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UTILIZING CULTURAL RESPONSIVE LITERACY PRACTICES IN ORDER TO INCREASE READING ENGAGEMENT IN PRIMARY AGED READERS

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UTILIZING CULTURAL RESPONSIVE LITERACY PRACTICES IN ORDER TO INCREASE READING ENGAGEMENT IN PRIMARY AGED READERS

by

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A Thesis

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Dedications

To the love of my life and best friend, my husband Perry. Your unwavering support and listening ear have been my greatest comfort throughout this experience. You have stood by me with patience, understanding, and most importantly, love. Thank you for lifting me up when I needed it most. Thank you for believing in me when I did not believe in myself. I love you, always.

To my precious daughter, Myla. Even though you are still young, every step of this journey has been led with the hope that one day you will see the significance of staying strong and pursuing your passions. I dedicate this work to you in the hope that it shows you the value of believing in your dreams and finishing what you started, no matter the obstacles. May you grow up knowing that with commitment and strength, you can accomplish anything. Mommy is done with all her schoolwork now.

To my parents, Bill and Joyce. Your support, love, and encouragement have been the foundation of my journey, not only throughout this thesis but throughout my entire academic career. You have instilled in me a deep love for learning and the drive to pursue knowledge with curiosity and passion. For every sacrifice you've made and every word of belief and wisdom you've given me, I am immensely grateful.

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Abstract

Molly E. Young
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Susan Browne, Ed.D.
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this conceptual research was to explore how culturally responsive literacy practices and various theoretical frameworks can be integrated to enhance reading engagement among primary-aged readers. This study examines the connections among several relevant theoretical frameworks and identifies common themes related to reading engagement. The theories that guided this research include Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), Funds of Knowledge (FoK), Self-Efficacy, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The conceptual framework highlights common themes across these frameworks, such as the importance of professional development and pre-service teacher programs, the significance of recognizing student strengths and backgrounds, and the need for learner autonomy. It emphasizes the roles of cultural context, personal belief in capabilities, the application of existing knowledge, and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, this research addresses the missed opportunities presented by traditional reading logs and discusses alternative approaches to enhance reading engagemen

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Stephanie (pseudonym): "I hate the reading log! I wish we didn't have to complete it for homework! There is no point to it. I'd understand if we had to write or draw about our favorite part, but what's the point of just listing the title and minutes read?"

Henry (pseudonym): "Why do I have to write down everything I read in the reading log? I love to read, but it's too much to have to write it all down! I feel like it doesn't help me as a reader."

Lauren [Megan's mother] (pseudonym): "Honestly, I think filling out the traditional reading log is a waste of time. It does not tell you, me, or Megan anything about their reading ability, comprehension skills, or level of engagement. Megan enjoys reading and reads all the time, but the tedious task of filling out the log each night robs my daughter of pure enjoyment through this reading experience."

The quotes above are examples of what my former students and parents have shared about their personal feelings towards the traditional reading log they are asked to complete as a part of reading homework throughout the school year. The implementation of the home reading program is a mandated requirement within second grade at the school I currently teach at and have for eleven years. The sole purpose of the program is to record how much a student is orally reading throughout the school year. Second grade

students read throughout the week and simply record the title of the book they read, how many minutes they orally read to a family member. I keep a record of how many minutes they read in my gradebook. Students' oral reading is a required practice in second grade. What this program lacks is the opportunity to show how engaged a reader is with the text.

The traditional reading log has several limitations and lacks how to address the student's level of reading engagement. For example, it is expected that traditional reading logs serve all students, despite their differences whether culturally or academically. Culturally responsive literacy practices in place of the traditional reading log may support a student's level of reading engagement as it will tailor to their specific needs. Culturally responsive literacy practices stem from Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which is an educational approach established by Geneva Gay in the early 2000s. According to Gay (2010), Culturally Responsive Teaching is defined as: "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). CRT is an approach that centers a student's identity and their experiences, as well as promoting student engagement and increased learning outcomes through positive student-teacher relationships. In order to be able to promote this in the classroom, a culturally responsive educator should comprise a set of knowledge and skills that allows them to foster these relationships with their students. Gay (2010) identifies eight competencies that are key practices within culturally responsive teaching which include: having high expectations for all students, drawing on student's culture to shape curriculum and instruction, reflecting on one's cultural lens, recognizing and redress bias in the system, bring real world issues to the classroom, promoting respect for student differences,

communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways, and collaborating with families. These key practices can be utilized and highlighted in an alternative approach to traditional reading logs that allows for an increased level of student engagement.

The absence of drawing on the student's culture to shape the curriculum and instruction is one of the eight competencies within Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) that is a missed opportunity and not utilized within the traditional reading log approach (Gay, 2010). In the alternative approach to the traditional reading log, students would be encouraged to respond in a way that relates to them and their learning from their independent reading experience, which embodies the action of drawing from their culture to shape instruction. This can be done so by the student completing a simple writing or drawing response activity of their choice. This will allow them to draw connections of their personal experiences, beliefs, and values to the text. Another fundamental competency within CRT that the traditional reading log approach fails to meet is promoting respect for student differences. Students having the chance to share their reading experiences and unique responses with their peers can allow for the opportunity of students learning about and from one another. "Educators contribute to such environments by modeling how to engage across differences and embodying respect for all forms of diversity" (Muniz, 2019). Reading engagement may likely be absent in the event that the culturally responsive literacy practices above are not put in place.

There are many incidents that took place during the school year that reflect examples of missed opportunities for culturally responsive literacy practices within the Reading Log Program. On one occasion, as I walked around the room to collect the reading folders, I overheard Jena (pseudonym), a Black student talking with one of her

classmates sitting across from her. She stated that she was bored with the home reading

program since all she does is list the titles and how many minutes she read for. She

wishes she could draw or write about what she reads, and would also love to share it with

her classmates. When a boy sitting beside her asked "Jena" about the title *Jada Jones*

Dance Queen listed in her log that was open on display, she stated that it was a part of her

favorite series, The Jada Jones Series, a children's book series featuring a Black main

character. She conveniently pulled that particular book out from her desk and when she

did, the boy commented on the main character's hair. He shared that he never saw a girl

with beads in her hair like Jada on the cover. I then overheard Jena share with Jacob

about her favorite hairstyles she wears, similar to Jada's. Next, I saw Jena open the book

and show Jacob the various different hairstyles that Jada has. Jacob expressed that Jada's

hairstyles were "cool" and that he has some background knowledge since his cousin also

has similar hairstyles and wears a bonnet to bed. I realized at this moment that the

alternative reading approach would be a great opportunity to promote student differences

by allowing students to draw upon their culture, beliefs, experiences, and values and

connect them to their reading experiences.

The situation above is just one example of how the Home Reading Program

affects reading engagement, motivation, and exposes gaps of access to culturally

responsive literature and practices. Providing students with the exposure to texts that are

outside their scope of interest gives opportunity to develop respect and empathy for

cultural differences represented in those texts. "Literature by and about people of color

can offer varying perspectives, different ways of viewing the same or similar

phenomena…Actively incorporating such literature into the curriculum-all year,

throughout the curriculum-can help students come to respect and value diversity as natural and enriching" (Bishop, 1997, p. 6). Children's representation is important to how children build their perspectives on their own ethnic and racial group, as well as that of others (Rogers, 2021). Bishop (1997) adds, "Ultimately, to the extent that school achievement is tied to a sense of self-worth, multicultural literature can have a beneficial effect on the school achievement of children who have historically been denied realistic images of themselves and their families, community, and culture" (p. 4). The failure to utilize a student's culture to shape curriculum and instruction is a problem I have with the Home Reading Program. This study investigates how culturally responsive teaching practices are used to increase reading engagement amongst primary aged readers.

Significance of Research

The Scholastic Book Fair is held every school year in the early Spring, and it is a pivotal event for faculty, teachers, and students as we are awarded the opportunity to purchase new books for the classroom and home environments. Every year, I escort my class down to the library where the book fair is hosted, and I watch the students purchase books that they have been so excited about for weeks leading up to the book fair. As the students wrap up their purchases and sit at the library tables waiting for the rest of the class to be done, I notice the students pull out their books from their bags and show off their purchases with their peers. It is interesting to see that most students, both white and students of color, who bought fiction books, purchased books that had characters who looked like them on the cover. Last year at the book fair, I can specifically recall when one of my students was reading a book she had just purchased with her table partners as

they waited for our book fair time to end. Mia, a student of color, read a few pages from *Bedtime Bonnet*, a book written by Nancy Redd featuring an African American family that describes their bedtime routine which involves wrapping their hair. When asked by her white peers what a bonnet was, Mia went on to proudly share about her bonnet and what her experiences of wrapping her hair were like before bed. Her routine slightly differed from the one portrayed in the story, but it was very interesting to witness a discussion fully led and facilitated by second graders. This positive experience led me to think how student-led discussions of the books they read can be incorporated and embedded into our school day, and then it hit me! Before I collect the home reading folders every Tuesday morning, students would be allowed to informally share about the books they are reading at home. It would be nice if the students could use their home reading logs as a reference when sharing with their peers, but I then realized that the traditional home reading log serves little purpose for the students when they want to share their favorite part or an intriguing character in the story they are reading, since the log only tracks the title and minutes read. I knew at this point that I wanted to create an alternative approach to the reading logs that allowed the students to be more engaged with the reading process. By having Mia share about her experience with wrapping her hair in a bonnet before bedtime, she is playing a critical role in shaping the discussion with her background and culture. The students, a part of the discussion, held respect for one another's differences. They also learned something new from a culture that they are unfamiliar with and learned it from a classmate which can be more engaging compared to a teacher. Rather than being a random yet effective learning opportunity for all involved, I want to set out and make this a part of our daily routine where students are shaping the

curriculum and instruction with the use of their culture, as well as promoting respect for student differences. It should be noted that the next day, Mia voluntarily brought in her own bonnet to share with the class and discussed cultural traditions she shared with her family. The discussion that took place during morning meeting was filled with curiosity, learning, and appreciation for cultural differences. I applauded Mia for wanting to continue the conversation about her family and personal practices which led to positive learning outcomes for all. This teaching moment was fully student-led, and also culturally responsive because it took place in a safe inclusive environment that allowed Mia to feel safe enough to share a special part of her family practices. One specific positive learning outcome that took place included the engagement from a student of color who normally struggled with participating. Ashley, who rarely participates in whole class discussions, wanted to share about the bonnet that she wears to bed and how she read something similar to *Bedtime Bonnet*. Ashley showed positive self-esteem and confidence when proudly making a connection to the topic. Ashley was encouraged to participate more throughout the day. Mirroring Gay's (2010) theory about culturally responsive teaching, Mia's discussion led Ashley to have a learning experience that was relevant to her personal experiences, deeming it an effective practice. This incident helped mold the significance of this study and led me to this research.

Research Problem

The following questions hope to be answered and explored through my research: How can culturally responsive literacy practices increase motivation and engagement for primary aged readers? How can student's FoK be used in their response to literature?

How do students respond to books with characters that represent their culture, or different cultures? Students have a personal connection when they are represented and shown in the text that they are reading (Bishop, R. S., 1990). This representation also includes principles of equity and social justice - purposeful issues like racism, homophobia, sexism, and economic inequality. Reading engagement may increase when equity literacy is embraced. Gorski and Swalwell (2015) address the importance of schools needing to put equity, rather than culture, in the center of diversity conversations. It is discussed that while Multicultural Curriculum initiatives have good intentions, these initiatives lack content that address serious equity concerns. Gorski and Swalwell (2015) state, "They become distinctly unmulticultural when we don't offer them alongside more serious curricular attention to issues like racism and homophobia because they present the illusion of multicultural learning even as they guarantee a lack of sophisticated multicultural learning" (p. 36). In response, equity literacy is a framework that is initiated for both multicultural curriculum development and addressing larger issues in order to make the classroom and schools more equitable. Gorski and Swalwell state that the key to developing equity literacy for teachers and students is pursuing four abilities which include: recognizing, responding, and redressing bias, discrimination, and inequity. The other key is to cultivate and sustain bias-free discrimination in communities (2015). By addressing these equity concerns, culturally responsive literacy practices can be implemented in order to increase student engagement and motivation.

Multicultural literature serves significant roles in the classroom. One function of selecting appropriate multicultural literature in the classroom is allowing students to have a personal experience with the text. Bishop (1993) states, "Reading literature ought to be

an aesthetic experience…In classrooms where multicultural literature is to have an effect, that experience is primary. Other goals can be achieved when readers…make thoughtful responses to their reading and to enrich their own reading by interacting with others" (p. 6). Overlapping concepts in Affective, Cultural, and Constructivist Lenses address student motivation and reading engagement while using culturally responsive literacy practices.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand how culturally centered literacy practices can increase reading engagement among primary grade students. As a teacher and community member, I hold a professional and personal stance on student reading engagement with the use of culturally diverse texts through Culturally Responsive Literacy Practices for primary learners. My background as a struggling reader myself, and now raising bi-racial children, heightens my awareness and commitment to ensuring culturally responsive resources to optimize student reading engagement and motivation. As a public school educator who has been teaching for over ten years, I understand that students having access to high-quality culturally responsive literature can allow them to feel represented and recognized. I understand that being a culturally responsive teacher can include designing culturally relevant curricula, developing a culturally relevant knowledge base, encouraging cross-cultural connections for students, and recognizing as well as redressing biases in the system (Gay, 2001). I also recognize the importance of addressing issues of equity within multicultural education. Gorski and Swalwell (2015) embrace equity literacy after stating that multicultural curriculum initiatives mask serious

equity concerns. Gorski and Swalwell (2015) state, "We can avoid these pitfalls by building our multicultural curriculum efforts, not around cultural awareness or cultural diversity, but around the cultivation of equity literacy in both ourselves and our students" (p. 40). As both a teacher and community member, I will always encourage students to read texts that relate to their identity as well as others. It is important that they read about other cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as family dynamics and structures, inclusiveness, and diverse student profiles. By doing so, this will promote respect for student differences and create a cultural caring community.

The Story of the Research Question

The research phenomenon was embraced during my clinical practicum in the summer of 2022. At this time, I was nearing the end of my journey in becoming a reading specialist by completing the clinical practicum as a part of the Master's Program in reading. Dr. Browne and Dr. Lee both led the clinical practicum, and this is when I was beginning to develop my research question. I shared my disdain of required reading logs with them, and both Dr. Lee and Dr. Browne helped me explore how culturally responsive literacy practices could enhance reading engagement with the use of a tool and strategy that replaces the reading log. Over time, my research question evolved into: *How can culturally responsive literacy practices increase motivation and engagement for primary aged readers? How can student's Funds of Knowledge be used in their response to literature? How do students respond to books with characters that represent their culture, or different cultures?*

How The Story Will Unfold

This qualitative study is conceptual. This study will represent my synthesis of literature on culturally responsive literacy practices that increase reading engagement. This will capture other researchers' previous knowledge on the topic, as well as my own derived from several literature reviews. Furthermore, this qualitative study is influenced by my own teaching experiences as a second grade teacher who is mandated to implement the Home Reading Program. There are three additional chapters after Chapter one. Chapter two focuses on new and relevant empirical literature, in addition to seminal work, that pertain to the research question and sub questions. The third Chapter is comprised of a conceptual framework that relates to the research question and sub questions. Finally, Chapter four summarizes the research while providing the implications for practice and future research within the study.

For the purpose of collecting data for this research, I read literature on Affective learning, Funds of Knowledge, Multiculturalism, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Additionally, I read several studies that utilized reading tools to increase reading engagement. The data I will collect from the literature will be used to answer my research questions. Once I have collected data from the literature reviews, the data will be analyzed by exploring how a student's Funds of Knowledge is used to respond to literature and how students respond to books with characters that represent their culture, or different cultures.

I hope that with this research, I can make meaningful contributions to the field of literacy that expand on reading engagement and motivation with the use of culturally

responsive literacy practices. I wish to discover through this research how a student's

Funds of Knowledge is used when responding to literature and how students respond to

literature with representation of their culture and others. This research will be meaningful

to me as an educator, graduate student, mother, and community member.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The following literature review summarizes and synthesizes empirical research that supports culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom with literacy engagement and achievement in mind. Additionally, empirical and seminal work elaborate on Multicultural Education, Funds of Knowledge, as well as reading engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy. These themes reviewed in literature support the research on Culturally Responsive Teaching to increase literacy engagement.

Multicultural Education

Dr. Sonia Nieto, an acclaimed professor and researcher, is a critical author who addresses the importance of affirming diversity and promoting equity across education in the United States. Nieto's (1992) seminal work *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* is one of the most prominent texts in the field of multicultural education. Nieto's seminal work outlines her definition of multicultural education along with seven principles for multicultural education. Nieto provides her definition of multicultural education as a way to assist in school reform for students of diverse backgrounds and she does so by analyzing seven key characteristics which affirms such students. Nieto (1992) describes multicultural education as, "A process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in society and accepts and affirms the

pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, gender, and sexual orientation, amongst others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education permeates the school's curriculum and intuitional strategies as well as the interactions amongst teachers, students, and families and the very way that schools conceptualized the nature of teaching and learning" (p. 32). Nieto's (1992) definition of multicultural education acknowledges the need to address inequities in education related to achievement for students of diverse backgrounds, therefore encouraging what and how education is provided to them. The seven key principles of multicultural education include: Multicultural education is against racism, it is the main education, it is important for all students, it is mixed everywhere, it is meant for social justice, it is a process, and finally multicultural education is a critical pedagogy (Nieto, 1992). Nieto developed these seven principles to help educators recognize that there is more than one way of comprehending and providing multicultural education. Nieto's (1992) purpose of the key principles of multicultural education is meant to cultivate a deeper understanding of how societal and school structures affect each other, and in result how those affect student learning.

"Multicultural education cannot be understood in a vacuum but rather must be seen in its personal, social, historical, and political context. Assuming that multicultural education is 'the answer' to school failure is simplistic at best for it overlooks important social and education issues that affect daily the lives of students. Educational failure is too complex and knotty an issue to be 'fixed' by any single program or approach. However, if broadly conceptualized and implemented, multicultural education can have a

substantive and positive impact on the educational experiences of most students" (Nieto, 1992, p. 23).

Dr. James A. Banks's (1993) seminal work discusses the historical development of multicultural education in the United States. He speaks on the historical challenges and the misunderstanding of multicultural education. Educators' misconceptions of multicultural education, and the belief that multicultural education is about changing the curriculum to include content about different ethnic and cultural groups are why goals were established (Banks, 1993). "A major goal of multicultural education, as stated by specialists in the field, is to reform the school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality" (Banks, 1993, p. 3). Five dimensions of multicultural education are proposed, and these five dimensions are used to form and establish curriculum, school policies, and programs. The five dimensions are content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. Banks explains that when multicultural education is barely understood, it is utilized only on certain occasions or additional lessons to teach about a certain subject. The knowledge construction dimension helps students understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by different groups of people (Banks, 1993). "Rather, the curriculum is reconceptualized to help students understand how knowledge is constructed and how it reflects human interests, ideology, and the experiences of the people who create it…They begin to understand why it is essential to look at the nation's experience from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives to comprehend fully its past and present" (Banks, 1993, p. 37).

Geneva Gay, a prominent scholar and author, is known for her significant contributions in the field of education, particularly in multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching. According to Gay (2004) there is immense potential for improving achievement of students from diverse backgrounds when multicultural education and literacy instruction are intertwined. Gay (2004) also suggests that teachers can be an obstacle to multicultural education due to their lack of skills and negative attitudes towards the framework. For that reason, teacher education programs must supply educators with explicit instruction for integrating multicultural education with literacy instruction (O'Byrne, W. I., & Smith, S. A., 2015). O'Byrne and Smith (2015) studied pre-service teachers' attitudes and behavior towards the merger of multicultural education and multicultural literacies, as well as the role that multicultural education plays in educating teachers. A qualitative and quantitative mixed model study was performed in order to study a hybrid instructional approach that provided direct instruction with multicultural education, and encouraged teachers to investigate their perspectives within the approach (O'Byrne, W. I., & Smith, S. A., 2015). Results show that an instructional approach that provides direct instruction and experiences in multicultural education can be used while allowing preservice teachers to investigate their own perspectives in a hybrid classroom environment.

Funds of Knowledge

The Funds of Knowledge (FoK) theory derived from the seminal works of Vélez-Ibáñez (1983) on U.S. Mexican households which hold cultural and community knowledge. The phrase Funds of Knowledge refers to the knowledge students acquire

from their family and cultural background (Lopez, 2006). The term was later developed

to address the belief of deficit thinking in teaching. Deficit thinking in education refers to

the idea that students from low income households fail to achieve due to lack of skills or

resources to be successful. There was a belief that poor students shared a "culture of

poverty" that lowered school achievement, leading to the development of "cultural

deficit" models (González, 2005). "Poor and minoritized students were viewed with a

lens of deficiencies, substandard in their socialization practices, language practices, and

orientation toward scholastic achievement" (González, 2005, p. 34). FoK began as an

approach to address the deficit thinking in teaching. FoK is a collection of skills learned

by life experiences through family traditions, social skills, and cultural practices that

gives the child a wide range of knowledge, which can be applied beyond an academic

setting. The concept of funds of knowledge was used by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and

González (1992) who collaborated together on a project between education and

anthropology. This research study qualitatively measured the establishment of strategic

connections between households and classrooms in Arizona's Mexican communities.

Teachers became the researchers and visited households, assumed the role of learners,

established relationships with families, and developed instructional classroom practices

and activities based on those observations. "The primary purpose of this work is to

develop innovations in teaching that draw upon the knowledge and skills found in local

households" (Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N., 1992, p. 132). Teachers

have a limited knowledge of their students outside the classroom and do not often pull

from their FoK which derives from the childs' world. The child's experiences as well as

the cultural makeup of their household helps form the funds of knowledge that the child

brings to school (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). In this study, they learned that establishing a strong relationship between families and schools can indeed be highly beneficial for both teachers and families, particularly in terms of enhancing academic outcomes and overall educational experience for the student. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González (1992) state, "The teachers assume the role of the learner, and in doing so, help establish a fundamentally new, more symmetrical relationship with the parents of the students" (p. 139).

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González's work (1992) on teachers engaging with U.S Mexican families outside of school provided rich examples of how they apply what they have learned about their student's FoK into curricular activities. For instance, a student named Carlos and his family welcomed his teacher, Cathy, into their home where he shared a lot about his summer spent in his family's home city, Magdalena. He also showed her his appreciation and interest for Mexican candy that he enjoyed selling. Cathy only learned of this unique skill because of the home visit. Otherwise, she would have missed out on this opportunity. Once back in the classroom, Cathy used Carlos' FoK to enhance her classroom instruction. She developed several lessons that incorporated the use of candy. More specifically, Carlo's mother, Mrs. Lopez volunteered to show the class how *Pipitora*, the Mexican candy, was made. She also taught the students the difference between U.S and Mexican food consumption and production. Afterwards the class made posters to help them sell the candy at a school-wide function. This example clearly demonstrates how innovations of teaching can be drawn upon by the knowledge and skills found within student's homes, which ultimately was the purpose of this study (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, 1992). "It is the teacher who is

ultimately the bridge between the students' world, theirs and their family's Funds of Knowledge, and the classroom experience" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, 1992, p. 137).

Gaining a better understanding of a student's FoK can enhance classroom practices for both teachers and students. Using a FoK approach to understanding students' overall sets of abilities and experiences can help teachers draw on these skills in classrooms to enrich their understanding of academic content while also motivating them during classroom activities. Eric Johnson and Angela Johnson (2016) explored how to enhance motivation and engagement of two, fourth grade Latina English Language Learners (ELLs) during literacy instruction with an academic intervention. The study is grounded in The FoK framework (González et al., 2005), Personalized Learning (Redding, 2013), and Educational Investment (Norton, 1995). In this study, the researchers are utilizing the two students, Carlos and Natalia's, out-of-school FoK in order to set the foundation of their projects which are rooted in their interests. The academic intervention strategy promotes personalized learning while also integrating the students' scholastic FoK in order to prepare the lessons, and an increase of student engagement was the goal (Johnson, E. J., & Johnson, A. B., 2016). It is imperative to understand how a student learns with out-of-school context and how they connect that with learning strategies in school (Zipin, 2009). "We extend this notion by also considering the important individual nuances of how students develop preferences for learning, organize information, and express themselves within school settings" (Johnson, E. J., & Johnson, A. B., 2016, p. 107). A part of the approach was for the teacher to conduct home visits which support home-school relationships, as well as understanding

that the students' out-of-school FoK assist in the design of the lessons. After home visits were conducted, the teacher met with Carlos and Natalia to plan out how their peer teaching projects based on personalized learning and FoK were to be implemented (Johnson, E. J., & Johnson, A. B., 2016). Data was collected before, during, and after the academic intervention was implemented. Academic and behavior patterns were observed before the intervention. When the academic intervention was implemented, student academic progress, family engagement, and how FoK connected, were themes found across the data. It is illustrated how students' overall engagement with classroom activities and with their peers can be increased through students designing and leading their own learning experiences. For example, Natalia chose to have her peers conduct a research study on their favorite animals which is demonstrated from her scholastic FoK. Carlos chose to implement a language arts lesson in which he asked his classmates to research automobiles, based on his out-of-school FoK. He incorporated his scholastic FoK by asking his peers to organize information of this topic in a KWL chart, research specific categories, and then finally conduct presentations of learned material to the class. The analysis at the conclusion of the intervention expresses the importance of all three processes utilized in the student (Johnson, E. J., & Johnson, A. B., 2016). After the projects were implemented and self-evaluations were completed, it was discovered that Natalia and Carlos both had an increase in their academic performance and a positive change in engagement. The study also demonstrates qualities of Culturally Responsive Teaching that allow the students to be engaged in the learning process. This approach is how Meltzer and Hamann (2004) describe a responsive classroom by stating, "Where students are acknowledged, have voice, and are given choices in learning tasks, reading

assignments, and topics of inquiry that then strengthen their literacy skills (as cited in

Johnson, E., & Johnson, A., 2016)" (p. 14).

Culturally Centered Pedagogies

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings, an influential scholar and theorist, developed her seminal

work *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (1995a) in order to address

equity and diversity among instructional practices. This critical work within the education

field is constructed to highlight how students can be empowered intellectually, socially,

emotionally, and politically through this teaching approach (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) theoretical Framework focuses on aspects of

student achievement that is promoted through students' cultural strength as well as

helping them maintain their cultural identities.

Ladson-Billings's seminal qualitative research with African American students

and eight teachers identified key elements of effective CRP which include: academic

success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. An essential component of CRP

is student success, more particularly that students of marginalized communities are

capable of academic success when curriculum and instructional strategies are

strategically designed for students to meet those high expectations (1995a). Ladson-

Billings describes cultural competence in a recent interview as, "The ability of students to

draw on their own backgrounds, languages, histories, customs, and experiences as they

gain fluency and facility in at least one other culture" (Will, 2022 Ladson-Billings, para.

6). The final key component of CRP, critical consciousness, outlines a students' ability to

be able to question current social order and evaluate current social justices. Ladson-Billings (2022) states, "We have to be able to show our students that what they are learning can have applications to the problems that they are confronting in their daily lives" (Will, 2022, Ladson-Billings, para. 6). By encouraging critical consciousness, this can help students understand and challenge social and political inequalities that affect their learning as well as their lives within their communities. Ladson-Billings also argues that teachers need to consider the following elements: conceptions of self and others, how social relations are structured, and conceptions of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). "A next step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities in schools" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 469).

Other significant work on CRP from Ladson-Billings includes *But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (1995b). In this seminal piece, Ladson-Billings further explains her theory of CRP and how the concepts within the framework go beyond good teaching practices. Ladson-Billings (1995b) explains that CRP is distinctly different from good teaching, because it points out cultural differences and strives to empower students, especially those who are neglected of academic success in the educational system. "For both groups, researchers and practitioners alike - this work is designed to challenge us to reconsider what we mean by 'good' teaching, to look for it in some unlikely places, and to challenge those who suggest it cannot be made available to all children" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 163).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Scholar and researcher, Geneva Gay (2002), defines Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in her seminal work as, "Using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). CRT is an educational approach intended to help prepare teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to improve academic success for ethnically diverse students.

In her seminal work, Gay (2002) offers a perspective on Culturally Responsive Teaching and the five competences that prepare for culturally responsive teaching. Those competences involve developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, cross-cultural communications, and cultural congruity in classroom instruction (Gay, 2002). These work together to promote student achievement. Preparing for culturally responsive teaching argues that explicit knowledge about cultural diversity is imperative to meeting the educational needs of ethnically diverse students (Gay, 2002).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Prominent scholar Django Paris is well known for the conception of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Django Paris constructed his seminal work *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice* which outlines the theoretical foundations within CSP (2012). By introducing CSP, Paris is building on previous educational pedagogies and frameworks by calling for an evolutionary shift in educational practice to help sustain and expand on students' culture

(2012). CSP follows the development of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2002). While CRP and CRT highlight the importance of how learning should be responsive and relevant to a student's cultural background, CSP sustains and affirms the student's identity and learning (Paris, 2012). Paris (2012) states, "The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95). In his seminal work, Paris argues that marginalized students can be forced to assimilate to dominate cultural norms, therefore undermining their own cultural identity (2012). Paris (2012) also emphasizes the critical need to maintain linguistic and cultural pluralism within the classroom. In order to do so, students' home languages, cultural practices, and ties to their community should be sustained and maintained within their instruction. Paris also acknowledges that culture is not static, and CSP is an approach that supports students as their cultural practices are continuously evolving over time (2012). "This research and the pedagogical, curricular, and teacher learning innovations it forwards is interested not in relevance or responsiveness, but in sustaining and extending the richness of our pluralist society. Such richness includes all of the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being that our students and communities embody—both those marginalized and dominant" (Paris, 2012, p. 96).

In the article, *What Are We Seeking to Sustain through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy?*, authors Paris and Samy Alim expand on Paris's concept of CSP (2012) while

also critiquing and advocating for educational practices that still need to be done in order to affirm and sustain students' cultural practices of those from diverse cultural backgrounds (2014). The authors speak to the importance of not just affirming and recognizing the cultural backgrounds of students, but more importantly to nurture and sustain them (Paris and Alim, 2014). Paris and Alim use CSP as a framework to dispute monocultural education and promote multiculturalism in schools (2014). CSP is presented as a framework that surpasses existing models of multicultural education by focusing students on being able to maintain and grow their cultural identities, while also expanding on their cultural practices (Paris and Alim, 2014). "Our goal is to find ways to support and sustain what we know are remarkable verbal improvisational skills while at the same time open up spaces for students themselves to critique the ways that they might be, intentionally or not, reproducing discourses that marginalize members of our communities" (Paris and Alim, 2014, p. 94). The authors argue that CSP fosters linguistic, literate, and cultural equity for all students through sustaining cultural diversity.

Other significant work from Paris and Alim include *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* (2017). Django and Alim's (2017) seminal work examines and questions the traditional education systems that force students of color and marginalized groups into dominant cultural norms surrounding them. The intention of CSP is to support those students by sustaining their cultural identity through academic success. Django and Alim (2017) propose that schooling should be a site for sustaining the cultural practices of communities of color rather than eradicating them.

A recent qualitative and visual inquiry was conducted in order to analyze and highlight the effectiveness of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies (CRSP) in the experiences of Black and Latinx preservice PE teachers enrolled in predominantly white PETE programs (Boyd, Simon, & Dixon, 2022). The authors address concerns and challenges that these preservice teachers face, which include representation and adapting to mainstream PE curriculum that lacks diverse cultural practices. "The cultural discordance between the approaches to teaching by preservice PE teachers of color and the assumptions of whiteness within standards, assessments, pedagogies, and curricula in PETE programs means that preservice PE teachers of color may struggle to reconcile their beliefs, desires, and views of teaching with their supervisors" (Boyd, Simon, & Dixon, 2022, p. 212-213). Three interviews were conducted per student, and data was analyzed inductively and deductively. Results of the study concluded that CRSP should be embedded within PETE programs to affirm and sustain a student's cultural background and identity (Boyd, Simon, & Dixon, 2022).

The Significance of Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Classroom

The racial and ethnic makeup of the U.S student and teacher population in public schools has changed over time. According to the most recent published demographic data from the NCES, 79% of P-12 public school teachers identified as Non-Hispanic White in the 2017-2018 school year. The data shows that less than 7% of teachers identified as Black, 9% Hispanic, and 2% Asian (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). While the U.S teacher population has become more racially diverse, the rate has not kept pace with the increase in racial and ethnic diversity of the student population.

A change in teacher professional development approaches is essential considering the shift in demographics in today's U.S schools. Because of the large teacher representation coming from the white middle-class background, professional development on Culturally Responsive Teaching is highly considered. Currently most teachers lack skills, experiences, and cultural knowledge that would allow them to give the proper education to students from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds. They also can often have negative attitudes and preconceived notions about students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This can be due to a lack of preparation to teach culturally and linguistically diverse populations (Boutte, 2012). Therefore, teachers would benefit from professional development involving Culturally Responsive Teaching practices, as well as strategies on how to effectively use CRT practices in the classroom.

A study involving teachers from K-8 public schools across three counties was conducted to examine the impact of professional development in Culturally Responsive Teaching practices during in-service with teacher practices and reading achievement (Cantrell, S. C., Sampson, S. O., Perry, K. H., & Robershaw, K., 2022). Professional development in Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP) was conducted for a year, with the intention to help teachers prepare for teaching in diverse settings. Student's literacy learning was also studied to evaluate the impact of this professional development. The findings show that there was a significant growth in teachers utilizing CRP compared to the control group. Growth in reading was achieved by students whose teachers participated in the professional development compared to those who did not (Cantrell, S. C., Sampson, S. O., Perry, K. H., & Robershaw, K., 2022). Contributing factors to a

student's reading achievement in this study also include instruction discourse and critical consciousness.

Family collaboration and involvement was also a factor cited in a study done by Siwatu in 2009. Family involvement was a central theme in this study that examined the perceptions of P-12 urban teachers who instructed students from diverse backgrounds. As a part of a qualitative mixed methodology, Siwatu used the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy (CRTOE) scale, along with the teachers' experiences, beliefs, thoughts, and their perceived ability to effectively implement Culturally Responsive Teaching (Siwatu, K. O., 2009). These were drawn from four open-ended sentence stems attached to the qualitative survey (Bonner, P. J., Warren, S. R., & Jiang, Y. H., 2018). The study demonstrated that the teachers surveyed have a strong sense of CRT, understand behaviors which make up CRT, and have a secure sense of self efficacy in teaching diverse students. The patterns that were found from the results of the four sentence stems which investigate teacher perceptions regarding their attitudes and feelings toward CRT, teaching behaviors appropriate to CRT, the effectiveness of CRT, and potential outcomes of CRT were grouped together as themes. These results highlighted the importance of respect, acceptance, and inclusion of the child's culture; all elements of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Bonner, P. J., Warren, S. R., & Jiang, Y. H., 2018). Family involvement and parental relations are a contributing factor to achievement motivation. By recognizing family collaboration and cultural understanding, CRT supports academic success.

Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching to Support Readers

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is utilized to recognize students' cultural backgrounds, identities, and experiences. A teacher incorporates CRT strategies into their instruction to support student achievement by valuing the diverse student population in the classroom which includes acknowledging the student's racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2002). "When academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, 2002, p. 106).

Research was conducted by a teacher to determine whether Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Practices can engage students and improve literacy achievement. A mixed-methods study with 17 middle school Black male students at an all-male urban public charter school showed that the needs of Black male students were met when the curriculum was adapted and targeted instructional practices were considered. The students were not interested in the classroom library before she decided to conduct her research based on the negative feelings expressed by her students (Walker, S., & Hutchison, L., 2021). By reorganizing her classroom library, restructuring her weekly lesson structure, and integrating students' perspectives in curriculum design and instruction, Walker discovered how to effectively incorporate CRP (Walker, S., & Hutchison, L., 2021). The two results of this study included that Black students positively responded to CRT practices by selecting books out of the library, and a significant increase in Measurement of Academic Performance (MAP) scores from Fall 2017 to Spring 2018.

How and where cultural responsiveness can be implemented into an already established curriculum with a core reading program may be a common concern that teachers face. In a 2015 study, Toppel and fellow colleagues demonstrate how cultural responsiveness can enhance core reading programs for Kindergarten students of diverse backgrounds, through the support of Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE) training. Cultural Responsiveness can be achieved when one demonstrates care, incorporates student collaboration, and carefully uses engagement strategies in conjunction with core reading programs (Toppel, 2015). Caring *for* the student rather than *about* them is essential in culturally responsive caring (Gay, 2010). "Teachers can then place students at the center of learning by using students' interests and strengths as opportunities for academic success" (Toppel, 2015, p. 554). Building relationships in order to understand students better can be done by conducting home-visits, talking with students' parents, observing the student in various school settings, to name a few. Once teachers have gathered relevant information about the students through the examples listed above, they can use that information to enhance, alter, and make thoughtful adjustments to the core reading program that better reflect and engage those students. Toppel (2015) exclaims, "By making concerted efforts to connect with focal students, teachers can better understand how their linguistic and cultural influences affect how they learn and communicate in the classroom" (p. 555).

From her five years of research in working with elementary school teachers who employ Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices alongside Differentiated Instruction (DI), Santamaria (2009) found how two different teaching practices combined together could serve many different types of learners. The purpose of this qualitative case

study was to recognize the differences between the two frameworks, finding commonalities among them, and identifying complementary teaching practices that support all students, especially those who are culturally diverse (Santamaria, 2009). An example of both CRT and DI frameworks is observed in one of the classrooms a part of the study. Engaged learning took place when a Bienvenidos elementary school teacher recruited culturally and linguistically diverse parents and student helpers into the classroom to volunteer and support students. These volunteers were there to support and affirm students who have academic differences as well as being culturally and linguistically diverse. Student learning is enriched when culturally diverse staff or volunteers are present in the learning environment (Santamaria, 2009). As a result, positive interaction among students from different ethnic backgrounds and students with special needs took place. "Having positive academic role models to relate to and identify with serves to engage the students and maintain their motivation to learn" (Santamaria, 2009, p. 237).

Reading Engagement, Motivation, and Self-Efficacy

It is supported through research that student engagement and reading motivation are essential to reading success. "Students' reading amount and breadth contribute substantially to several valued aspects of their achievement and performance, such as reading achievement, world knowledge, and participation in society" (Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T., 1997, p. 420). Guthrie and Wigfield are critical authors in the research of reading engagement and motivation. Their seminal research study focused on examining and comparing children's reading motivation to the amount and breadth of their reading

(Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T., 1997). Guthrie and Wigfield utilized the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ), a questionnaire first created by them in 1995, to study 11 possible motivational constructs, including self-efficacy, intrinsic and extrinsic reading motives, social aspects of reading, and the desire to avoid reading (Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T., 1997). It is found at the conclusion of the study that reading motivation is multifaceted and predicts children's reading amount and breadth. "The Efficacy and Challenge aspects reflect work on self-efficacy and competence beliefs (see Bandura, 1977; Schunk, 1991; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992)" (as cited in Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T., 1997, p. 428). Bandura (1997) believed that self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of achievement, and Guthrie and Wigfield support that notion in their findings (Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T., 1997).

Canadian-American Psychologist Albert Bandura, the pioneer of Social Cognitive Theory, is another author whose work is heavily involved in the research of reading engagement and motivation. The premise of his Social Cognitive Theory explains the connections of people, their behavior, and the environment around them. The concept of self-efficacy was proposed by Bandura in 1977 as a behavioral factor within the Social Cognitive Theory. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) believes there are four sources of influences which contribute to an individual's self-efficacy belief, including mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Mastery experience refers to a child's past experience in an academic related task. Mastery experience, or performative outcomes, hold a strong influence in a child's self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) states, "They provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can

muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one's personal

efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is

firmly established" (p.80).

Dale Schunk and Barry Zimmerman also share developed concepts of self-

efficacy, although more focused in the educational form. In Schunk and Zimmerman's

(2007) seminal work *Influencing Children's Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation of Reading

and Writing Through Modeling,* the authors address how a student performs in reading

and writing utilizing the Zimmerman four-phase social cognitive model of the

development of self-regulatory competence. The research discusses how teachers can

provide modeling to support a student's self-efficacy. Schunk and Zimmerman's (2007)

seminal work is further discussed and used in chapter 3.

A qualitative study conducted during the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years

explored the potential role of self-efficacy on reading achievement in ethnically diverse

primary aged learners (Lee, Y. S., & Jonson-Reid, M., 2016). 881 first through third

grade students in school districts throughout the East Coast participated in the study.

Standardized reading tests were used to understand the students' reading ability both at

pre and post-testing. Questions were utilized from scales originally constructed by

Pajares (2002) and Marsh (1990) in order to measure reading task self-efficacy and

global reading self-concept. Results showed that reading self-efficacy had a positive and

profound impact when students completed the post-testing and the scores were positive

and reflected so. Another purpose of this study was to test possible mediating effects of

classroom behavior and motivation. A supplementary analysis within the study indicated

that reading self-efficacy was prominently linked with motivation but not with classroom

behaviors. The results conclude that only student motivation mediated the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading achievement for the testing. Self-efficacy was still important and the extent of the effect did not decrease significantly after student motivation was controlled (Lee, Y. S., & Jonson-Reid, M., 2016).

An article written by professional educators Nikki Bray-Clark and Reid Bates discusses a research-based framework of professional development. Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R. (2003) elaborate on the notion that professional development for educators should focus on self-efficacy training, and the purpose of the training is to improve teacher competence which in turn will improve student outcome. Their review of the research shows evidence proving that self-efficacy may be an imperative predictor of teacher success in training, which is also their desired result after such training takes place (Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R., 2003). It is also suggested that as the cycle of positive feedback in the training process continues, self-efficacy beliefs will increase which allows for increased teacher effectiveness (Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R., 2003). According to Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R. (2003), "This positive, cyclic efficacy-performance spiral is important because it strongly suggests that self-efficacy will be a critical component in the ongoing professional development of teachers, and that directing resources at enhancing teacher self-efficacy can initiate and sustain an ongoing process of individual improvement" (p. 16). This literature emphasizes the importance of how self-efficacy can act as a theoretical framework through researched-grounded initiatives of professional development which helps shape teacher effectiveness and ultimately positive student outcome. This work will be heavily utilized in the following chapter.

Authors Howard Margolis and Patrick McCabe emphasize the significance of a struggling learner's self-efficacy and how to support it, in their 2006 work, 'Improving Self-Efficacy and Motivation: What to Do, What to Say'. Within this article are sensible solutions based on the self-efficacy theory which work to improve motivation for struggling readers (Margolis, H., & Mccabe, P. P., 2006). Enactive mastery, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion are three out of the four sources of self-efficacy that the authors use to promote how a teacher can determine *what to do* and *what to say* in order to enhance a student's beliefs about themselves and hopefully increase their eagerness to engage in the educational process (Margolis, H., & Mccabe, P. P., 2006). The authors promote the implementation of challenging tasks, the use of peer models, teaching of specific learning strategies, emphasizing on student choice and interest, and acknowledging effort as general strategies on how to support students with low self-efficacy (Margolis, H., & Mccabe, P. P., 2006). Additionally, providing specific feedback and encouragement, along with celebrating success will aim to improve a student's self-efficacy (Margolis, H., & Mccabe, P. P., 2006). Aspects from this article will be further developed in the conceptual framework chapter.

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which was developed by two psychologists, Richard Ryan and Edward Deci in the late 20th century, is a theory that suggests individuals have three basic psychological needs to help drive motivation including: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L., 2000). Ryan and Delci's (2000) seminal work explores the psychological needs that are the basis for facilitating self motivation. Higher levels of intrinsic motivation are determined when these three psychological needs are met (Ryan and Delci, 2000). Self-determination

theory is unique because it emphasizes the instructional task of vitalizing students' inner

motivational resources as the key step in facilitating high-quality engagement (Reeve &

Halusic, 2009). In other words, SDT identifies what student's possess which are inner

motivational resources, and it offers recommendations so that teachers can utilize these

resources during instruction in order to obtain a high level of student engagement

(Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

A research study was conducted to understand the relationship between reading

performance and reading motivation, and the role of reading engagement and frequency.

This study took place in Belgium in 2012 and had 1,260 fifth grade students and 67

teacher participants. The SRQ-Reading Motivation was developed and used as a

questionnaire that measured reading for enjoyment and academic reading motivation

based on self-determination theory (De Naeghel et al., 2012). There are two factors that

make up recreational and academic reading motivation, and those include autonomous

and controlled motivation. Results indicate that there is a positive correlation with

recreational autonomous reading motivation and reading behavior, indicating better

performance (De Naeghel et al., 2012).

Two years later in 2014, Jessie De Naeghel and fellow researchers conducted a

study that measured the role of teacher behavior in adolescents' intrinsic reading

motivation (De Naeghel et al., 2014). Data from 2009 in the Programme for International

Student Assessment (PISA) was analyzed, this being the majority source for the study. A

sample of 4,269 15-year old students from Belgium were studied, and several factors of

those students were extracted from the data to help identify important elements and

relationships of motivation (De Naeghel et al., 2014). The relationship between the

teacher's specific behaviors of support and how their behaviors influenced the students' intrinsic motivation was analyzed with multilevel modeling (De Naeghel et al., 2014). The results show that the teacher's behavior plays a significant role in student motivation, which correlates with the Self-Determination Theory. More specifically, evidence proved that if a teacher is to be autonomy supported, structured, and involved, adolescent intrinsic reading motivation is likely to be improved (De Naeghel et al., 2014).

Self-Determination Theory and intrinsic motivation play a critical role in the classroom when it comes to a student's reading engagement and ability level. While identifying a student's reading level of course is beneficial to reading instruction, this process does not automatically lead to a student being successful in the reading process. When strictly focusing on identifying reading levels, teachers miss out on numerous opportunities that allow them to not only identify a student's reading level, but also celebrate their reading and explore how their interests can be embedded into their daily reading (Svrcek and Heidt, 2022). In their research, Natalie Svrcek and Marium Heidt (2022) discuss how self-determination theory should be used to help teachers recognize readers, and urge educators to rethink how reading levels are used within reading instruction. "We instead offer an opportunity for teachers to bolster students' well-being by focusing on their motivational needs and their efficacy as readers. In designing reading instruction and activities around students' interests, choice, abilities, and interactions in the class community, we can empower students, foster their lifelong love of read-ing, and support their development as strong and strategic readers" (Svrcek and Heidt, 2022, p. 311). Svrcek and Heidt (2022) support teachers in building their student's literacy skills and motivational needs by providing instructional strategies that tailor to fulfilling

specific and multiple motivational needs including autonomy, competence, and

relatedness. These literacy strategies may help strengthen a learner's literacy and

motivational areas, which ultimately can lead to a student becoming more intrinsically

motivated. Svrcek and Heidt (2022) add, "With a framework of SDT, we hope students

and teachers alike will feel a greater sense of joy and excitement when it comes to

reading and reading instruction, and importantly, create future generations of motivated

and successful readers" (p. 322).

Reading engagement is viewed in, "Its behavioral form, consisting of actions and

intentions to interact with text for the purposes of understanding and learning" (Guthrie,

2013, p. 10). Guthrie (2013) states that engagement is the act of reading to meet internal

and external expectations. A research study was conducted in order to describe how

reading achievement, reading motivation, and engagement are related with varying

reading instruction. Two purposes carried this study, one examining the relationship

among reading achievement, motivation, and engagement with traditional

Reading/Language Arts (R/LA), and the second purpose studying the same variables with

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) (Guthrie et al., 2013). The researchers

wanted to determine if either reading instruction influenced achievement, motivation, or

engagement. The participants included seventh grade teachers and 1,159 seventh grade

students in a Mid Atlantic state. The results showed that with traditional R/LA,

motivation was associated with achievement through engagement.

Cultural responsiveness in the education field relates to teaching practices that

acknowledges and encompasses a student's identity, cultural background, and

experiences into their learning. Culturally responsiveness can have a positive impact on

student's engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy. A student's engagement is strengthened by cultural responsiveness when they are provided with texts and materials that reflect their cultural background, values, and beliefs (Gay, 2002). When a student's cultural background is valued and woven into the curriculum and they are able to make choices that positively impact their learning, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards reading and motivation can be obtained (Gay, 2002). "Cognitive evaluation theory (CET) further specifies, and studies have shown (Fisher, 1978; Ryan, 1982), that feelings of competence will not enhance intrinsic motivation unless accompanied by a sense of autonomy or, in attributional terms, by an internal perceived locus of causality (deCharms, 1968). Thus, according to CET, people must not only experience competence or efficacy, they must also experience their behavior as self-determined for intrinsic motivation to be in evidence" (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 70). Cultural responsiveness can increase a student's self-efficacy by being in a learning environment where students feel valued, respected, and validated. "While task-specific academic self-efficacy has a strong, positive effect on academic achievement and this effect holds for young children at risk of academic failure, the intervention aimed at raising self-efficacy has focused on the role of teachers and parents…these include creating a pleasant affective learning environment" (Usher and Bressoux 2011, as cited in Lee and Johnson-Reid, 2015, p. 86).

In summary, connections between intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and literacy achievement can be found—intrinsic reading motivation can help the student be more engaged in reading activities, which supports the student's reading success. The student

is more likely to have a higher reading self-efficacy and better literacy achievement which in turn help the growth of reading motivation (Bandura, 1977a).

Conclusion

A significant amount of research within theoretical frameworks including culturally centered pedagogies, funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-determination theory work together to support student learning and the positive impacts they have on how students learn. Multicultural education aims to foster equity and justice, while culturally centered pedagogies focus on a student's cultural background, identity, and experiences. Both of these educational approaches share a common goal: positively impacting students and strengthening their academic achievement. Funds of Knowledge addresses an individual's overall knowledge, experiences, and abilities that they can utilize in the classroom in a positive way to facilitate their learning. Self-efficacy pertains to a student's own beliefs in their abilities to complete a task. All these frameworks and theoretical approaches link to how students can be successfully engaged in reading.

The seminal and empirical studies outlined in detail above elaborate on how culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom work towards increasing literacy engagement and achievement. Common themes reviewed in the literature support the research on Culturally Responsive Teaching to increase literacy engagement.

An integrative approach can be utilized when the theoretical frameworks outlined above strategically work together to address the research question *How can culturally responsive literacy practices increase motivation and engagement for primary aged readers?* Culturally relevant pedagogies center the student's cultural background and

would connect reading to the student's life, therefore increasing reading engagement and motivation. A student's self-efficacy can be fostered through reading experiences that allow for student success, which will likely boost engagement and motivation to keep reading. Self-determination theory addresses autonomy, competence, and relatedness which all work together to support a student's intrinsic motivation to read. Finally, reading can be more meaningfully and effective if such literacy practices connect to the student's cultural and community practices, therefore critically emphasizing the funds of knowledge framework. When these approaches effectively work together to create culturally responsive literacy practices, a student's reading motivation and engagement can be enhanced. Such experiences can be created by educators that will allow students to feel valued and connected to their learning.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Reading engagement and motivation are crucial characteristics in the development of a young reader. Research consistently shows that motivated and engaged readers are more likely to develop strong reading skills, which are foundational to academic success and lifelong learning (Kern & Friedman, 2008). However, motivating and engaging primary-aged readers can be challenging for educators. This research study has been conceptually developed in order to address how a student's motivation and engagement can be potentially increased through culturally responsive literacy practices. Grounded in theoretical frameworks including culturally centered pedagogies, funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-determination theory, this conceptual research study aims to show a positive correlation between these theories and an increase in reading engagement.

Theories within the Framework

Several major theories and lenses have supported the development of this research and worked together to address the research questions. The main theoretical framework that best guides this research is the Cultural Lenses because culturally responsive pedagogy that addresses culturally responsive teaching is addressed within this lens. Additionally, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, as well as multicultural education all speak to the research question and fall under the Cultural

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Lenses. Furthermore, the key qualities of motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy that are addressed in the Affective Lens are fundamental concepts that contribute to a significant part of this study. Within the Affective Lens theories, The self-determination theory, self-efficacy, student motivation, and student engagement collaborate together to answer the research question. The four approaches that most support this research and that were heavily focused on in the literature review include *culturally responsive pedagogy, students' funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-determination theory*.

Reading engagement and motivation are crucial for reading development; however, educators often face challenges when students are not engaged, preventing them from getting the most out of their reading experiences. Culturally Responsive Teaching with the incorporation of Self-Efficacy, Self-Determination Theory, and Funds of Knowledge all work together to increase student reading engagement. (Figure 1) shows the integration of the four pedagogies with an increase in reading engagement being the center focus.

Figure 1

Mind Map of Theory Integration with Culturally Responsive Literacy Practices to Increase Reading Engagement
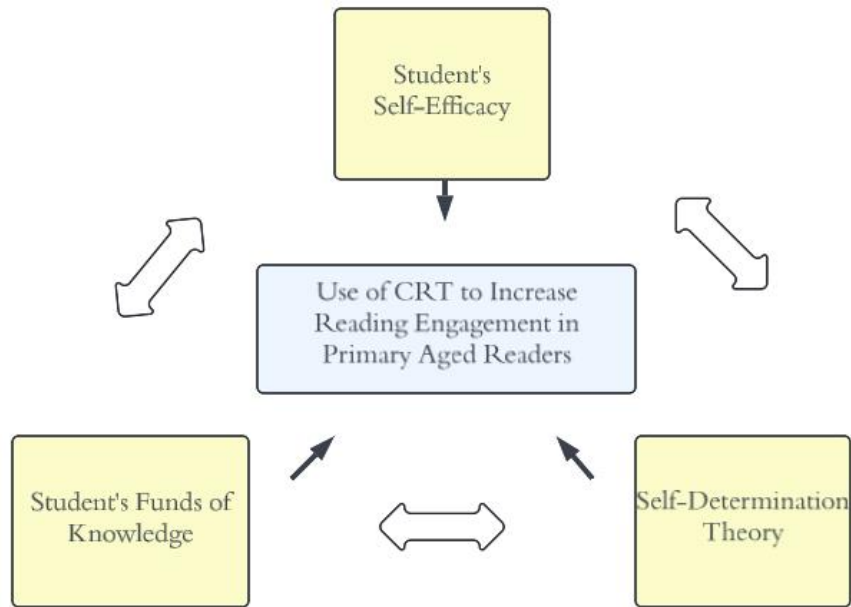
Culturally Centered Pedagogies

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Educators strive to meet the needs of all their students. They do so by getting to know their students and identifying their academic needs. Specifically, a culturally responsive teacher develops an understanding of their student's cultural background and appreciates what their cultural context can bring to classroom instruction (Gay, 2010). Gay (2010) describes culturally responsive teaching as being validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is validating because it views cultural differences as assets, and creates a culturally caring environment where individuals with different backgrounds are valued. This teaching concept uses knowledge of the students culture to guide instruction,

curriculum development, and classroom climate (Gay, 2010). CRT is also comprehensive

because it guides the teacher to look at the whole child in the context of their knowledge,

skills, values, and attitudes while accommodating to the student's identity and honoring

their cultural identity (Gay, 2010). "Multidimensional culturally responsive teaching

encompasses curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher

relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance

assessments" (Gay, 2010, p.33). CRT incorporates many classroom environment features,

teaching methods, and ways of student evaluation. Students are being held accountable in

this process and allows them to be more successful learners and better human beings,

therefore making CRT empowering (Gay, 2010). CRT works towards changing how

teachers deliver education and how students receive their education. Transforming

teaching practices in order to enhance educational equity, promote systemic change, and

encourage inclusivity and respect are a few of the ways that make CRT transformative

(Gay, 2010). To conclude, CRT supports student engagement because the learning

experience connects to the student's cultural context, and allows for education to be more

relevant and meaningful. Gay's (2010) description of culturally responsive teaching

supports the discussion of the significance of professional development, individual's

strengths and weaknesses, and learner autonomy.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Dejango Paris coined the concept of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)

(2012) after building off of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings,

1995a) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2002). Paris developed CSP,

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"A way of both naming and conceptualizing the need to meaningfully value and maintain the practices of their students in the process of extending their students' repertoires of practice to include dominant language, literacies, and other cultural practices" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). CSP is an educational framework developed to support, sustain, and maintain the cultural identities and practices of students from diverse backgrounds. CSP strives to affirm and sustain these practices as valuable, instead of treating students' cultural practices as deficits to be overcome and adapt to dominant norms (Paris, 2012). Paris (2012) describes culturally sustaining pedagogy as, "The term *culturally sustaining* requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, then, has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers" (p. 95). Paris argues that marginalized students can be forced to assimilate to dominate cultural norms, therefore undermining their own cultural identity (2012).

While Self-determination theory (SDT) will be further explained later on in this chapter, it is important to recognize at this point that there are contrasting perspectives on how the theory can impact non-dominant students, and what pedagogy centers them most. Ryan and Delci (2000) speak to the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in relation to motivation and engagement, but do not directly address non-dominant students. CSP aims to support non-dominant students by integrating their cultural practices into their learning, and sustaining that integration (Paris, 2012). Paris

and Alim (2014) address how Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy supports non-dominant students including how it addresses the students' needs. This is something that SDT falls short on and does not address in relation to non-dominant students.

Funds of Knowledge

Increasing student engagement involves several factors, including teachers building connections with their students. Teachers can create strong relationships with their students by understanding their cultural backgrounds and valuing what the student can bring to the classroom. This idea is grounded in the concepts of funds of knowledge (FoK). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, (1992), developed and used the term 'funds of knowledge' to refer to those 'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being' (p. 133). As previously mentioned in the literature review, FoK was created in order to address the idea of deficit views within the education system and society, particularly directed at students from low income households. The main reason for the funds of knowledge approach is that, "Classroom learning can be greatly enhanced when teachers learn more about their students and their students' households" (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997, p. 90). Once educators learn more about their students through home visits involving the teacher assuming the role as the learner (Moll et al., 1992), they can be equipped to design instruction which will include the student's cultural expectations and experiences. This can show the student that the teacher is building trust and respect by also building content and instruction around their interests and backgrounds. By understanding that each student has a unique set of out-of-school funds of knowledge (Johnson, E. J., &

Johnson, A. B., 2016), the teacher can work towards providing individualized support

and guidance that assists the student in achieving academic success. Research tools

within Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González's study, (1992) are, "What helps redefine the

homes of the students as rich in funds of knowledge that represent important resources

for educational change" (p. 139). Teachers utilizing the FoK approach will also

understand that the classroom climate, instruction, and implementation of instructional

strategies can be enriched when they incorporate a student's cultural knowledge from

their home, families, and communities. Gonzalez and Moll (2002) state that the funds of

knowledge approach represents, "Communities in terms of the resources, the wherewithal

they do possess, and a way to harness these resources for classroom teaching" (p. 625).

This would make learning more meaningful and relevant for the student, therefore

allowing for increased student reading engagement. The components and benefits of the

funds of knowledge approach described above will support the discussion of the

significance of professional development, individual's strengths and weaknesses, and

learner autonomy further in this chapter.

Self-Efficacy

Students need to believe in themselves in order for them to succeed. While there

are several factors that contribute to reading engagement and success, reading

engagement may not occur without the student believing in their own ability and

capability to read. It is well known that students can believe in themselves with the help

from their teacher. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy relates to a person's

personal beliefs which determine how well they can succeed in a task that they plan to

do. Bandura (1997) believed that a person's effort, persistence, and choice of activity are

affected by their self-efficacy. If a student has a higher self-efficacy, they are more likely to participate in reading. One of many responsibilities that educators are tasked with is helping their students acquire high self-efficacy. Teachers mold and shape their students' own beliefs by providing feedback and guidance, leading to opportunities for success. Effective teachers provide meaningful learning experiences that relate to the students, and scaffold instruction tailoring to their academic needs. If a teacher is confident in their abilities to teach all students, including culturally diverse students, his or her confidence can then be transferred to their students (Hawk, K., Cowley, E. T., & Hill, J., 2002).

Addressing an educator's own self-efficacy can be incredibly significant to student engagement and success. A teacher's self-efficacy is a critical component within professional development. Teacher self-efficacy influences their behavior with students as well as their instruction. As previously stated in the literature review, Bray-Clark and Bates (2003) discuss the level of teacher competence and how that relates to student outcome. "We believe that self-efficacy, when used as a pivot point in the design of in-service training and professional development activities, can provide a sound theoretical framework for understanding the why's and how's of teacher development. It also points to the potential value of a set of practical tools—including feedback, various instructional design elements, and integrated support systems—that can be used to foster positive efficacy beliefs, improve teacher competence, and enhance student outcomes." (Bray-Clark, & Bates, 2003, p. 20)

Students can be encouraged to believe in themselves, and this can be done with the support of their teacher who provides the right self-efficacy tools, allowing the student to feel a sense of empowerment with their learning and progress. As mentioned in

the previous chapter, Margolis and McCabe (2006) highlight the magnitude of a struggling learner's self-efficacy and provide strategies on how to bolster their learner autonomy. "By explicitly explaining and showing how new work resembles recent work on which struggling learners succeeded, teachers can help learners believe they will again succeed" (Margolis, H., & McCabe, P. P., 2006, p. 223). The components and benefits of the self-efficacy described above will support the further discussion of the significance of professional development, individual's strengths and weaknesses, and learner autonomy further in this chapter.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory that recognizes the significance of human motivation, and how three basic human needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) affect an individual's motivation and personality (Ryan and Delci, 2000). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are defined for clarity, which strengthens the discussion within this chapter, and is supported by Delci and Ryan's seminal and empirical work. Autonomy means to act with a sense of choice, and students are able to take ownership of their learning when choices are based on their interests (Delci and Ryan, 2008). Competence refers to the need to gain mastery in one's interactions. "The need for competence is best satisfied within well-structured environments that afford optimal challenges, positive feedback, and opportunities for growth" (Ryan and Delci, 2020, p. 1). Finally, relatedness is the need to feel connectedness with others (Ryan and Delci, 2000). One's well being and motivation are affected and impacted by all three psychological needs (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2020).

Student engagement, better performance, and the student's overall well-being will be positively impacted when these three needs are able to be satisfied (Ryan and Deci, 2020). A student's intrinsic motivation to read and possible increase of student engagement can be achieved when all three psychological needs listed above are fulfilled. A "create an optimally motivating classroom climate" can be created when teachers reinforce their students' basic psychological needs along with intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, as cited in, De Naeghel et al., 2014, p. 1560). There is research supporting the notion that teachers who have training on assisting their students with intrinsic motivation and autonomy led to their students being more autonomously motivated to leisurely read (De Naeghel et al., 2016, as cited in, Svrcek and Heidt, 2022). "Providing opportunities and support for autonomous motivation in academic and leisure reading at both the elementary and secondary levels leads to better reading outcomes and intrinsically motivating reading opportunities (De Naeghel et al., 2012; De Naeghel et al., 2014), which promotes lifelong reading" (Svrcek and Heidt, 2022, p. 318). Natalie Svrcek and Marium Heidt's (2022) academic work on the use of self-determination theory to recognize readers, supports learner autonomy and recognizing individual strengths, which are further discussed in this chapter.

Connections between Frameworks and Literacy Practices

The four frameworks outlined above share the prominence of reading engagement. Common themes among culturally responsive teaching, funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-determination theory include *the significance of professional development / pre-service teacher programs, individual (student) strengths*

and backgrounds, and (student) learner autonomy. When these aspects are effectively addressed, a more motivating, productive, and inclusive learning environment is established. The conceptual framework entails how the four pedagogies above share the common themes listed, and explains how they all connect to reading engagement.

In order for pre-service teachers to be successful, there needs to be effective college level training programs which provide ample knowledge and opportunities for strong teaching. Results from Cantrell's et al. (2022) study on professional development indicate that the teachers who participated had higher levels of implementation of culturally responsive practices than those who did not. The students of the teachers who participated had greater achievement than those who did not. "Teachers made connections between students' literacy learning and classroom relationships, family collaboration, instruction, discourse, and critical consciousness…Relationships with students and families resulted in perceived academic impacts on students' literacy" (Cantrell et al., 2022, pgs. 250, 251). Teachers can be motivated to change their instructional strategies based on the student's funds of knowledge. E. Johnson and A. Jonson's (2016) study on students designing and implementing instructional lessons based on their interest has notable implications for language-minority students. "As successful applications of this approach proliferate within teacher preparation programs and professional development contexts, educators will become more aware of the accessibility of personalized learning techniques and the value of integrating their students into lesson development and implementation to promote meaningful instruction" (E. and A. Johnson, 2016, p. 117). The purpose of Cantrell's et al. (2022) approach in the professional development study was to support a teacher's self-efficacy, and the results

suggested a positive relationship with student learning and the teacher's implementation of Culturally Responsive Practices. "Teachers were able to see how their behaviors were impacting students, and this deepened their enactment of their learning" (Cantrell et al., 2022, p. 254). Self-determination Theory supports the notion that an adaptive learning environment is necessary in order for a students' competency, autonomy, and relatedness needs to be met. "Instructional behavior to support students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness involve important clues to take into account in teachers' pre-service and in-service professional development as well as in curriculum reform and so entail implications for educational policy and practice" (De Naeghel et al., 2014, p. 1560).

Additionally, the four pedagogies all account for the student's own strengths and the significance of their background in relation to increased engagement. Walker and Hutchinson's (2021) study about how CRT positively influences literacy achievement among Black male students speaks on how incorporating a student's background experience supports achievement and engagement. "We believe that the consideration and use of the backgrounds of 17 Black male students in this study in selecting relevant instructional materials and strategies resulted in positive academic achievement (Walker & Hutchison, 2021, p. 427). Respectively, recognition of an individual's strength and their background derive from their funds of knowledge. Moll's et al. (1992) collaborative work of education and anthropology involve teachers learning how to innovate teaching practices that utilize the knowledge and skills found within students' families and homes. Carlos, a Mexican-American student whose teacher came to observe his household, shared with his teacher what he enjoys doing outside of school and all that he knows

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about his home city, Magdalena. The teachers in this study learned the importance of understanding a student's funds of knowledge and what that brings to the classroom instruction and climate. "These children have had the background experiences to explore in-depth issues that tie in with a sixth-grade curriculum, such as the study of other countries, different forms of government, ecosystems, and so on" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 137). Margolis and McCabe's (2006) work on improving a student's self-efficacy and motivation discusses how an individual's strength and previous success can positively influence their confidence. "By explicitly explaining and showing how new work resembles recent work on which struggling learners succeeded, teachers can help learners believe they will again succeed…To bolster their confidence, teachers can ask them how they can apply previously learned strategies to the new work" (Margolis, H., & Mccabe, P. P., 2006, p.223). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is aligned with supporting an individual's interests, acknowledging their strengths and background, as well as their intrinsic motivators. Ryan and Delci's (2020) work on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through the self-determination theory perspective outlines SDT research that explains how positive academic outcomes can be predicted through intrinsic motivation and autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation. SDT research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in classrooms suggest the need for autonomy support (Ryan and Delci, 2020). "Teachers who support students' autonomy begin by attempting to understand, acknowledge, and where possible, be responsive to students' perspectives. They also try to provide opportunities for students to take ownership and initiative of their schoolwork, providing them with meaningful choices and tasks that can engage their interests" (Ryan and Delci, 2020, p. 6).

Finally, the four frameworks outlined above highlight the importance of student engagement through individual empowerment and learner autonomy. Learner autonomy focuses on the premise that students can be in control of their learning, and focuses on how they learn (Benson, 2016). It is imperative that teachers create a learning environment conducive for autonomous learning. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is designed to value a student's cultural identity, which is also empowering them, therefore leading to increased student engagement. CRT acknowledges and supports a student's unique background and experiences, and is able to strengthen the learning process and promote academic achievement with the use of these valuable insights (Gay, 2018). "These approaches to teaching are based on the assumption that positive self-concepts, knowledge of and pride in one's own ethnic identity, and improved academic achievement are interactional" (Gay, 2010, p. 18). Funds of Knowledge (FoK) approach can positively influence student engagement because it empowers students through the validation and incorporation of their family and home knowledge into instructional content, creating an autonomous learning environment. As established through their research, the results of E. Johnson and A. Johnson's (2016) academic intervention with personalized learning demonstrated an increase in student participation and held a positive effect on student engagement for ELL participants and classmates. "By empowering ELL students as classroom leaders and honoring the wealth of cultural capital they bring to school every day, teachers can counter the hegemony of academic and linguistic standardization that continues to marginalize culturally diverse students and communities in U.S. schools" (E. Johnson & A. Johnson, 2016, p. 117). Self-Efficacy encourages a sense of student empowerment as students are encouraged to

believe in their own abilities to help them succeed. As previously discussed, Margolis and McCabe (2006) suggest practical strategies and solutions to support a struggling student's self-efficacy and to improve their motivation. "By knowing what strategy to use and exactly what to do, struggling learners are apt to develop optimism— increased self-efficacy—about their ability to succeed on tasks for which the strategy was designed (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997)" (as cited in Margolis and McCabe, 2006, p. 222). Lastly, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) draws upon the importance of autonomy. Students should be motivated by their own individual goals, and be able to feel in control of their learning. "Autonomy supportive classrooms are those in which students see their perspectives valued, have opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings, and are encouraged to make choices and exercise self-initiative in learning activities" (McCombs, 2015, Recommendations section, para. 1).

A Conceptual Framework

Access to resources that reflect the diverse population has been lacking (Zhou, 2003). The socioeconomic and culturally diverse student population has grown increasingly so over time. Curriculum and access to literacy resources have not kept up with this demographic change. All students, and especially those who are of color, may benefit from access to literacy resources that are culturally responsive. Culturally responsive literacy resources are approaches and materials that are developed in order to recognize and incorporate the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of learners into literacy instruction (Gay, 2013). Muenz (2019-2020) explains, "Research illustrates that instructional materials, assignments, and texts that reflect students' backgrounds and

experiences are critical to engagement and deep meaningful learning" (p, 10-11). These resources strive to engage students by allowing them to credit their own identities, perspectives, and experiences, essentially creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Gay, 2002). The use of all these resources, along with family collaboration and professional development, are ways to foster a more inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and empowered, thus potentially increasing student reading engagement.

The research question that is being investigated in this conceptual study is: *How can culturally responsive literacy practices increase motivation and engagement for primary aged readers?* The sub questions are as follows: *How can a student's FoK be used to foster and evoke a response to literature, and How can culturally responsive literature support a student's self-efficacy?* The answers to these questions will be further developed below.

Literacy practices such as the traditional reading log serve little purpose when trying to monitor student reading engagement and progress of their reading abilities. Reading logs are conducted as a way of tracking the amount of independent reading that takes place at home. While some may think that the reading log promotes accountability and responsibility, the act of jotting down how many minutes read each night can rob the student's joy for reading. This traditional approach has limited effectiveness because it fails to capture the student's engagement with the text. Based on the log alone, the teacher is unable to understand the student's feelings towards the text or the development of their curiosity as they read.

In the researcher's classroom, it was observed in the 2022-2023 school year that there were missed opportunities that the traditional home reading log could provide. Not only did students exhibit anxiety, frustration, or anger with reading logs, but the implementation of the reading logs lacked the opportunity for students to learn from one another with a curriculum and instruction that is shaped by the students' culture. If the culturally literacy practices previously mentioned were utilized alongside the implementation of the traditional reading log, student's reading engagement may increase. Studying how culturally responsive literacy practices, along with other pedagogical approaches, with culturally responsive texts can increase student reading motivation and engagement is the purpose of this research. This phenomenon is addressed through this conceptual study by analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating data from the literature review, along with other relative literature that is presented in this chapter. This research will address the knowledge gap of reading engagement.

Culturally responsive teaching is an approach to teaching that makes meaningful connections between school and the students' cultural experiences, languages, and life outside of school (cite). In order to implement this approach, it is imperative to understand the students being taught. Taking the time to understand how students live, how they learn, and what matters to them is critical. Once this information is established, using it to drive instruction can potentially increase learning engagement.

Reading engagement is influenced by various educational theories and practices that emphasize the importance of cultural context, personal belief in capabilities, the use of existing knowledge, and intrinsic motivation. The findings in several empirical and seminal studies carefully analyzed for this research are utilized to help prove the

researcher's position and stance on those beliefs. Below is an outline of how culturally responsive teaching, self-efficacy, funds of knowledge, and self-determination theory relate to reading engagement.

The Significance of Cultural Context

It is imperative that a student's cultural background and beliefs are respected in the classroom, as well as utilized effectively to drive instruction. Seminal work from Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2000) both emphasize how crucial it is that a student's culture and ethnic background are incorporated into their learning and the curriculum, while also stressing the importance that students maintain some cultural integrity in the process of succeeding academically. Ladson-Billings (1995) describes an example of a connection made by a teacher and her students in her seminal work *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*, creating a learning opportunity through the combination of their love of poetry and rap music - therefore showing how academic achievement and cultural competence can be intertwined. "Culturally relevant teachers utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161). Gay (2000) explains that Culturally Responsive Teaching, "Acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies, that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum" (p. 29). The approaches to teaching are created with the intention that there are positive self-concepts, understanding and respecting one's own ethnic identity, and improved academic success are merged (Gay, 2000).

A student may be more inclined to show interest and be engaged in the reading process if diverse texts and materials that reflect their cultural background were carefully selected. By creating an inclusive learning environment, students can sense that they belong and are valued, thus motivating them to engage in reading activities. Munez (2019-2020) states, "Research illustrates that instructional materials, assignments, and texts that reflect students' backgrounds and experiences are critical to engagement and deep meaningful learning. A smaller, yet promising group of studies evaluating the effectiveness of CRT interventions link this approach to a wide range of positive outcomes such as academic achievement and persistence, improved attendance, greater interest in school, among other outcomes" (p. 10-11).

The Significance of Personal Belief in Capabilities

If a learner is able to believe in themselves and be confident in their capabilities, they may be more likely to be motivated and engaged in reading. Seminal work from Bandura (1977) and Schunk & Zimmerman (2007) both highlight the significance and outcomes of having a higher self-efficacy, which can lead to greater motivation and determination. Bandura (1977) explains, "Differences between self-efficacy expectations and outcome expectations and their joint impact on behavior" (p. 193). Schunk and Zimmerman's (2007) seminal work *Influencing Children's Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation of Reading and Writing Through Modeling* addresses Bandura's (1977) term of self-efficacy, but in the educational form. They discuss how modeling influences a learner's self-efficacy and self-regulation when they are involved in reading and writing activities (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2007). Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) state, "Compared with students who doubt their learning capabilities, those with high self-

efficacy for acquiring a skill or performing a task participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties, and achieve at higher levels" (p. 8). Teachers can provide students with different types of modeling in order to positively influence self-efficacy and self-regulation while reading. Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) suggest teachers should make certain that students experience progress and success, expose them to successful modeling, and provide helpful feedback in order to build on their self-efficacy.

Culturally responsive literature may play a significant role in supporting a student's self-efficacy. When a student's identity, experiences, and perspectives are shown throughout the reading material, positive outcomes can arise such as increased student engagement. Also, students can establish an enhanced self-identity development through culturally responsive literature. Athanases (1998) states, "When students identified with characters and texts, they reflected on personal concerns, including family nostalgia and loss, adolescent challenges, and culture, gender, and sexual-identity formation. Students identified with and felt strength from literary characters across racial, ethnic, and gender lines. This result reminds us of an important point: Works by an ethnically diverse group of authors can engage equally diverse groups of students and teach across the lines that divide about profound human experiences" (p. 291). When a student is able to see themselves as characters represented in the text they are reading, they are more likely to feel validated and develop a positive self-image.

The Significance of Existing Knowledge

When students are able to incorporate their prior knowledge into the learning process where new learning is taking place, they may likely be more motivated to participate in reading activities and be engaged. The same goes for incorporating cultural knowledge learned from home. Seminal as well as empirical research from various experts in the field contribute to this conclusion. Moll, Amanti, Neff & González's (1992) approach to understanding how the knowledge that students of low-income households bring to the classroom can be used to enhance learning and teaching practices. Moll, Amanti, Neff & González (1992) state, "These historically-accumulated and culturally-developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). A student's learning process can be strengthened when teachers learn about their students' households and their everyday lives (González, 1995). An empirical study from Eric Johnson and Angela Johnson (2016), which examines the level of motivation and engagement among English Language Learners (ELLs) through an academic intervention involving FoK framework and personalized learning, signifies the importance of strong home-school relations. "Our aim here is to build on these perspectives of integrating students' out-of-school funds of knowledge to enhance learning opportunities while additionally demonstrating how to tap into their scholastic funds of knowledge to propel academic progress and deepen their educational investment" (E. Johnson & A. Johnson, 2016, p. 107).

A student's Funds of Knowledge (FoK) may act as a puissant resource when fostering and evoking a response to culturally responsive literature. Students bring a plethora of cultural knowledge and skills to the classroom that stem from family and

community environments. When students are responding to literature in either written or verbal form, personal connections will likely be made. "Implementation of FoK strategies in curriculum gives voice to students and validates their experiences, thereby fostering equitable and democratic classroom practices. This culturally responsive practice has the potential to greatly impact students' engagement with school, foster a positive cultural self-image, and increase access to cultural capital" (Valenzuela, 2002, as cited in Alexander et al., 2014, p. 5). Making use of a students' Funds of Knowledge in relation to culturally responsive literature not only improves their learning experience but also allows for a more inclusive and affirming classroom environment.

The Significance of Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is defined as being the internal, self-directed drive, giving a person enjoyment (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Earlier in this chapter, it was discussed that intrinsic motivation is shaped by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) influences including autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Students may be more likely to participate in reading activities and be intrinsically motivated if they are given autonomy, or the choice, to choose their own book to read. Intrinsic motivation may be positively influenced when a student is competent, and feels confident in their capabilities. Finally, a student's level of intrinsic motivation might be greater when they are able to relate to others through similar book sharing experiences. Also, a student's level of intrinsic motivation can be heavily associated with teacher involvement (De Naeghel et al., 2014). "This suggests that teachers should be encouraged to support their adolescent students' inherent psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and

relatedness during reading activities in order to create an optimally motivating classroom

climate" (Deci & Ryan, 2000 as cited in De Naeghel et al., 2014, p. 1560). (Figure 2)

shows how reading engagement is connected directly to Culturally Responsive Teaching,

Self-Efficacy, Funds of Knowledge, and Self-Determination Theory. Educators can

integrate several practices and concepts grounded in the four pedagogical approaches in

order to maximize reading engagement. Carefully selecting diverse texts and reading

materials, fostering a growth mindset, connecting learning to their students' lives, and

encouraging student autonomy are all strategies that can be utilized to create a more

inclusive and motivating learning environment, thus promoting reading engagement.

These strategies are further developed in the 'Implications for Practice' in Chapter 4.

Figure 2

Connection of How all Relevant Theories Link to Reading Engagement
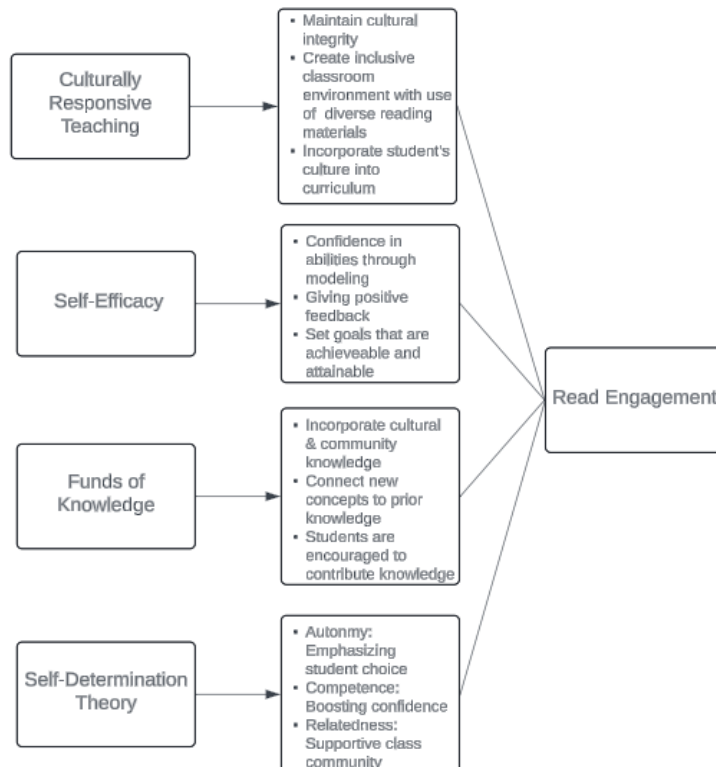
Chapter 4

Conclusion

Summary

This conceptual research study examined how culturally responsive literacy practices can increase reading engagement among primary aged readers. The literature within this research includes both seminal and empirical studies that focus on culturally responsive teaching, funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, self-determination theory, along with other important work that all contribute to the significance of culturally responsive literature in connection to reading engagement. Since finalizing my research, I have determined that reading engagement can be increased with the integration of several different theories. Consequently, it was essential for me to further evaluate these theories to understand their relationship with one another and how they are linked to reading engagement, thereby addressing the questions to my research questions presented in this study. My overarching research question is: *How can culturally responsive literacy practices increase motivation and engagement for primary aged readers?* My sub questions are as follows: *How can a student's FoK be used to foster and evoke a response to literature, and How can culturally responsive literature support a student's self-efficacy?* Connecting a student's family and community knowledge as well as experiences to classroom instruction can support a student's ability to respond to literature, especially when the literature reflects the cultural background of the student. Students can feel more internally motivated to participate in reading when they see themselves in the text and they can connect their own experiences to the characters. Additionally, a student's self-identity can be further enhanced and developed through

culturally responsive literature as their cultural background is represented in the literature.

The conceptual framework developed in chapter 3 entails how the culturally responsive pedagogy, funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-determination theory share intersecting approaches that are synthesized and analyzed. The conceptual framework also explains in detail how they all connect to reading engagement. The conceptual framework addresses the researcher's problem and questions. This conceptual framework that I developed has led me to understand that culturally responsive teaching along with the use of self-determination theory, a student's funds of knowledge, and a student's self-efficacy all uniquely contribute to how reading engagement can be increased. This is shown in chapter 3, specifically in figure 1. Professional development and pre-service teacher programs, an individual's strength and backgrounds, and learner autonomy all prove to be significant to reading engagement, while also connecting to an inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, common themes from these theoretical frameworks emerged as imperative to reading engagement which include the importance of cultural context, personal belief in capabilities, the use of existing knowledge, and finally intrinsic motivation.

Limitations of Study

Initially, this research study was intended to be conducted in a second grade classroom with a sample of 19 students. However, time constraints in the Fall of 2023 halted the qualitative research study. Due to the inability to conduct this research study in the classroom, a conceptual study was further developed. Since the research question and

sub questions were intended for the original study to be in the classroom, sub questions had to be altered in order to operate effectively in this study. The sub question: *How do students respond to books with characters that represent their culture, or different cultures* changed to *How can culturally responsive literature support a student's self-efficacy*? The reason for this change is because I was unable to retrieve student samples of how they respond to books with similar character representation since I was not working with any student population at the time.

Further, when examining self-efficacy in relation to enhancing reading engagement, I chose to mostly focus on a student's self-efficacy rather than teacher self-efficacy. Several empirical studies evaluated teacher self-efficacy, one being Bray-Clark and Bates (2003), which I found to be beneficial and significant to this study, however; I strived to center more on a student's self-efficacy when trying to understand how their reading engagement is effected. By doing so, I was able to learn more about a student's beliefs in their own abilities.

Implications for Teachers and Practice

The research speaks to highlight the importance of culturally responsive literacy practices and what those practices should entail in order to increase student engagement. As outlined in Chapter 1 under the section *Significance of Research,* data from the researcher's school proves that traditional reading logs serve little purpose in trying not only to increase reading engagement, but maintain engagement if there is any at all. The anecdotal evidence of parents and students sharing experiences of reduced reading

engagement with the use of traditional reading logs assist in the argument that traditional reading logs are not useful.

With the conceptual framework in mind, traditional reading logs can be altered for better purposes to increase engagement. Diverse texts can be used to help students of various cultural backgrounds to see themselves represented in the texts. This association can help the reading experience be more relatable for the students allowing for an increase in engagement and motivation. Another benefit of culturally responsive literature is that it provides various content on diverse cultural perspectives and challenges stereotypes of cultures different from the reader. This opportunity can allow students to develop empathy for others.

In an effort to sustain and maintain a student's identity and cultural background, concepts from culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) can certainly be utilized when analyzing reading instruction, curriculum, and an alternate way to document reading being done. It is imperative for educators to recognize that there are a range of readers in their classrooms. It is also important for teachers to value cultural relevance and diversity. By providing students the opportunity to use reading logs that reflect their own cultural background and interests, personal connections and engagement with the text may increase. By promoting agency and voice, students may feel empowered to respond to texts using an alternative reading log approach that is grounded in CSP concepts - including multimedia ideas. A student's reading engagement and motivation may be increased when they are free to use cultural expression in response to the literature. As educators, we have to understand and respect where students are coming from in regards to reading development, how they got here, and how comfortable they feel as a reader. As

we consider the ideas shared above, we have to keep in mind how we are honoring these readers, while also allowing themselves to reflect on their development and appreciate how far they have come in their reading journey.

Implications for Future Research

Future research on the use of culturally responsive literacy practices in an elementary setting would provide fellow educators with more understanding in this area. Findings from empirical studies that teachers conduct themselves would be useful to the education field. In addition, qualitative research on a student's self-efficacy and how it relates to their funds of knowledge while evaluating their engagement level would be beneficial to understand. Finally, educators should analyze data on levels of student engagement when culturally responsive teaching is put in place.

Conclusion

As an educator, I strive to help all my students be fully engaged in the reading process and in their learning. The experiences I have gathered from the use of the traditional reading logs in primary grades over the past ten years has opened my eyes to the missed opportunities I could have brought upon my students a long time ago. After hearing the disdain of traditional reading logs and the little purpose they serve to students such as Stephanie, Henry, Megan, and Mia, I realized that it was time to investigate how different approaches to reading and learning can help increase reading engagement.

Geneva Gay coined the term *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, and explains that in order to make learning more relevant, effective, relatable, and engaging for ethnically

diverse students, teaching needs to include cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and relatable content for those learners (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive teachers understand the risk and need for student success (Gay, 2010). Gay (2010) states, "This is done by bolstering students' morale, providing resources and personal assistance, developing an ethos of achievement, and celebrating individual and collective accomplishments" (p. 34-35). Her work, along with the work of many others, has helped me learn the significance of what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher. In conclusion, this research study has shaped my teaching philosophy and teaching practices. This work has allowed me to understand the depth of knowledge that students from diverse backgrounds bring to the classroom and how to incorporate their cultural knowledge into classroom instruction in hopes to further their reading engagement. Teachers are rewarded with the rich responsibility to positively impact a student's reading motivation and engagement. By incorporating culturally responsive literacy practices, teachers can empower their students, make learning relevant, and create a sense of belonging for learners. It is important to recognize that when students are motivated to read and be fully engaged in the process, they benefit across many areas, opening the door to academic success, personal growth, and enjoyment for reading. Teachers are rewarded with the rich responsibility to positively impact a student's reading motivation and engagement. By incorporating culturally responsive literacy practices, teachers can empower their students, make learning relevant, and create a sense of belonging for learners.

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