who knows an answer in something we read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Different</th>
<th>A Little Different</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
50. I look forward to finding out my reading grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Like Me</th>
<th>A Lot Like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51. I always do my reading work exactly as the teacher wants it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Like Me</th>
<th>A Lot Like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52. I like to finish my reading before other students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Like Me</th>
<th>A Lot Like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53. My parents ask me about my reading grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Different From Me</th>
<th>A Little Like Me</th>
<th>A Lot Like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B

## RECORDING SHEET FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Identifier</th>
<th>Reading Start Time</th>
<th>Behaviors Noted During Reading Time:</th>
<th>Reading Stop Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: R = reading RT = reading with teacher intervention T = Talking P = Playing/Fidgeting O= Out of Seat OT= Off-Task

Observer Notes:
APPENDIX C

STUDENT READING REFLECTION FORM

Directions: Think about the text you have been reading and answer the following questions as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. What text did you choose to read, and why did you choose that text?

2. Which characters, stories, or ideas from this text most stood out to you, and why?

3. What was most surprising, interesting, or challenging to you about this text?

4. What have you enjoyed about this text?

5. What are some of the differences between this text and the texts that you usually read?

6. Are you interested in reading more texts like this?
APPENDIX D

STUDENT READING MOTIVATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Identifier:______________________ Date: __________________

Student Reading Motivation Interview Questions (Initial)
1. How do you think reading impacts your life?
2. If you were asked to describe how good you were at reading, what would you say?
   a. What about at understanding what you read?
3. Why did you choose the text that you chose to read?
4. Would you choose that text again?
5. Do you enjoy reading?
   a. Why do you feel this way?
6. Do you generally like the books you read in school?
7. Do you read outside of school?
   a. If so, how does what you read out of school differ from what you read in school?
   b. Is it something you choose to do, or does someone make you?
   c. What about your choice novel—do you read that at home?
      i. Why/why not?
8. In your mind, what could make reading more enjoyable?
9. What else do you think I need to know to make reading in class more fun?

Student Reading Motivation Interview Questions (Follow-On Interviews)

1. Which text are you reading now?
   a. If different from previous text:
      i. Why did you choose this new text?
      ii. How did it compare to the last text?
   b. If the same text as the original:
      i. What is happening in the text now?
      ii. How are you enjoying the story?
2. How are you feeling about reading now that you have been reading a choice text for a while?
3. Do you read outside of school?
   a. If this has changed from previous responses: What made you change your mind about reading outside of school?
4. (Open for questions pertaining to reflection responses, book club participation, or classroom related behaviors).
## APPENDIX E

### MRQ FULL RESULTS TABLES

**Table E.1**

*Grade-Level Pre-Intervention MRQ Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade-Level</th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Work Avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Average</td>
<td>2.933</td>
<td>2.593</td>
<td>2.628</td>
<td>2.816</td>
<td>2.861</td>
<td>2.883</td>
<td>2.706</td>
<td>3.083</td>
<td>2.058</td>
<td>2.522</td>
<td>2.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Median</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>3.250</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>2.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>0.633</td>
<td>0.645</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.769</td>
<td>0.641</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E.2

*Grade-Level Post-Intervention MRQ Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Work Avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Average</td>
<td>3.074</td>
<td>2.876</td>
<td>2.994</td>
<td>2.992</td>
<td>2.950</td>
<td>2.863</td>
<td>2.833</td>
<td>3.077</td>
<td>2.167</td>
<td>2.758</td>
<td>2.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Median</td>
<td>3.333</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.143</td>
<td>2.833</td>
<td>2.500</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.629</td>
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</table>

Table E.3

*Study Participant General Pre-Intervention MRQ Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Work Avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Average</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2.240</td>
<td>2.040</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2.640</td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>2.550</td>
<td>1.571</td>
<td>1.933</td>
<td>2.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Median</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2.714</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.250</td>
<td>1.429</td>
<td>1.833</td>
<td>2.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.558</td>
<td>0.1767</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>0.584</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>0.727</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>0.224</td>
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</table>
### Table E.4

**Study Participant General Post-Intervention MRQ Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Efficacy</th>
<th>Reading Challenge</th>
<th>Reading Curiosity</th>
<th>Reading Aesthetics</th>
<th>Reading Importance</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Work Avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Average</strong></td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>2.760</td>
<td>3.120</td>
<td>2.829</td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.160</td>
<td>3.050</td>
<td>1.714</td>
<td>2.167</td>
<td>2.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Median</strong></td>
<td>2.667</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>3.500</td>
<td>1.857</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>0.710</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>0.697</td>
<td>1.647</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX F

**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW RESPONSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial interview</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Bailey</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Eli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: How do you think reading impacts your life?</td>
<td>“Really good. Helps me get smarter.”</td>
<td>“It doesn’t really.”</td>
<td>“It does because like what if you can’t read, but if you read you can learn bigger words. Important because in the future you have to read out loud and you can’t or you don’t know what a word is.”</td>
<td>“I don’t think it impacts because reading doesn’t teach you as much, now we read, so it’s not as important. I get my reading from games and videos and media.”</td>
<td>“It doesn’t impact my life.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial interview</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Eli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: If you were asked to describe how good you were at reading, what would you say?</td>
<td>“I’m pretty good at reading, just have trouble with some words. I would say I’m not that good [at understanding what you read] because I don’t get the gist sometimes.”</td>
<td>“About a 6th, average-ish.”</td>
<td>“I’m pretty good. I can read a little bit but I have a stuttering problem that messes up my reading.”</td>
<td>“7.5 out of 10. I really stutter sometimes I am thinking what to say and don’t know the full sentence.”</td>
<td>“Okay.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: Why did you choose the text you chose to read?</td>
<td>“Diary of a Wimpy Kid because I thought it was interesting.”</td>
<td>“A part of the horror genre.”</td>
<td>“Sisters/Guts I like the author.”</td>
<td>“Basketball Stars because of the cover.”</td>
<td>“Diary of a Wimpy Kid because it is a fun book to read. Pictures make it fun.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4: Would you choose this text again?</td>
<td>“Yes, because I want to read the whole series.”</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
<td>“Probably not. It doesn’t have a main story, but if I really like it, maybe.”</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Eli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5: Do you enjoy reading?</td>
<td>“Yes, because it’s actually fun when you get better at it.”</td>
<td>“Yes. I feel comfortable. I can imagine everything that is happening.”</td>
<td>“Yes; to me, if I read something I picture it in my mind, I just like to read.”</td>
<td>“Not really. It’s boring because there’s not much interaction. I like to do things quickly and fast reading.”</td>
<td>“Not really.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6: Do you generally like the books you read in school?</td>
<td>“Yes.”</td>
<td>“Kind of. I don’t know how to describe it, just not my genre.”</td>
<td>“No, I don’t like chapter books. If it’s a comic I can see what’s going on.”</td>
<td>“Not really, but usually some interesting things like The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe last year.”</td>
<td>“A little bit.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7: Do you read outside of school?</td>
<td>“No, because I have a lot of things to do but will read if I have time.”</td>
<td>“Yes. Things about the cast are different, some are lighthearted, I choose them.”</td>
<td>“Yes. They are the same [outside of school] because my little sister has baby books that I read to her.”</td>
<td>“No. It’s boring outside of videos and media.”</td>
<td>“No.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8: In your mind, what could make reading more enjoyable?</td>
<td>“If books weren’t so complicated.”</td>
<td>“The characters and setting.”</td>
<td>“Chapter books to have some kind of picture or something to show what is going on.”</td>
<td>“If . . . I don’t know because reading is reading. If it was shorter and had more pictures.”</td>
<td>“I don’t know.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Initial Interview

| Question 9: What else do you think I need to know to make reading in class more fun? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Adam                            | Bailey                          | Charlie                         | David                           | Eli                             |
| “That’s kind of hard. Maybe books that are more interesting. They are pretty interesting but need to be more.” | “I don’t know.” | “Have more books like *Big Nate* and *Dogman*.” | “Nothing. Just the people, I’ve asked to change classes.” | “Not really.” |

### Final Interview

| Question 1: Which text are you reading now? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Adam                            | Bailey                          | Charlie                         | David                           | Eli                             |
| “Diary of a Wimpy Kid. I remembered that I had bought it so I just started reading it.” | *Dread Nation* | “Zeke Meeks. Last year I was reading it and picked it up again. It has some pictures, but it’s not a graphic novel.” | “Amulet 4 because I’ve read the series last grade and now I have a goal to read the last seven books. It’s a comic book and it has adventure, I love adventure.” | “*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* because it’s interesting [participant could not say what was happening in the story].” |

<p>| Question 2: How are you feeling about reading now that you have been reading a choice text for a while? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Adam                            | Bailey                          | Charlie                         | David                           | Eli                             |
| “I have been feeling okay reading – about the same.” | “It’s like kinda helped me improve my reading. Like I went to read one sentence, and now I can go to more.” | “It makes it easier to me because she gave us chapter books with big words.” | “I love reading more because I have found more interest in books.” | “The same.” |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final interview</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Bailey</th>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Eli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: Do you read outside of school?</td>
<td>“Yes, I figured I should just probably read.”</td>
<td>“Yes, it is the same.”</td>
<td>“A little more, I have been reading on my laptop.”</td>
<td>“No.”</td>
<td>“No.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>