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Jillian Stenger
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract
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Abstract

This study examined reading motivation among three fifth grade students in a suburban elementary school. The students’ reading motivation levels varied, as one student was highly motivated, one student demonstrated average motivation, and one student had little motivation. Data was collected through observations, teacher and student interviews, and student questionnaires that assessed dimensions of reading motivation. The findings show that not only do these students read for different reasons, but they also display varied degrees of avoidance, compliance, and involvement during reading activities. Another major finding is that giving students choices and allowing for group discussion during reading motivates students. Teachers must implement certain instructional strategies in order to foster reading motivation and instill a love of reading among students.
Why is it that some students avoid reading and reading related activities at all costs, while other students’ heads are buried in books at all times? It is essential that teachers recognize that while reading motivation varies from student to student, certain steps can be taken in order to help foster reading motivation among all students. Being aware of what motivates students to read is critical if teachers wish for students to truly enjoy reading and become lifelong readers. After all, as Johns and Lenski (2005) maintain, teachers all hold the same goal for their students – for them to want to read. Additionally, according to Guthrie et al. (1999), the students who have a desire to read are most likely better readers than students who are unmotivated to read (as cited in Johns & Lenski, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, it appears that highly motivated students are often more proficient readers than students with little to no reading motivation. Having that inspiration and ambition to read and finding joy in reading is then crucial to becoming a successful reader.

It is then the teacher’s task to discover what it is that motivates individual students, and how to engage them in reading both inside and outside of school. If teachers are aware of what specifically contributes to levels of reading motivation among students, then teachers can be more effective in their approach to both reading and reading instruction in the classroom.

This current study involved fifth grade students and discovering what motivates these students to read. The findings suggest that students with different reading motivation levels exhibit certain behaviors during reading activities, including different degrees of avoidance, involvement, and compliance. Students’ reasons for reading also differ, as the highly motivated student and student with average motivation appear to be intrinsically motivated to read, while the student with low motivation is more extrinsically motivated to read. In addition, instructional strategies that seem to motivate fifth grade students during reading include: group discussions
and collaboration, offering students choices in their learning, and popcorn reading (a form of
taking turns in oral reading).

**Theoretical Framework**

In order to help answer my research question, “What motivates students to read and what
can teachers do in order to encourage unmotivated students to want to read?” it may be helpful to
consider sociocultural-historical theory, New Literacy Studies, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
theory, and self-determination theory. Each of these theories offers specific ideas and concepts
that are pertinent to the particular research that has been conducted.

**Sociocultural-Historical Theory**

According to Larson and Marsh (2005), literacy is a social practice which is
“…constructed in everyday practices” (p. 10). As Barton and Hamilton (1998) suggest, literacy
is primarily a social activity that can be found in social interaction among people (as cited in
Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 10). That is literacy itself includes all the socializing we do each day,
both in formal and informal settings and conversations with friends, colleagues, and family
members. Our daily social exchanges with others are especially vital, because that is how our
literacy skills are formed, as well as our views regarding reading and literacy. For example, if
we interact with people on a daily basis who hold and verbally express negative views of
reading, our outlook may consequently change. As Larson and Marsh (2005) maintain, children
are socialized in a multitude of communities, “…participating in a community of teachers,
adults, parents and professionals, each with its own set of practices and discourses” (p. 106).
Within these communities are individuals who hold their own beliefs and attitudes regarding
literacy practices, all of which are likely to surface through social interaction with others. For
young children especially who are at the beginning stages of forming their literacy skills and
views, their social interaction is key, as the number of perspectives to which they are exposed can greatly influence their own.

An additional component of sociocultural-historical theory that connects to student motivation is that of the idea that children are seen as literate beings (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 106). Under sociocultural-historical theory, there exists a notion that literacy knowledge is co-constructed between the teacher and student (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 106). That is, the teacher him/herself does not solely create literacy learning, but it is the participation of both the teacher and student that contribute to the knowledge learned. If, however, students do not feel valued and “…recognized and legitimized in the classroom and community,” their attitude and motivation toward reading may diminish (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 106). Therefore it is imperative that teachers view their students as essential parts of the classroom community, and recognize their individual literacy skills. In doing so, teachers will be upholding what Larson and Marsh (2005) call a “…meaningful learning community, a community of learners…” (p. 107). In this positive classroom community, all students are viewed as indispensable components to the classroom, each with valuable literacy knowledge to contribute.

New Literacy Studies

In addition to sociocultural-historical theory, New Literacy Studies may also help in answering my proposed research question. Similar to sociocultural-historical theory, New Literacy Studies maintains that “…literacy learning does not simply occur in formal or informal settings, or in or out of school, but also occurs in-between in everyday interaction as tools for building and maintaining social relations” (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 18). These “in-between” occurrences can include activities such as reading labels on cereal boxes, creating shopping lists, or reading a menu at a restaurant. Heath (1983) calls these occurrences “literacy events” which
she defines as, “…occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies” (p. 74). It is these literacy events that help to shape and form community members’ beliefs and views toward literacy. As Heath (1983) argues, “Children learn certain customs, beliefs, and skills in early enculturation experiences with written materials…” (p. 75). That is, children in all communities are surrounded by a specific culture and set of beliefs and habits pertaining to literacy experiences. For example, many children in mainstream communities grow up with bedtime stories, which help to establish this pattern of behavior over the next several years (Heath, 1983, p. 75). At the same time, children who are growing up in non-mainstream communities may not experience the same literacy events that children in mainstream communities do, as literacy events are unique to the community of individuals.

Both Heath’s (1983) study and New Literacy Studies outline the significance of one’s community and learned literacy habits and beliefs. This assertion that each community experiences certain literacy events relates to reading motivation because if children grow up in a community where literacy is not regarded as something of value, chances are children may enter school with little motivation to read. In other words, if a child’s family members and friends do not encourage one another to read and view reading as an enjoyable literacy activity, the child him/herself will likely show little reading motivation. As Heath (1983) states, “Children have to learn to select, hold, and retrieve content from books and other written or printed texts in accordance with their community’s rules or ‘ways of taking’ and the children’s learning follows community paths of language socialization” (p. 91). Each community has in place certain “rules” for its members to follow, including how to view and approach reading, and how one should create meaning from a text.
It is critical for teachers to understand New Literacy Studies and to obtain a better understanding of their own literacy practices and the literacy practices of their students and families (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 24). If teachers are more aware of what literacy looks like in their students’ homes and local community, then they can make instruction more effective and authentic. For example, if teachers understand the “…purposeful nature of literacy practices and their connection to broader social goals and cultural practices…” and create more meaningful literacy activities that connect with students’ real lives, then it may encourage students to become more motivated and excited about reading and literacy (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 24).

Rather than creating literacy activities in a random and isolated manner for students to complete, it is essential to connect literacy activities to students’ lives, as it helps them view the activities as more authentic. Students’ motivation and desire to read may then increase, setting in motion the necessary steps for students to become lifelong readers.

**Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Theory**

According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), reading motivation is defined as “…the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (p. 405). It is then one’s goals, values, and beliefs that determine the degree to which one is motivated to read. Since an individual person holds his or her own goals, values, and beliefs regarding reading, it can be expected that reading motivation will vary from person to person.

As Sweet (1997) asserts, the two types of motivation that exist and operate within students are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation “…refers to a person’s inner desire to engage in an activity, whether the activity has an external value” (Sweet, 1997, p. 87). That is, a student who is intrinsically motivated to read reads for the sake of reading, or because
he or she truly wishes to learn about a certain topic or subject. An intrinsically motivated student also finds pleasure in the act of reading and will “…seek opportunities to engage in book reading, often losing track of time while immersed in the task” (Sweet, 1997, p. 87). Thus, these students read for fun and during their leisure time and may become so absorbed in what they are reading that they forget what is going on around them.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation “…refers to a person being prompted to engage in an activity by an incentive or anticipated outcome that is external to the activity” (Sweet, 1997, p. 87). A student who is primarily extrinsically motivated reads not because he or she truly has an interest in reading, but because his or her teacher requires them to read. As Sweet (1997) maintains, an extrinsically motivated student reads “…as a means to an end” such as reading in order to receive a higher report grade (p. 88). Additionally, an extrinsically motivated student will read because of “…what they will receive for the activity rather than from the activity itself” (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004, p. 301). That is, these students are more interested in the rewards or grades they will receive, as opposed to the act of reading itself.

Whether one is intrinsically motivated to read or extrinsically motivated to read, certain implications can be drawn. If a student is already intrinsically motivated to read and displays a strong interest in reading, teachers need to continue to support these students by encouraging them to keep reading and to share what they are reading with others. Teachers can continue to promote intrinsic motivation within these students by suggesting additional reading materials that they believe would appeal to their students. Since these students have already developed a genuine interest in reading, teachers must continue to be an encouraging support system for these students in order to help strengthen their motivation.
For students who appear more extrinsically motivated to read, it is likely that these students have not yet discovered a sense of enjoyment in reading. These students are driven by external factors such as rewards and grades, and have not yet developed an interest in reading for the sake of reading. It then becomes the responsibility of the classroom teacher to help foster an interest in reading within these students that will last over time, beyond the walls of the classroom. Several instructional strategies can help to develop intrinsic motivation in students, which are discussed in great detail in the literature review section of this paper.

**Self-Determination Theory**

Self-determination theory helps to provide additional insight into motivation, and why certain individuals are intrinsically motivated and others are not, especially in the learning context. According to self-determination theory, there are three psychological needs: relatedness, competency, and autonomy (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Relatedness means developing emotional and secure connections with others around you that are “…based on trust, caring, and mutual concern for one another’s social and emotional well-being” (Sweet, 1997, p. 89). If children are raised in homes where this sense of relatedness is present, and where reading is a valued, everyday activity, then these children are likely to develop a strong interest in reading (Sweet, 1997). That is, if reading and books play a significant role in a child’s home and upbringing, then they will likely hold reading in a similar regard in the future.

Competency, the second psychological need, is also central to one’s level of intrinsic motivation. According to self-determination theory, “…feeling competent or effective when engaged in challenging activities…” is an important part of intrinsic motivation (Sweet, 1997, p. 90). When children feel confident and able to perform a task, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to complete that task; conversely, when children feel insecure about
achieving a task, they are likely to have a low level of intrinsic motivation and feel poorly about their abilities. Thus, children who feel competent about their reading abilities are more likely to become intrinsically motivated to read (Sweet, 1997, p. 90).

Autonomy, the final psychological need according to self-determination theory, refers to freedom and choice; that is, giving children the ability to make choices in their learning. Providing students the freedom to make their own decisions in regards to what they read has been shown to increase intrinsic motivation (Sweet, 1997, p. 90). If students are given the opportunity to make choices in their own learning (e.g. reading), they are more likely to place more value on their learning experiences, and choose reading materials and activities that are more meaningful to them.

These three psychological needs of relatedness, competency, and autonomy all serve as the basis to the process of internalization, which then leads individuals to a more intrinsic orientation (Sweet, 1997). That is, if these three psychological needs are met in regards to reading, a child is one step closer to becoming more intrinsically motivated to read, and more likely to begin reading for the sake of reading. Feeling a sense of relatedness and belonging in a classroom, feeling competent about their reading abilities, and being given the opportunity to make choices in regards to their own learning, are three critical components that help to facilitate intrinsic motivation in students.

*How motivation is constructed*

In addition to examining sociocultural-historical theory, New Literacy Studies, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory, and self-determination theory, it may also be helpful to consider how it is that motivation is constructed. According to Wigfield (1997), some of the factors that relate to the particular question of whether or not one can succeed include: children’s ability
beliefs, expectancies, and efficacy beliefs (p. 16). Whereas ability beliefs refer to children’s evaluations of their level of competence in certain areas, expectancies refer to how children sense they will perform on an upcoming task (Wigfield, 1997, p. 16).

Similar to expectancies, efficacy beliefs, or self-efficacy, refers to how an individual expects to perform. According to Bandura (1997), one’s expectations or efficacy beliefs, determine activity choice, willingness to expend effort, and persistence (as cited in Wigfield, 1997, p. 16). That is, if an individual believes that he or she can accomplish a task, he or she will choose that particular activity, devote a great deal of effort in completing that activity, and demonstrate perseverance while doing so. Thus, if a student believes that he or she has the ability to accomplish a task such as reading and expects to do well, they are more likely to participate and engage in reading for a longer period of time (Wigfield, 1997).

While ability beliefs, expectancies, and efficacy beliefs are all factors that relate to the question of whether or not one can succeed, the next question to consider is whether one wants to succeed and why one wants to succeed. In answering this question, the constructs of subjective task values, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and achievement goals are important to consider; Subjective task values refer to individuals’ incentives for completing particular activities (Wigfield, 1997, p. 17). Specifically, interest value, or how much one is interested in the activity, attainment value, or how important an activity is, and utility value, how useful an activity is, are three specific components to subjective task values. In other words, the more a student is interested in reading, the more important the reading is to a student, and the more useful reading is to a student, the more likely it is that a student will make the decision to continue reading and remain engaged in reading.
Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are also additional constructs that relates to whether one wants to succeed. As mentioned previously, an intrinsically motivated student reads for the sake of reading and because he or she has a genuine interest in reading, while an extrinsically motivated student reads for external reasons like rewards. If an individual is intrinsically motivated, then he or she demonstrates a true curiosity and desire to learn about a particular topic through reading. It is these students who hold an honest passion for reading that are likely to remain engaged in reading in the long run (Wigfield, 1997, p. 17).

Finally, achievement goals are important to consider in regards to why one wishes to succeed. Wigfield (1997) defines achievement goals as “…the purposes children have for achievement in different areas; they deal with the ‘whys’ of behavior” (p. 18). According to Wigfield (1997), there are two different achievement goals, including: learning an activity and outperforming others. As Wigfield (1997) maintains, whereas children who focus on outperforming others are more likely to choose activities they know they are able to successfully complete, children who focus on the specific act of learning tend to choose more challenging activities, and are more concerned with their own individual progress (p. 18). Thus, if students are encouraged to focus on their own learning and are provided learning goals, then these students are likely to maintain intrinsic motivation throughout school (Wigfield, 1997, p. 18).

Research Question

Given that literacy is a social practice that takes place in our everyday interactions and that one’s motivation is constructed by ability beliefs, expectancies, and efficacy beliefs, what is it that motivates students to read? What instructional strategies can teachers implement in order to encourage unmotivated students to want to read?

Literature Review
Factors That Influence Reading Motivation

Motivation is a complex topic that varies from individual to individual. In examining such a multifaceted topic, it is essential to consider how and why motivation varies among individual students. Specifically, how does one’s level of motivation appear to correlate with gender, grade level, ethnicity and culture, and degree of parental involvement?

Gender

As argued by Unrau and Schlackman (2006), Mucherah and Yoder (2008), Martinez et al. (2008), and Baker and Wigfield (1999), differences in students’ levels of reading motivation, attitudes, and reasons for reading vary between males and females. Both Martinez et al. (2008) and Baker and Wigfield (1999) found that girls revealed more positive attitudes toward reading than their male peers, as indicated by students’ responses to the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey and The Motivation for Reading Questionnaire, respectively. Martinez et al.’s (2008) study involved fourth grade students, while Baker and Wigfield (1999) focused on fifth and sixth grade students.

While Mucherah and Yoder (2008) also found that sixth and eighth grade female students held more positive attitudes toward reading, they also stated that these female students “…had high reading efficacy, read more challenging material, read for curiosity…more often than male students” (p. 227). That is, female students expressed higher competency in reading, read materials that presented a challenge, and read because they truly desired to learn. Although these female students did appear to have a strong interest in reading in order to gain more knowledge about a certain topic, Mucherah and Yoder (2008) also discovered that female students “…read more for social reasons, compliance, and to improve their grades…” (p. 227). Similarly, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) also report that girls appear to be influenced by external factors.
“Overall, girls rated themselves higher than did boys in extrinsic motivation, suggesting that dimensions of the extrinsic composite…contribute to the motivation of girls to a greater degree than to that of boys…” (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006, p. 96). Thus, the female students in Unrau and Schlackman’s (2006) study often read in order to be recognized for their accomplishments and receive good grades.

Although Mucherah and Yoder (2008) Unrau and Schlackman (2006), and Martinez et al. (2008) uncovered notable findings regarding gender differences in reading attitudes, none of the articles appear to examine the underlying reasons as to why it is that female students express more positive attitudes toward reading than male students. For example, Martinez et al. (2008) mainly compare their findings to previous research, rather than discussing their own findings and providing possible explanations for their findings. The apparent correlation between gender and reading attitudes and implications for educators are both left untouched. Though Baker and Wigfield (1999) do not delve into great discussion regarding gender differences in reading attitudes, they do cite Eisenberg, Martin, and Fabes (1996) and McKenna et al. (1995) in discussing how gender differences “…may reflect the internalization of cultural expectations that girls will be more positive about reading than boys” (as cited in Baker & Wigfield, 1999, p. 473). Baker and Wigfield (1999) then do touch upon the deeper issue of how culture plays such a powerful role in students’ lives, including their attitudes toward reading.

**Grade Level**

Just as reading motivation varies by gender, students’ motivation to read and attitudes toward reading also fluctuate with grade level. Several researchers suggest that as students progress through school, not only does their motivation decline, but their attitudes change as well (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006; Katz, Kaplan, & Gueta, 2010; Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, &
Blumenfeld, 1993; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001). Eccles et al. (1993) found that in comparison to fourth grade students, first grade students reported much higher competence in reading, which Parsons and Ruble (1977) suggest could “…reflect increasing pessimism with age…” (as cited in Eccles et al., 1993, p. 843). This negativity may develop because as Schunk (1999) argues, “…as students receive teacher feedback and compare themselves with peers, they form a more realistic…sense of self-efficacy for various literacy tasks” (as cited in Wilson & Trainin, 2007, p. 276). Therefore, as students confer more and more with their teachers as they grow older, they become more aware of their areas of need – which could result in poorer perceptions toward themselves and decreased motivation. Likewise, as students move across grade levels in elementary school, they may start to compare themselves and their grades with other classmates, which can be extremely harmful to a student’s view of him or herself.

Consistent with Eccles et al.’s (1993) findings, both Katz et al. (2010) and Unrau and Schlackman (2006) found that children’s motivation decreases as they move across grade levels. Whereas Eccles et al. (1993) examined differences in young students in the primary grades, Katz et al. (2010) and Unrau and Schlackman (2006) focused on older students in the middle and high school level. One of the major findings of Katz et al. (2010) is that motivation decreases as students transition from elementary school to middle school. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, “…the findings also indicate that junior high school students perceived their teachers as less supportive of their psychological needs than did elementary school students” (Katz et al., 2010, p. 262). Thus, if students do not feel that they have the support necessary to be successful in school, their attitudes may take a downward shift. Similarly, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) discovered a pattern of declining motivation as students moved through middle school. Unlike Katz et al.’s (2010) study, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) did not suggest
a possible link between declining motivation and the amount of teacher support at the middle school level.

While Katz et al. (2010) investigated some of the deeper concepts related to decreasing motivation across grade levels, Unrau and Schlackman’s (2006) discussion of their findings and implications were not quite as extensive. For example, Katz et al. (2010) discuss how students who had a higher level of psychological needs were more likely to perceive their teachers as providing a low level of support. Katz et al. (2010) also draw conclusions and implications based on their findings. Whereas Katz et al. (2010) examine underlying issues and factors influencing students’ perceptions of their teachers’ levels of support, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) only mention that they found a pattern of decreasing motivation for reading as students moved through the middle school years, including both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with no significant explanations as to why this pattern may have emerged, or what educators can do about these findings.

Like Katz et al. (2010) and Unrau and Schlackman (2006), Gottfried et al. (2001) also focused on students at the secondary level while examining levels of motivation. According to Gottfried et al. (2001), one possible reason for middle and high school students’ declines in motivation is because “…school environments become increasingly fraught with anxiety as competition for grades and school activities plays an important role in future college admissions…” (p. 10). Thus, as students move forward in their schooling, they may begin to feel the pressure to perform well in order to gain admission to a top college. The demands on students are much higher than they were at the elementary level. Gottfried et al.’s (2001) findings are then somewhat similar to the findings of Katz et al. (2010) in the sense that both sets of research indicate that environmental factors may be part of the cause for students’ motivation
to drop over the years; that is, Katz et al. (2010) discusses lower amounts of teacher support at the middle school level, and Gottfried et al. (2001) talks about the external atmosphere of the high school setting itself.

A weakness of Gottfried et al.’s (2001) study is that there is little discussion of specific subject areas and materials used in each subject. While Gottfried et al. (2001) do greatly discuss how students’ motivation decrease at the high school level because of the pressures of applying to colleges, the specific area of reading and English Language Arts are not discussed. However, Gottfried et al. (2001) do acknowledge that “Actual aspects of the subject matter itself, or the way it is taught, may be important to examine” (p. 10). Therefore, while Gottfried et al. (2001) recognize that their explanations of decreased motivation are insufficient, they do not discuss the matters of specific subject areas or how they are taught to students.

Ethnicity and Culture

Research regarding the relationship between ethnicity and culture and reading motivation and reading attitudes appears to be mixed. While Unrau and Schlackman (2006) and Mucherah and Yoder (2008) examine intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among students of different ethnic backgrounds, Baker and Wigfield (1999) focus on students’ reported attitudes toward reading. The findings of Unrau and Schlackman (2006) indicate that intrinsic motivation positively relates to reading achievement of Asian middle school students, but not Hispanic middle school students. That is, Asian students’ curiosity, involvement, and preference for challenging reading materials were rated higher than it was for Hispanic students.

In discussing why intrinsic motivation positively related to and predicted reading achievement for Asian students but not Hispanic students, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) discuss that they “…suspect that more Asian students than Hispanic students were able to pursue and
fulfill those needs to expand competence and self-determination” (p. 96). That is, according to Unrau and Schlackman (2006), Asian students may hold more internalized values and beliefs regarding schooling, which may indicate why there was a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and reading achievement in these students. That is to say, if Asian students come from families and cultural backgrounds that place a high value on education, it is likely that their perceptions of school will then be formed according to their cultural beliefs.

While Unrau and Schlackman (2006) relate their findings regarding Asian students to their culture, their explanation for the lack of positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and reading achievement for Hispanic students is a bit weaker. Unrau and Schlackman (2006) draw on the work of Ogbu (1983), a cultural anthropologist, in order to explain the lack of positive correlation for Hispanic students. Specifically, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) refer to Ogbu’s cultural-ecological theory in which Ogbu (1983) classifies minorities into voluntary and involuntary groups (p. 97). According to Ogbu (1983), voluntary minorities (e.g. those who immigrated to America willingly, usually to improve their opportunities and opportunities for their children), “…frame their situation in America as one that promotes self-realization through the pursuit of opportunity in a new land” (as cited in Unrau & Schlackman, 2006, p. 97).

Involuntary minorities, on the other hand, “…may frame their situation in America as one that is far less promising in social and economic terms” as “Hard work and education may not enable them to achieve their vision of a self-determined future” (Unrau and Schlackman, 2006, p. 98).

Although it is understood that Ogbu (1983) is explaining the difference between what it means to be a voluntary and involuntary minority in America, this explanation appears to also be quite problematic in explaining the lack of intrinsic motivation among Hispanic students. For example, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) discuss how “…in-school literacies, including the
acquisition of English, may not always be perceived as funds of knowledge that will enable them, without conflict, to pursue their vision of a self-determined future” (p. 98). What is unclear is how this statement refers to only Hispanic students and other involuntary minorities and not Asian students, and other voluntary minorities. For all minority students, both involuntary and voluntary, there is a chance that teachers will not see the value in students’ experiences and backgrounds. All students whose first language is something other than English will also face some sort of challenge in their education, regardless of whether or not their ancestors were involuntary or voluntary minorities.

While Unrau and Schlackman (2006) claim that intrinsic motivation positively relates to Asian students’ reading achievement and not Hispanic students, Mucherah and Yoder (2008) argue that in regards to reading curiosity – that is, reading in order to learn about a certain topic – differences arose between minority students and white students. According to Mucherah and Yoder (2008), minority students outperformed white students in the area of reading curiosity, which is a characteristic of intrinsic motivation (p. 228). Minority students then expressed more of a desire to read in order to learn about a new topic or expand on their interests. Just as Unrau and Schlackman (2006) found differences in intrinsic motivation between Asian and Hispanic students, Mucherah and Yoder (2008) found differences in reading curiosity, a feature of intrinsic motivation, between minority students and white students. Although minority students had higher levels of reading curiosity than white students, white students performed better on the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress, a state-mandated test (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008, p. 228). Though Mucherah and Yoder (2008) discovered interesting findings regarding white and African American students’ levels of intrinsic motivation, no extensive explanation or
investigation into the possible reasons behind these findings are explored and discussed. Rather, the findings are presented, but not explored at great lengths.

Just as Unrau and Schlackman (2006) and Mucherah and Yoder (2008) discovered findings relating to varied levels of intrinsic motivation across different ethnic groups, Baker and Wigfield (1999) noted differences between ethnic groups as well; however, they found differences in reading attitudes. According to Baker and Wigfield’s (1999) study, African American students “…reported more positive reading motivation than white students…” (p. 473). That is, African American students viewed reading in a more positive light, according to their responses to The Motivation for Reading Questionnaire. Baker and Wigfield (1999) also cited similarities to a previous study by Stevenson et al. (1990) in which fifth grade African American students appeared to like reading more than their white peers (as cited in Baker & Wigfield, 1999, p. 473).

Baker and Wigfield (1999) explained their findings by suggesting that perhaps African American students reported high positive reading motivation because they “…may have a general tendency to respond positively on self-report measures…” which has been found in previous research (p. 473). Possible reasons for African American students to report high levels of positive responses on self-report measures include, according to Graham (1994), self-protective factors, social comparison processes, or social desirability (as cited in Baker & Wigfield, 1999, p. 473). However, Graham (1994) does acknowledge that these possible reasons are weak, and Baker and Wigfield (1999) state that further research needs to be conducted in order to gain a better understanding of differences in ethnicity in motivation. Therefore, although African American students did respond more positively than white students, the possible reasons as to why are still unclear.
Role of parental involvement

A great amount of research indicates that a relationship exists between parental involvement and student motivation and achievement; however, some disparities arise throughout the research in terms of the exact role parental involvement plays (Coleman & McNeese, 2009; Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009; Martin, Marsh, McInerney, Green, & Dowson, 2007; Stewart, 2008; Bakker, Denessen, & Brus-Laeven, 2007). While both Martin et al. (2007) and Rogers et al. (2009) found that parental involvement is positively associated with student motivation and achievement, it influences different students in different ways. For example, Rogers et al. (2009) argues that the relationship between parental involvement and student school achievement, though indirect, does help to increase children’s academic competence. “Parental involvement seems to influence achievement through the mediational role of the child’s academic competence…” (Rogers et al., 2009, p. 45). That is, Rogers et al. (2009) found that parents do influence their child’s academic achievement through ways such as helping with homework, actively managing the learning environment, and encouraging and supporting the child’s learning. It is through these methods of participation that parents help to positively influence their child’s academic performance.

Although Martin et al. (2007) also found there to be a positive correlation between participation of parents and children’s performance, their findings focus more on how parents influence their child’s self-esteem. Whereas Rogers et al. (2009) explained parents’ involvement in academic-specific activities such as helping with homework and managing their child’s learning environment, Martin et al. (2007) conclude that “…relative to the academic domain, parents’ influence on the nonacademic domain (e.g., general self-esteem) is prominent” (p. 119). Although parents in Martin et al.’s (2007) study appear to more greatly influence the child’s self-
esteem in general, doing so can still help to increase their motivation. As Martin et al. (2007) assert, these “…positive interpersonal relationships…” influence children’s lives, in both academic and nonacademic domains (p. 119). Thus, developing students’ self-esteem will help to increase their confidence in both academic and nonacademic settings, which is likely to lead to an increase in levels of motivation.

While Rogers et al. (2009) and Martin et al. (2007) found positive relationships between parental involvement and students’ academic achievement and self-esteem, Coleman and McNeese (2009) and Stewart (2008) came to different conclusions. Both Coleman and McNeese (2009) and Stewart (2008) discovered a negative correlation between parental involvement and student motivation. Coleman and McNeese (2009) argue that a negative relationship between parental involvement and student motivation exists, most likely because of students at the fifth grade level desiring more and more independence from their parents. That is, students at this age may prefer that their parents become less involved in their school lives. Similarly, Stewart’s study (2008) also did not confirm a positive association between the participation of parents and student motivation. Nevertheless, Stewart (2008) asserts that although the results of the study do not confirm a positive relationship, it “…does not necessarily negate the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s school activities” (p. 198). In other words, just because a positive correlation did not appear to exist in this one particular study, it is not recommended that parents cease all involvement and interest in their students’ lives, as doing so may be more harmful.

**Instructional practices and strategies that promote reading motivation and engagement**

Much recent research indicates that instructional practices can greatly influence reading motivation among students (Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000; Guthrie et al., 2006; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004; Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, & Perencevich,
Instructional Strategies in CORI classrooms

CORI is an instructional program that links reading with either science or social studies in order to promote the development of reading comprehension, motivation, and engagement among students (Wigfield et al., 2004; Wigfield et al., 2008). CORI includes “…several instructional practices designed to foster students’ engagement in reading…” as well as teaches a variety of reading strategies in order to foster reading comprehension (Wigfield et al., 2008, p. 433).

CORI includes specific instructional strategies designed to foster students’ intrinsic reading motivation. According to Guthrie et al. (2000), Wigfield et al. (2008), Guthrie et al. (2006), Wigfield et al. (2004), and Guthrie et al. (2006), the instructional strategies present in CORI programs that help to foster reading motivation in students include: using content goals in a conceptual theme for reading instruction, offering choices and control to students, providing hands-on activities, using interesting texts for instruction, and allowing students to collaborate with one another. As Guthrie et al. (2000) explains, “Students with learning goals seek to understand content, master skills, and gain competence” (p. 332). That is, if teachers and students focus on learning goals in order to achieve mastery of a certain subject as opposed to
focusing on performance goals and grades, students’ intrinsic motivation and effort are likely to significantly increase (Guthrie et al., 2000, p. 332).

In addition to setting learning goals for students, it is imperative that teachers give students choices and control over their learning. As both Guthrie et al. (2000) and Wigfield et al. (2004) maintain, supporting the development of students’ autonomy as learners can help to increase students’ motivation. Wigfield et al. (2004) define autonomy as “…individuals’ sense of having control over their own learning” (p. 303). If students feel that they are responsible for their own learning rather than having someone else dictate what they must do, students are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to learn. Likewise, Guthrie et al. (2000) states that enhancing students’ ownership over their literacy activities helps to increase their interest in reading (p. 332). Finally, it is important to note that both Guthrie et al.’s (2000) and Wigfield et al.’s (2004) findings relate to self-determination theory, which states that one of the psychological needs of individuals is that of autonomy. As previously mentioned, autonomy refers to giving students the freedom to make their own decisions about their learning, which has been shown to increase intrinsic motivation in students (Sweet, 1997).

Offering students hands-on activities and stimulating tasks is a third instructional strategy that positively influences students’ reading motivation and engagement. According to Wigfield et al. (2008) hands-on activities help to generate children’s interest in different topics, and supports students’ intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Guthrie et al. (2006) maintains that immediately connecting hands-on interactions and activities to related texts will also foster students’ motivation (p. 234). Thus, it is critical for students to first become engaged by participating in a stimulating task, and then immediately reading a related book to expand on their knowledge learned through the stimulating activity.
If teachers truly wish to engage students and hold their attention, it is essential that interesting texts are used during instruction. As Wigfield et al. (2004) states, teachers in the CORI program provide students with diverse, interesting books that connect to students’ interests and questions (p. 303). It is crucial to first offer a variety of books to students, help students to make connections between the texts to their real lives, and then allow them to decide which book they will read. In order to support the autonomy of students, interesting and relatable books must be available for use.

The final instructional practice that appears to enhance motivation among students is that of social interaction and collaboration. According to Gambrell, Mazzoni, and Almasi (2000), “Students’ intrinsic motivation and efficacy during their work with complex comprehension strategies are increased when they have opportunities to share their questions, interesting, and new information” (as cited in Wigfield et al., 2004, p. 304). Thus, the more students talk with peers about a particular text, the more they learn from one another, which may lead to an increase of their own understanding of the material. Due to the positive influence of social interactions among students, it is common for CORI teachers to incorporate multiple collaborative activities such as literature circles, and often encourage students to work together (Wigfield et al., 2004, p. 304). These strategies that encourage and foster socialization among students connect with sociocultural-historical theory and the notion that literacy is primarily a social practice. As Larson and Marsh (2005) argue, individuals’ literacy skills are formed through the social interactions with others in everyday settings. Thus, implementing collaborative activities in the classroom is not only pertinent to the development of one’s set of literacy skills, but they are also likely to contribute positively to students’ motivation levels.

*How instructional practices of CORI classrooms influence students’ reading behaviors*
According to Guthrie et al. (2000), Guthrie et al. (2006), Wigfield et al. (2004), Guthrie et al. (2006), and Wigfield et al. (2008), the CORI program, as well as the specific instructional strategies that are part of CORI, positively influences students’ intrinsic motivation, reading comprehension, reading achievement, reported student use of reading strategies, and students’ self-efficacy. Guthrie et al. (2006), Wigfield et al. (2004), and Guthrie et al. (2006) all found that the implementation of the CORI instructional program increased students’ motivation to read. Guthrie et al. (2006) reported that integrating a high number of stimulating tasks and hands-on activities in the classroom significantly increased students’ intrinsic motivation read at the conclusion of the twelve week period. Moreover, Guthrie et al. (2006) suggests that a stimulating task “…combined with the presence and accessibility of an interesting book on an identical topic…” evokes students’ interests (p. 243). That is, incorporating some sort of hands-on task in the classroom and then immediately connecting it with a text on a similar topic at the student’s reading level will help to encourage engagement, at least with that particular topic.

Similar to Guthrie et al.’s (2006) study, Wigfield et al. (2004) and Guthrie et al. (2000) both found similar outcomes regarding the CORI instructional program. In addition to discovering that students’ motivation increased, Wigfield et al. (2004) also reports that “…in CORI classrooms, children’s intrinsic motivation to read (defined as reading curiosity and preference for challenge) increased during the course of the program, as did their self-efficacy for reading” (p. 306). That is, not only did students’ intrinsic motivation levels increase as they also did in Guthrie et al.’s (2006) study, but students expressed higher competency in their reading abilities as well. Likewise, Guthrie et al. (2000) maintain that students who received CORI instruction had “…significantly higher curiosity for reading at the end of the academic year…” (p. 338). Additionally, Wigfield et al. (2004) also makes similar claims to Guthrie et al.
(2006) in regards to the degree of influence of connecting hands-on activities with relevant texts, stating that this “package of instructional supports facilitated children’s intrinsic motivation to read, as well as their self-efficacy” (p. 307). Thus, it appears that in both Guthrie et al.’s (2006) and Wigfield et al.’s (2004) studies, following hands-on activities with related texts with students appear to positively influence their motivation and self-efficacy.

Given these important findings of CORI students reporting higher competency beliefs in their reading abilities, it is critical to consider the aforementioned self-determination theory and the psychological need of competency. As Sweet (1997) maintains, if students feel confident in their abilities, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to accomplish a given task. Thus, these students who expressed higher competency in their reading abilities are likely to sustain high intrinsic motivation.

In addition to increases in reading motivation, Guthrie et al. (2000), Wigfield et al. (2008), and Wigfield et al. (2004) also found that students who received CORI instruction used learned reading strategies more often than students who received traditional instruction. According to Wigfield et al. (2008), students’ frequent use of reading strategies could be attributed to CORI’s combination of instructional practices used to teach reading strategies as well as practices that foster students’ motivation (p. 443). Similarly, Guthrie et al. (2000) reported that CORI students used a range of cognitive strategies in order to make sense of texts during instruction (p. 334). While Wigfield et al. (2004) also discuss the effectiveness of the reading strategies given to CORI students, the researchers also propose a possible reason why the students in the CORI program reported higher use of reading strategies. Wigfield et al. (2004) argue that the CORI students may have used reading strategies more often because their self-efficacy could have increased to a greater extent than did the students receiving traditional
instruction, mainly due to “…the overall package of motivation support provided in CORI…” (p. 307). Therefore, it is important to consider how the possible increases in students’ self-efficacy in the CORI program influenced the likelihood of students using reading instructional strategies designed to improve students’ reading. In other words, the higher a student’s self-efficacy and confidence in reading abilities, the more likely it is that a student will utilize reading strategies.

While some researchers examined the changes in students’ reading motivation, self-efficacy, and reported use of reading strategies, other researchers examined how CORI instruction influenced the amount of reading students completed (Wigfield et al., 2004; Guthrie et al., 2006b). Both Wigfield et al. (2004) and Guthrie et al. (2006) predicted that students receiving CORI instruction would read more frequently at the end of the study. In Guthrie et al.’s (2006) study, as students developed high intrinsic motivation for reading, they also reported “…high levels of curiosity to read, involvement in a range of reading activities, preference for challenging materials, and extended amounts of time in reading activities” (p. 108). Similarly, in Wigfield et al.’s (2004) study, students who received CORI instruction also reported increase in reading frequency. However, in Wigfield et al.’s (2004) study, the findings were unexpected – that is, Wigfield et al. (2004) initially predicted that the reading frequency of students in the CORI classrooms would be significantly higher than students receiving traditional instruction. Surprisingly, students’ reading frequency increased in both the CORI setting as well as the traditional instruction setting (Wigfield et al., 2004, p. 307). Though both groups of students reported increased reading frequency, Wigfield et al. (2004) argue that in the long run, CORI students will read more often because of the degree to which CORI promotes intrinsic motivation to read (p. 307).

Instructional practices in other classrooms
While several researchers examined features of classrooms using the CORI program, other researchers such as Katz et al. (2010), Lapp and Fisher (2009), Fullerton (2001), Taboada et al. (2009), and Wilson and Trainin (2007) conducted studies in classrooms that did not implement the CORI program. Similar to how Guthrie et al. (2000), Guthrie et al. (2006), Wigfield et al. (2004), and Guthrie et al. (2006) examined how certain instructional strategies seen in CORI classrooms influenced students’ levels of motivation, Katz et al. (2010), Lapp and Fisher (2009), Fullerton (2001), and Taboada et al. (2009) made their own discoveries regarding particular instructional practices and how they appear to correlate with students’ reading behaviors.

Lapp and Fisher (2009) and Taboada et al. (2009) both argue that encouraging student questioning in the classroom is a critical component to enhance student motivation and engagement. Lapp and Fisher (2009) examined the components of an eleventh grade English class, and found that allowing students to discover questions on their own pertaining to a particular text and searching for the answers captured students’ interests and increased their motivation to learn. Similarly, Hidi (1990) argues that encouraging students to generate their own questions empowers them to “…set their own goals for reading and…select and process certain types of information in preference to others…” (as cited in Taboada et al., 2009, p. 98). Taboada et al. (2009) also maintains that processes such as student questioning make independent contributions to students’ comprehension in reading, while internal motivation is the “energizer” that “…helps students to engage their cognitive processes…” in order to make sense of a text (p. 98). In other words, internal motivation is what initially sparks students to use their cognitive processes to make meaning of a text. Thus, as students’ internal motivation is fostered over time, “…the cognitive processes…of student questioning become more fluent, enhancing
students’ text comprehension” (Taboada et al., 2009, p. 98). Whereas Lapp and Fisher (2009) make no such claim that internal motivation is the driving force behind students engaging in cognitive processes such as questioning, Taboada et al. (2009) argue that cognitive processes such as student questioning independently contributes to a student’s comprehension, although it is driven by internal motivation.

In addition to student questioning, Lapp and Fisher (2009) and Fullerton (2001) both maintain that collaboration in the classroom is essential to increasing students’ reading motivation. Whereas Fullerton (2001) focuses on collaboration in terms of teachers working with students, Lapp and Fisher (2009) maintain that collaboration must occur not only between teachers and students, but among students themselves. According to Fullerton (2001), working with students and providing them with scaffolding and eventually encouraging them to work independently helps students become self-regulated learners in control of their own learning (p. 62). Along the same lines, Lapp and Fisher (2009) emphasize the importance of teachers working with their students, allowing them to have a say in what takes place in the classroom. For example, in Lapp and Fisher’s (2009) study, students requested that their teacher tell them the unit topics and questions for the remainder of the school year so that they could offer suggestions for related book club texts (p. 559). Since the classroom teachers “…took their lead, shared the themes for the year, worked with them to select possible nominations, and then allowed the students to select which book they wanted to read” students became more enthusiastically involved in classroom activities and their own learning (Lapp and Fisher, 2009, p. 559).

While Lapp and Fisher’s (2009) findings correlate with those of Fullerton (2001) in terms of the importance of collaboration between teachers and students, Lapp and Fisher (2009) also
argue that students need to collaborate with one another and participate in discussions about what they are reading. Lapp and Fisher (2009) claim that having support of peers who value reading “…is a factor of major significance among adolescents who are being motivated to read” (p. 561). Thus, it is imperative to allow for collaboration within the classroom, as it expands our knowledge and promotes intrinsic motivation and interest.

Along with student questioning and collaboration, a third instructional practice that helps to develop students’ reading motivation is that of providing students with a choice when it comes to literacy activities. Just as autonomy support is an instructional practice seen in CORI classrooms, researchers such as Lapp and Fisher (2009) and Fullerton (2001) also claim that giving students a choice aids in increasing motivation. Both Lapp and Fisher (2009) and Fullerton (2001) state that giving students choices gives them a sense of control. According to Lapp and Fisher (2009), allowing students to select and read books of their own choosing from a list of books that were organized around a specific topic prompted high levels of participation among students during class discussions. “Their enthusiastic participation cemented for us the fact that adolescents, just like adults, will read…if they can have some ownership in the selection” (Lapp & Fisher, 2009, p. 559). Likewise, Fullerton (2001) found that giving students choices in reading and writing selections and allowing students to decide how to respond proved to greatly increase students’ motivations and efforts put forth in literacy tasks.

While these aforementioned instructional practices all play a significant role in supporting students’ reading motivation and engagement, it is also imperative that teachers offer students a high level of support. Research indicates that teacher support and involvement in students’ learning can make a considerable difference in students’ motivation (Katz et al., 2010; Wilson & Trainin, 2007). While Katz et al. (2010) explores the roles of teachers in the middle
school setting, Wilson and Trainin (2007) discuss teachers’ roles in the primary years. Katz et al. (2010) found that students reported lower autonomous motivation at the middle school level than students in elementary school. Additionally, Katz et al. (2010) claim that “…junior high school students perceived their teachers as less supportive of their psychological needs than did elementary school students” (p. 262). If students do not feel that they are in a supportive learning environment surrounded by compassionate teachers, it may be difficult to become or remain intrinsically motivated to learn.

Along similar lines, Wilson and Trainin (2007) emphasize the importance of teachers in the primary grades to offer positive feedback to students regarding their performance on literacy tasks. As Wilson and Trainin (2007) maintain, “…if feedback from the teacher…focuses on failure and is generally negative, students will begin to develop negative perceptions of themselves as readers and writers” (p. 264). In other words, repeatedly giving young students negative feedback about their literacy skills will likely damage their self-perceptions and view of learning. Thus, it is essential to take into account how teachers’ approaches and levels of support influence students’ learning and motivation.

Methods

Context

This study took place at an elementary school that accommodates students in grades three through five. The school is located in the suburbs in western New York, and consists of approximately eight hundred seventy four students, with an average class size of 22 students. Approximately 95% of the students in this school are Caucasian, and 12% of the students are eligible for free lunch. The average attendance rate for students in this school is 96%.
I conducted my research in Mrs. Gates’ fifth grade classroom. The class is made up of fifteen boys and nine girls, for a total of twenty four students. There are twenty three Caucasian students and one Hispanic student in the classroom. Additionally, three students have 504 plans, and one student has an IEP and receives services from a 1:1 aide.

Participants

The classroom teacher, Mrs. Gates, has her teaching certification in grades pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. She has been teaching for eleven years – three years at the fourth grade level, seven years at the sixth grade level, and one year at the fifth grade level. This is her first year teaching fifth grade, as well as her first year teaching in this particular elementary school.

I focused on three students in Mrs. Gates’ fifth grade class – one student with high reading motivation, one student with average reading motivation, and one student with low reading motivation. These students’ motivation levels were determined by Mrs. Gates. Hunter, a ten year old Caucasian male is highly motivated to read and is reading above grade level. Mrs. Gates described him as a student who loves to learn, loves to read, and loves to read in order to learn new information. Mrs. Gates also added that Hunter brings his background knowledge to every lesson and has quite an extensive vocabulary. Additionally, Hunter loves history and geology and reads both fiction and non-fiction.

Adam, a ten year old Caucasian male demonstrates average reading motivation and is reading above grade level. Mrs. Gates described Adam as a “typical” fifth grade male who is an overall good student. Currently, Adam is performing at an average to above average level in all subject areas. Adam will also complete his work right away so that he can move on to something else or have time to play.
Finally, Freddie, a ten year old Caucasian male reads below level and shows little to no reading motivation. He struggles with Math and English Language Arts, and receives Academic Intervention Services for both subjects. Freddie is extremely energetic and involved in sports. At times, it is difficult for him to focus. Mrs. Gates also stated that Freddie would almost rather be anywhere than school. Additionally, Freddie has not yet met the benchmark in fluency for fifth grade.

**Researcher Stance**

In Mrs. Gates’ classroom, I took on the role of a passive observer, as I focused primarily on my data collection. I observed students in their guided reading groups, audio recorded their guided reading sessions, and recorded field notes. In addition to observing, I also acted as an interviewer with the Mrs. Gates and three students.

I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College where I am working toward obtaining a Master’s degree in Reading and Literacy Education, birth through grade twelve. I also hold a Bachelor’s degree in Childhood Education with a concentration in English from SUNY Geneseo.

**Data Collection**

As previously mentioned, I used a variety of tools in order to collect data. I observed students’ guided reading groups, recorded and collected field notes, and audio recorded students’ guided reading sessions. Immediately after each observation, I also reflected in a notebook about what I observed during guided reading. In addition, I conducted a total of four interviews (one with Mrs. Gates, one with Hunter, one with Adam, and one with Freddie). A total of three student questionnaires were also completed and collected.

**Method**
I first asked Mrs. Gates to recommend three students for me to observe and interview, provided that the students’ parents had given me consent to work directly with their children. These three students’ levels of motivation varied, as previously mentioned. One student, Hunter, was very highly motivated to read, one student, Adam, demonstrated average reading motivation, and one student, Freddie, showed little to no motivation to read. By motivation, I mean “…the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000 p. 405). Hunter, Adam, and Freddie are the three students I closely observed during English Language Arts as well as interviewed.

Once Mrs. Gates identified the three students with whom I would be working, I visited her classroom to discuss my research with her as well as meet the students and begin my observations. For a total of five days, I visited Mrs. Gates’ classroom during English Language Arts from 12:45pm until 2:30pm. During this time, I observed students during read aloud time, guided reading groups, as well as independent work time. During the fifteen minutes of read aloud time, I took notes of Hunter, Adam, and Freddie’s general behaviors.

I also observed each student’s guided reading group a total of three times, which met for approximately fifteen minutes. Freddie was in the green reading group (below level), and Adam and Hunter were in the blue reading group (above level). While I observed each student’s guided reading group, I audio recorded each meeting as well as took field notes on what I was observing. Specifically, I took notes on the instructional strategies utilized by Mrs. Gates, as well as the students’ reactions or responses to her instructional strategies. Additionally, I took notes on each student’s behavior during guided reading.

After I observed the guided reading groups, I asked each student to complete a questionnaire that assessed their attitudes toward reading and their reading motivation (Appendix
A). Once students filled out the questionnaires, I conducted a follow-up interview with each student and asked about their specific responses to the questionnaire. That is, I asked each student to elaborate on a few of his responses in order to provide me with additional information regarding his responses. In my interview with the three students, I also asked about the instructional strategies I observed during guided reading, and how the students believe these instructional strategies help them with their reading.

In addition to interviewing Hunter, Adam, and Freddie, I also interviewed Mrs. Gates. I asked her about the instructional strategies she used during guided reading, how she views the three students’ reading motivation levels and attitudes toward reading, and what she believes she can do as their classroom teacher to help promote reading motivation among her students. I also asked her about specific strategies she uses to increase intrinsic motivation in her students.

**Ensuring Trustworthiness**

Throughout my research, it was important that I followed the criteria for validity set forth by Guba (1981) (as cited in Mills, 2007, p. 85). In order to establish trustworthiness of my research, I ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is defined by Mills (2007) as “…the researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained” (p. 85). One way I ensured credibility in my research was by using peer debriefing, in which I used a critical colleague to help me reflect on my research process and provide me with additional insights. A second method I used in order to ensure credibility of my study was practicing triangulation, which means I collected multiple sources of data rather than a single source (Mills, 2007). For example, I took field notes and audio recordings during my observation of guided
reading, interviewed the teacher and students, and collected students’ questionnaire responses. Therefore, I collected data through a variety of forms.

In addition to credibility, I also ensured transferability of my study. As Mills (2007) states, “…transferability refers to qualitative researchers’ beliefs that everything they study is context bound…” and that “truth” statements cannot be applied to larger groups of people (p. 86). In order to guarantee transferability, I collected extremely detailed and descriptive data so that comparisons can be made to other contexts. Additionally, my detailed description of the context of my study will allow others to clearly envision the setting of the study.

Dependability, Guba’s (1981) third criteria to ensure validity of research, refers to the stability of the data (as cited in Mills, 2007). In regards to dependability, I used overlap methods, which is similar to practicing triangulation. I used multiple methods so that the weakness of one method may be compensated by the strength of another method (Mills, 2007). For example, I interviewed both the classroom teacher and three students in order to better understand the instructional strategies I observed during guided reading. A second way I assured dependability of my study was by establishing an “audit trail” in which a critical colleague examined my processes of data collection, analysis of the data, and my interpretation of the data. My critical colleague’s examination includes verbal feedback and suggestions (Mills, 2007).

Finally, confirmability, which refers to the neutrality or objectivity of data, was also ensured (Mills, 2007). Again, I practiced triangulation by collecting and comparing multiple sources of data rather than solely relying on one single piece of data. I also practiced reflexivity by keeping a journal in which I reflected throughout the entire research process (Mills, 2007). Recording my thoughts and findings helped me answer my initial research questions as well as discover additional areas in which I am interested in researching further.
Informed Consent

Prior to conducting my research, Mrs. Gates informed parents that I would be in her classroom by including relevant information in a weekly newsletter. In this newsletter, she informed parents that I would be in her classroom conducting research as part of my graduate program, and that I was investigating reading motivation among fifth grade students. Additionally, Mrs. Gates emailed a parental consent form to the parents of the three students with whom I would be working. Each student’s parents signed and returned the form, which then allowed me to work directly with their children. These students’ parents were assured that their child would remain anonymous, as a pseudonym would be assigned to every participant in the study.

Mrs. Gates, Hunter, Adam, and Freddie also all gave me permission to work with them during my research. Mrs. Gates read and signed an informed consent form, while Hunter, Adam, and Freddie read and signed a written assent form specifically for minors. For each participant, I included a brief description and purpose of my study, as well as emphasized that confidentiality would be guaranteed, as no personal information or identification would be distributed to others.

Data Analysis

Multiple steps were taken as I analyzed the data collected throughout my research. First, after each visit to Mrs. Gates’ classroom, I uploaded the audio recordings from that day’s guided reading groups onto my computer, as well as the interviews I conducted with the students and Mrs. Gates. As I listened to the recordings, I typed what was said and discussed. I also typed my handwritten field notes and observations from the day. The next step I took in analyzing the data was making copies of each student’s questionnaire. I used these copies of the
questionnaires, typed field notes from my daily visits, and typed notes and transcripts of the student and teacher interviews to begin coding and identifying reoccurring themes.

I labeled certain portions of my data with a different term (e.g. “disengagement” or “distraction”), and also highlighted incidents involving the three different students and teacher in different colors. That way, when I wanted to give specific evidence to support each of the themes, I could easily locate occurrences involving Hunter, Adam, Freddie, and Mrs. Gates. Initially, I had eight categories as I coded the data, and then I reduced it to the following four themes: involvement, avoidance, compliance, and reasons for reading.

Once I determined the specific themes and color coded the data, I took the data regarding each specific theme and organized it by participant (e.g. I took all of the “involvement” data involving Hunter and put it into a new document, all of the “involvement” data involving Freddie into another document, all of the “involvement” data involving Adam into a third document, etc). Within each of these new documents, I added subcategories including: observations, student questionnaire and interview, and teacher interview, which allowed me to see the multiple sources of data I had collected regarding each of the four themes. When I was finished organizing all of the data, I then had a total of nine new documents (“Involvement” for all three students, “Avoidance” for all three students, and “Compliance” for all three students). Once I organized all of the data this way, I was more easily able to keep track of the evidence I would include in my final paper.

Findings and Discussion

After careful examination and analysis of the data collected throughout my research, four themes revealed themselves. Three of these themes include specific behaviors demonstrated by the three students pertaining to reading activities. These behaviors or themes include: avoidance,
compliance, and involvement. The fourth theme that emerged was students’ different reasons for reading, which touched upon extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

**Avoidance**

The first major theme that arose was that of work avoidance. Work avoidance is defined by Baker and Wigfield (1999) as “…the desire to avoid reading activities” (p. 455). Through observations, students’ responses to a questionnaire designed to assess different aspects of reading motivation, follow-up interviews with students, and an interview with Mrs. Gates, work avoidance emerged as a primary area of focus and examination.

The degree to which Hunter, Adam, and Freddie demonstrated work avoidance varied, with Freddie showing the most avoidance behaviors. At the start of any reading activity, including read alouds, guided reading groups, or going to the library to choose a book for the students’ book project, Freddie displayed avoidance behaviors. For example, when Mrs. Gates was about to begin a read aloud or guided reading groups, Freddie immediately walked to the sign-out sheet to sign out to use the restroom. Another example of Freddie’s avoidance behaviors was when he asked Mrs. Gates if he could go to the library to switch the book he had already started for his book project because the book he was reading was about the Boston Red Sox (Freddie is a die-hard New York Yankees fan). As I walked with Freddie to the library to choose a new book, I read the inside book jacket and pointed out to Freddie that although the author is a Red Sox fan, the book itself is not about the Red Sox. Freddie insisted that he could not and would not read the book, and that he needed to choose a new one. At the library, Freddie walked from shelf to shelf, hesitant to accept assistance or help from myself in searching for or selecting a book. After some time, he decided on a new book.
In addition to my observations of Freddie, Mrs. Gates also informed me in an interview that most of the time, Freddie would rather be almost anywhere than school. She also stated that he does just about anything to get off track during reading, including using the restroom, going to the nurse, or getting a drink. Along with Mrs. Gates’ responses to my interview questions, Freddie also indicated on a reading motivation questionnaire and in an interview that he does not like to read something when the works are too difficult to understand, nor does he enjoy reading difficult books. For example, although Freddie rated himself with a “1” (strongly disagree) when asked question six on the questionnaire, “I don’t like reading something when the words are too hard for me to understand,” I believe he was confused as to what the statement meant and/or how he rated himself. I believe he meant to answer with either a “4” (agree) or “5” (strongly agree), because when asked in the follow-up interview why difficult words do not bother him when he reads, Freddie answered, “Because in harder books, one page takes five to ten minutes for me to read. It takes longer...the words are harder...those books usually have more complex vocabulary. Those books make me mad because they have really long chapters and hard words.” Given Freddie’s response, it seems as though it contradicts with his initial rating on the questionnaire, leading me to believe that he does not enjoy reading something when words are too difficult for him to understand, and that he prefers not to be presented with challenging words when reading.

These avoidance behaviors I observed appeared to be supported and confirmed by both Mrs. Gates’ responses and Freddie’s responses to the questionnaire and interview questions. These behaviors, including wanting to sign out and be excused from reading activities, his reluctance to accept help in choosing a book, and his discontent in reading something with
difficult words seem to indicate that reading is not an activity that Freddie enjoys, and therefore wants to avoid whenever possible.

Another instance where Freddie demonstrated work avoidance was during guided reading groups. During reading groups, Freddie showed a great deal of disengagement. Specifically, when Mrs. Gates asked Freddie a question, most of the time he shrugged, repeated another student’s answer, or gave a sarcastic or humorous response. For example, when Mrs. Gates asked students to name what kind of book they might find the butterfly migration map in that they were examining, two students answered, “National Geographic.” When Mrs. Gates asked for an answer besides National Geographic, Freddie shouted, “National Geographic!” When Mrs. Gates asked Freddie to be more specific (e.g. what kind of National Geographic magazine, or what kind of article), Freddie shrugged and answered, “I don’t know.” Freddie also repeated another student’s answer when asked to identify other jobs of a grasshopper’s front legs. Freddie repeated, “To support them,” followed by a shrug when Mrs. Gates asked him to name another job of the front legs.

Mrs. Gates also informed me that it is often difficult to engage Freddie and get him interested during reading groups and that he will only volunteer if he is somewhat interested in the subject matter or if he thinks he knows the correct answer. By consistently shrugging when asked a question and repeating other students’ answers, Freddie is avoiding his tasks during guided reading, preventing any sort of involvement in reading. Consistent disengagement and disinterest during reading groups is likely to continue to hinder Freddie’s reading improvement and progress.

While Freddie displayed a great deal of avoidance, Hunter and Adam did not display any avoidance-related behaviors, nor indicated that they dislike reading something with difficult
words. Through observations of both Hunter and Adam, it was apparent that they involved themselves in reading activities, which will be discussed later. When Adam was asked to rate himself in response to, “*I don’t like reading something when the words are too hard for me to understand*,” he gave himself a “3” (undecided). Adam informed me that he usually likes hard books because he learns new words in them. Additionally, he stated that it all depends on the book he is reading; if it is a book he likes, he will continue to read it. However, if the words are way too hard for him to understand, he might put the book down and read something else. Based on Adam’s response to the questionnaire and interview question, it appears that Adam will continue reading if he enjoys what he is reading, and that he likes to learn new words.

While Adam gave himself a “3,” Hunter gave himself a “5” (strongly agree) when asked whether or not he likes to read something when the words are too hard for him to understand. When asked to tell me more about why he gave himself a “5,” Hunter asserted, “*Because I think reading being a challenge makes it a lot more fun. Once you finish a hard book, you can move up a bit and keep moving until you are an amazing reader. And then you can read anything.*” He also stated that as long as he is interested in a book, he will keep reading it, even if the words are too hard for him to understand. Additionally, Hunter informed me that when he comes across a word he does not know, he uses context clues to help him figure it out. His knowledge of using different word solving strategies such as context clues may also contribute to his level of reading motivation, as he is comfortable applying such strategies during his reading. Based on Hunter’s responses, it is obvious that he desires a challenge when reading, because it makes it more enjoyable for him. Additionally, it is clear that as long as a book keeps his interest, he is likely to continue reading it, even if he comes across unfamiliar words that present difficulty to
him, as he uses context clues to help determine an unknown word’s meaning. Hunter clearly shows that he enjoys a challenge, and that he utilizes word-solving strategies while reading.

**Involvement**

Involvement is a second theme that emerged. Baker and Wigfield (1999) define involvement as, “…the enjoyment experienced from reading certain kinds of literary or informational texts…” (p. 455). Involvement relates to notions regarding intrinsic motivation, as the degree to which students are involved in their reading tasks positively correlates with their levels of intrinsic motivation (Baker & Wigfield, 1999, p. 455).

Each of the three students showed different levels of involvement in reading activities during my time in Mrs. Gates’ classroom. Freddie, who exhibited many avoidance-related behaviors that were previously discussed, showed very little involvement in reading activities. During my time in the classroom, he displayed a very low level of involvement and enthusiasm in reading activities, as he was often distracted and disengaged during these activities; either he was whispering to a classmate or playing with things inside his desk. Additionally, when I asked Freddie to read with me and talk with me about what he was reading, he was extremely hesitant and seemed disinterested in doing so.

In addition to my observations, Freddie indicated on the questionnaire and interview that sometimes he will read in his free time. In response to question ten on the questionnaire, “I love to read in my free time,” Freddie initially gave himself a “1” (strongly disagree) and then chose to change his answer to a “3” (undecided). When asked why he changed his answer and to tell me more about why he gave himself a “3,” Freddie stated that sometimes he will read in his free time if it is raining or if he does not have any sports going on. Given his answer, it seems like reading is something he will do if the weather is poor or if he does not have any other sports
commitments. Therefore, he demonstrates a low level of involvement when it comes to reading. Similarly, in an interview with Mrs. Gates, Mrs. Gates also indicated that she believes sports are a higher priority than reading in Freddie’s home. Although she does not think Freddie’s parents discourage reading, she knows his family is extremely sports-oriented and that Freddie is involved in basketball, baseball, and football, which takes up a great deal of time.

Adam, who was described by Mrs. Gates as the “typical” fifth grade male, showed involvement in reading activities, but not to a great extent. Adam listened attentively during read alouds, volunteered at times, and followed along during guided reading; however, he was not extremely enthusiastic in his participation. On the questionnaire, Adam gave himself a “4” (agree) when asked, “I love to read in my free time.” When asked for more information, Adam stated that he reads for fun and that he reads because he wants to read. Also, during “quiet time” when students are allowed to read, draw, or write quietly to themselves, Adam always chose to read and would read the entire time. Additionally, Mrs. Gates informed me that Adam is somewhat “neutral” during reading groups; that is, while he is not completely excited about participating or volunteering, he is not entirely disengaged either.

Hunter showed a great deal of enthusiasm and involvement in all reading activities during my time in Mrs. Gates’ classroom. During read alouds, Hunter excitedly shouted, “Best chapter ever!” and “Woo!” He even clapped at the end of each chapter. During guided reading, Hunter was completely immersed in discussions and volunteered to either answer a question or offer more information, even when Mrs. Gates did not ask for a volunteer. For example, during a discussion about space and space exploration, Hunter argued in favor strongly for space exploration and travel. Another time during guided reading, students were discussing renewable resources. Again, Hunter’s enthusiasm was evident, as he repeatedly raised his hand to talk
about the benefits of geothermal heating and using renewable resources: “Geothermal heating can be used as another way of getting money as well as another way to heat a house. We just need to try something new but we just don’t want to spend the money. We need to spend money to get money. Like we should spend money on a geothermal power station.”

In addition to my observations of Hunter greatly involving himself in all reading activities in Mrs. Gates’ class, he also indicated on the questionnaire that he loves to read in his free time. In regards to the statement, “I love to read in my free time” Hunter gave himself a “4” (agree). He then informed me in an interview that reading is fun and interesting to him, and that he likes reading in order to learn about new things and new information. He also added that he likes to read history books, especially about the Renaissance period, as well as fantasy books, mythology, mysteries, and fiction. In addition to his responses to the questionnaire, Mrs. Gates also stated that Hunter absolutely loves to read and learn. However, she pointed out that at times, he participates to the point where he dominates the group and other students are not given a chance to speak. It is obvious from my observations of Hunter, his responses on the questionnaire and interview, and Mrs. Gates’ interview that he very much involves himself in reading tasks, and he enjoys doing so.

While Freddie, Adam, and Hunter all displayed different levels of enthusiasm and involvement in reading activities, a similarity among the three of them was that they all seemed to agree on certain instructional strategies that they enjoyed and that helped them as readers. These strategies also appeared to maintain their interest and involvement during reading groups. During my observations of the students’ guided reading groups and the remainder of the English Language Arts block, I noted that Mrs. Gates used popcorn reading, encouraged students to talk
and share answers with one another, and gave students a choice regarding certain reading activities.

When Mrs. Gates told students they were going to use “popcorn reading” during reading groups, Freddie, Adam, and Hunter all smiled and appeared excited about “popcorn reading.” When Mrs. Gates asked for a volunteer to start off “popcorn reading” all three of the students raised their hands. Similarly, during student interviews, each student expressed a positive attitude toward “popcorn reading.” Specifically, Freddie stated that, “Most of the time I think popcorn reading is good. It teaches me to track and follow along while others are reading. If you’re called on, you need to know where you are so you can pick up and start reading. Popcorn reading helps me follow along.” Along similar lines, Adam stated that he likes “popcorn reading” and that it gives everyone a fair chance to read. Finally, Hunter told me that popcorn reading is “nice” but that there is a way that someone can just read one word and then pass it along to someone else. He added, “I think it would be better if the teacher made it so that you have to read at least one sentence before passing it along.” Based on my observations of students’ behavior during guided reading as well as their responses, it appears as though popcorn reading is overall, an enjoyable and effective activity.

In addition to “popcorn reading,” Mrs. Gates also encouraged students to share answers with one another and have discussions about specific topics. For all three students, working with one another appeared to have a positive effect on their behavior and learning. For example, when Mrs. Gates told Freddie and another student to compare diagrams of a grasshopper because they labeled the parts differently, both Freddie and the other student looked at one another’s diagram and talked about which answers were correct and which ones needed to be changed. Additionally, as I mentioned earlier, group discussions stimulated Hunter’s learning to the
highest degree. He jumped at every opportunity to share an answer or a thought, or to argue another side of a debate (e.g. about space exploration). Adam seemed be engaged for the most part in discussions, but again, not to a high degree.

Students’ responses to questions during an interview certainly support what I observed during reading, in regards to discussions and social interaction. In response to whether or not discussions and working with others helps Freddie as a reader, Freddie answered, “I think it helps me because it helps to be able to talk to someone about what I am thinking instead of keeping it in my head.” Similarly, Adam stated, “Sometimes it helps me, like if it is about something that I don’t understand…it helps to talk because it helps me understand what’s going on.” Both Freddie and Adam appear to somewhat enjoy discussions and feel that they do help them as readers. Lastly, in my interview with Hunter, his responses were not surprising, as they directly reflected what I observed during guided reading. When asked what he thinks about discussions and helping one another out, he stated, “I think letting students talk and have brief discussions about what they are reading is a really good system...it’s like an open discussion. It’s not as formal where you have to raise your hand to say something, as long as no one else is talking, you can say what you want.” Hunter continued to tell me that he likes to get involved in discussions, especially if they are about something he cares about.

Finally, I observed that although Mrs. Gates does not allow students to choose their guided reading book, they are allowed to choose the book they read for their book project. Mrs. Gates informed me during an interview that for the monthly book projects, students choose which book they use. She also told me that students choose which book to read during free read time. She added that she has not yet given students the choice of what kind of project to complete for the book project, although she may in the future. When I interviewed the students
about how important it is to them to be able to choose which book they read, they all unanimously agreed that choice is very important to them.

Freddie stated that he would rather choose a book because someone else may choose one that is either too hard or too easy for him. Adam discussed that he would rather choose the book he reads because the teacher might pick a book that he is not interested in and then he would not want to read it. Finally, Hunter asserted, “In some respect, I like what we are doing now... how we can pick the book but the teacher tells us what assignment we have to complete. It would be hard for me to choose my own project because I’d have a hard time narrowing it down. If I didn’t pick my own book, I would worry that the teacher might tell me to read something that is not in-depth as I would like it to be.” From the students’ responses, it appears as though choice is certainly a major factor in students’ motivation to read.

Compliance

A third theme that surfaced through my data analysis is that of compliance and the degrees to which each student was compliant during reading instruction. Based on my observations in Mrs. Gates’ classroom, I noticed differences among students’ behavior regarding whether or not they were compliant during instruction. Adam and Hunter were extremely compliant during reading instruction, following directions and doing what they were asked to do. During read alouds when students were asked to quietly sit at their desks and listen, both Adam and Hunter were alert and listened attentively. Freddie would either play with a marker or whisper to his friends during this time, and was asked to put the marker away more than once. Again, Freddie playing with a marker and whispering to his friends is another indication of his low level of involvement in reading activities, as well as non-compliance.
During guided reading, Adam and Hunter did what was expected of them. If either of them were asked a question, they answered. When another student was reading, they followed along. Similarly, in my interview with Mrs. Gates, she informed me that Adam will participate and do what is asked during reading and all other subjects. Hunter also does what is asked, and never displays compliance issues. However, Freddie often followed along for a short period of time during guided reading, and then began to flip through the rest of the pages, losing track of where his classmate was reading. There was another instance when Mrs. Gates had asked the students to read the next few pages on their own, and Freddie asked his classmate, “What are we doing?,” to which his classmate responded, “We’re supposed to be reading to ourselves.” Freddie then read to himself, after his classmate informed him of what he was supposed to be doing.

An additional instance where Freddie was not compliant was when Mrs. Gates reminded students of using context clues and asked students to place their finger on the clue that let them know what “enabled” meant. Freddie appeared to be quite disengaged at this point, and did not do what was asked. When Mrs. Gates asked him to do what he was supposed to do, he stated, “I’m thinking.” Additionally, when Mrs. Gates asked students to write something down, he did not. Instead, he told Mrs. Gates that he was thinking and that he did not have anything to write yet. During guided reading, Freddie appeared to have trouble staying on task and doing what he was asked. Likewise, Mrs. Gates told me during an interview that Freddie is often very difficult during guided reading groups, as he is often fidgety, squirmy, and disinterested. She continued to tell me that it is hard for her to get him focused and stay on task during reading groups. Some of Freddie’s non-compliance behaviors certainly seem to overlap with his work avoidance
behaviors as well, such as not doing what was asked right away and delaying what he was asked to do.

_Reasons for reading_

After examining the student questionnaires and students’ responses to my interview questions, it was obvious that the three students read for certain reasons, some of which appeared to be extrinsic reasons for reading, and some of which sounded more like intrinsic reasons for reading. For example, on Freddie’s student questionnaire, he gave himself a “3” (undecided) when presented with the statement, “I read because I have to.” Freddie told me that, “Most of the time, people don’t have to force me to read. Most of the time I’ll start reading on my own.” Additionally, Freddie gave himself a “4” (agree) when asked to rate himself on the following statement: “Finishing every reading assignment on time is very important to me.” When I asked Freddie to tell me a little bit more about why finishing assignments on time is important to him, he stated that when he gets good grades like As or Bs, he will usually get something, like a new baseball glove or batting glove. Freddie’s reason for finishing reading assignment seems to be extrinsically related, as he reported that he often will get something new when he has good grades.

On Adam’s questionnaire, Adam gave himself a “1” (strongly disagree) when presented with, “I read because I have to.” When asked for more information, Adam stated, “Well, I mostly read for fun, not to get a good grade. No one has to tell me to read...I just read because I want to read.” Based on Adam’s response, it seems that he reads because it is something he enjoys doing wants to do, which are intrinsic reasons for reading rather than extrinsic reasons. Additionally, Adam gave himself a “5” (strongly agree) when presented with, “Finishing every reading assignment on time is very important to me.” In the follow-up interview with Adam, he
told me that he does not want to be late with a library book or receive a bad grade if he is late with an assignment. While it appears that grades are important to Adam, his desire to read for pleasure seems to trump any extrinsically motivated reasons for reading.

Hunter rated himself in the same regard as Adam (e.g. a “1” for “I read because I have to” and a “5” for “Finishing every reading assignment on time is very important to me.”).

Although Hunter’s responses in the follow-up interview differed slightly from Adam’s responses, it seems as though he feels as strongly about these two statements as Adam. For example, in response to “I read because I have to,” Hunter told me, “I read because it’s fun and interesting, and I like it. Although I do have to read for book projects and to get good grades, that is not why I read.” When asked why finishing every reading assignment is important to him, Hunter informed me of the following: “I have to finish them on time because I have to get a good grade. If I don’t finish an assignment on time, it might make it harder to get into a good college. And it will go on my record if I fail an assignment, which isn’t good.” Based on Hunter’s responses it can be deduced that he very much enjoys reading, and although he does have to read for certain assignments, the primary reason why he reads is because he likes it.

Again, enjoying reading for the sake of reading and pleasure are intrinsic reasons for reading.

**Implications**

The research and findings suggest several implications for me as a teacher. First, it is clear that students are motivated to read for different reasons. Whether these reasons are more extrinsic or intrinsic, it is my job as a teacher to try and instill an intrinsic love of reading within all of my students so that they become lifelong readers. Secondly, there appears to be certain instructional strategies that help to motivate students to read. As both the literature and my findings suggest, group discussions and collaboration as well as choice and autonomy are two
such ways that can foster intrinsic reading motivation among students. If I hope to motivate my students to want to read and view themselves as readers, then I must implement these strategies in my classroom and take into consideration what the recent research states, and what my findings support are the most effective instructional strategies to use with students.

Students’ motivation and reasons for reading varies from individual to individual. While some students read primarily for an external reward or incentive, other students have an inherent desire to read, and read because they want to read. After conducting research on why fifth graders Freddie, Adam, and Hunter read, it is clear that their reasons vary, and that their reasons appear to correlate with their reading motivation levels. For example, Hunter, who Mrs. Gates identified as “highly motivated,” shows a great deal of intrinsic motivation to read, while Freddie, who Mrs. Gates classified as a student with little to no reading motivation, appears to read if his schedule allows, and in order to earn an external reward such as a batting glove. Adam, the student with “average reading motivation” appears to fall somewhere in between Hunter and Freddie, though his reasons for reading more closely align with those of Hunter’s.

Given that each of these student’s reasons for reading differ, it is then important for me as a teacher to recognize that not every student is going to be intrinsically motivated to read and that I must take certain steps in order to foster reading motivation in my students. One thing I will do as a teacher in order to promote reading motivation in my students is show my enthusiasm and love of reading. I will share with students what I am reading at home, what is happening in the book, and any relevant connections I am currently making between what I am reading to my own life or another text that I have read. As self-determination theory states, if students are surrounded by a sense of relatedness and see that reading is valued as an everyday activity, then they are more likely to develop a strong interest in reading (Sweet, 1997).
Therefore, sharing with students my personal reading will help to develop their curiosity and interest in reading.

Sharing with students what I am reading at home would also demonstrate for them that readers talk about what they are reading with others, as it can lead to enlightening discussions. As Lapp and Fisher (2009) maintain, giving students opportunities to have discussions and “…have their say about the text” are significant if “…students are to accomplish a major goal of English education – to be changed by literature and to continue to read long after they have left our classrooms” (p. 561). Also, during Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time, or Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), I will make sure that I do the same; that is, if I am asking my students to stop what they are doing and read, I will be sure to read as well. If students see that I am doing what I ask of them to do and they see me reading at the same time, they will start to see that reading is something that I do in my free time, and it is something that I value. Again, doing so would provide students with the psychological need of relatedness (according to self-determination theory), as they would hopefully begin to see reading as a valuable experience and develop the intrinsic motivation to read.

Another motivational strategy that I will implement in my classroom during reading and across the content areas will be that of group discussions and collaboration. As the literature suggests and my findings show, group discussions and giving students the opportunity to socialize and converse with one another is a highly effective strategy to help motivate students. Specifically, Fullerton (2001) and Lapp and Fisher (2009) both argue that collaboration and socialization among students is essential in increasing students’ reading motivation, as students’ levels of enthusiasm and involvement in classroom activities greatly increased.
Allowing students to share their thoughts and ideas with one another and to help each other gives them the chance to learn from one another. Students may hear ideas from peers that they would otherwise not have thought about or considered. Students would also hear other perspectives and ways of thinking, which would also expand their own thinking about a certain topic. As sociocultural-historical theory maintains, social interaction among students is key, as students’ literacy skills are formed through such experiences (Larson & Marsh, 2005). In addition to forming one’s literacy skills, socializing with others also exposes students to others’ perspectives regarding reading and literacy practices (Larson & Marsh, 2005). As Hunter, Adam, and Freddie revealed, group discussions help them because they are able to talk with others about what they are thinking and it helps to hear what their peers think, especially if a topic is confusing or unclear.

Given what I learned in relevant literature such as Fullerton’s (2001) study and Lapp and Fisher’s (2009) study, as well as the components of sociocultural-historical theory and my own research about motivational instructional strategies, I will certainly be sure to give students ample opportunities for discussion and collaboration in my classroom. It is critical that I, as well as other teachers, recognize just how much valuable information is learned during informal conversations.

In addition to sharing my enthusiasm about reading and incorporating group discussions, another implication of my findings is the power of choice and autonomy in regards to reading. That is, letting students make their own choices and turning over that amount of power to students appears to have a significant effect on students’ motivation. As both Guthrie et al. (2000) and Wigfield et al. (2004) argue, supporting the development of students’ autonomy as learners can greatly help to increase their intrinsic motivation. That is, if students are given
choices and control over their learning, they will be more intrinsically motivated to learn.

Similarly, both Lapp and Fisher (2009) and Fullerton (2001) claim that giving students choices helps to increase their motivation, as they feel more of a sense of control over their learning. In addition to the findings of Guthrie et al. (2000), Wigfield et al. (2004), Lapp and Fisher (2009) and Fullerton (2001), autonomy is also one of the three psychological needs discussed in self-determination theory. According to Sweet (1997), students are more likely to value their reading and learning experiences if they are given freedom in regards to what they read.

Both the literature and my interviews with Hunter, Adam, Freddie, and Mrs. Gates indicate that choice is extremely important in order to motivate students. In my classroom, I will allow students to choose the books they read, even if they happen to be books of the same genre.

While it is also important for me to expose students to other genres of literature and encourage them to expand their repertoire of reading materials, I first need to ensure that my students are reading. If students read books of the same genre, after a while they will increase their confidence and will then be more likely to take risks and try a book of another genre or topic. In regards to reading activities, I will also give students choices. For example, if I ask students to write about a certain character in a book we are reading, I would allow them to choose the character they write about. For more substantial assignments such as book projects, I will give students options (e.g. creating a brochure or poster, performing a dramatic reenactment, creating a graphic novel or comic strips, etc). There are several ways to assess students’ work and comprehension of a text, and I must offer assignments that appeal to all types of learners. It is imperative that I acknowledge that every student has his or her own learning style, and to provide students with a great variety of assignments from which to choose.
Finally, after considering all of the implications that my research brings to mind, I am left with a few additional unanswered questions for myself, as well as for other teachers. First, what else can teachers do to build struggling readers’ confidence? It is extremely important that students have confidence and view themselves as competent and capable readers. If students do not possess these beliefs about themselves, it is likely that they will either never develop the desire to read, or they will ultimately lose any motivation to read. A second question that comes to mind is what can teachers do in the upper elementary years through the high school level to help motivate students who lack reading motivation? It is clear that the primary years of schooling are crucial to building our students’ confidence levels and instilling an intrinsic desire to read in our students. What can be done if students’ confidence is shattered in first grade and it is never built back to where it was? What extra steps do teachers need to take with students who have gone through years of schooling with low-self esteem and self-efficacy and who have lost the motivation to read?

**Conclusion**

High reading motivation is key to becoming a successful reader. If teachers want their students to be proficient readers, then a love of reading and intrinsic motivation must be fostered over time. As Guthrie et al. (1999) argues, students who hold the desire to read are often times better readers than students who are not motivated to read (as stated in Johns & Lenski, 2005, p. 2). Teachers must not only motivate their students in order for them to become better readers, but also to encourage students to become lifelong readers and enjoy reading. Teachers can incorporate instructional strategies that have been shown to motivate students such as using interesting texts, incorporating more hands-on activities that correlate with the texts that students are reading, giving students specific learning goals to work toward, giving students choices and
more control over their learning, and having students work together and participate in group discussions. Along with implementing these instructional strategies, teachers must also offer students a positive and supportive learning environment in which to thrive. Without encouragement and support, these strategies will only go so far. It is the combination of effective instructional strategies along with compassionate and supportive teachers that will help to motivate students and inspire them to truly love reading.
Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

~* Reading Questionnaire *~

**Directions:** I am interested in learning more about you as a reader. Please answer the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers.

1 = Strongly Disagree  
2 = Disagree  
3 = Undecided  
4 = Agree  
5 = Strongly Agree

1. List the types of books you like to read/don't like to read.

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<th>Like to read</th>
<th>Don't like to read</th>
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2. Describe yourself as a reader.

3. Out of all the subjects in school, I am the best at reading.

1  2  3  4  5

4. I like to read hard, challenging books.

1  2  3  4  5

5. As long as I am interested in a book, I don't care how hard it is to read.

1  2  3  4  5
6. I don’t like reading something when the words are too hard for me to understand.

   1    2    3    4    5

7. I read about my hobbies and interests to learn more about them.

   1    2    3    4    5

8. I read in order to get a good grade.

   1    2    3    4    5

9. I read because my teacher tells me I have to read.

   1    2    3    4    5

10. I love to read in my free time.

    1    2    3    4    5

11. I like to talk to my friends and family about what I am reading.

    1    2    3    4    5

12. I read to my parents or siblings.

    1    2    3    4    5

13. Finishing every reading assignment on time is very important to me.

    1    2    3    4    5

14. I read because I have to.

    1    2    3    4    5
References


