

STUDENT READING PRACTICE: A CHOICE FOR TEACHERS, A CHANCE FOR
STUDENTS, A HOLISTIC MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

Due to increased demand for reading achievement nationwide, middle school English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers need instructional practices to promote literacy. Student reading practice (SRP) is supported by research as such an instructional reading practice. The purpose of this holistic multiple case study was to explain how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy at four middle schools in Virginia in light of heightened demands for reading achievement. The theories framing this study were socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998). The design was a qualitative, holistic multiple case study of six middle school ELA teachers' choice to use student reading practice to promote student literacy. ELA teacher participants taught one of the middle school grades, six through eight, and the student participants were associated and grouped with their ELA teacher. Data collection comprised of teacher interviews, classroom observations, and student focus groups. Data were analyzed through direct interpretation of individual cases embedded within each data type and then across cases using Stake's (2006) multiple case study analysis methods in order to develop naturalistic generalizations about the phenomenon. Credibility was created via triangulation of data collection, expert review of data analysis, member checks, and an audit trail. The research concluded that middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because it promotes the enjoyment of reading and helps students prioritize it. SRP should be implemented in a manner that encourages lifelong reading, and the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have a significant impact on teachers' use of SRP.

Keywords: sustained silent reading, free voluntary reading, independent reading, literacy, middle school reading fluency, silent reading, teaching reading

Dedication

“The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity. And that means finding books that they enjoy, giving them access to those books, and letting them read them.” –Neil Gaiman

To all the students who deserve to be *so* literate that they embrace reading for the rest of their lives, this dissertation is intended for you. May you read well and become truly literate citizens of the world!

“Resolve to edge in a little reading every day, if it is but a single sentence.” –Horace Mann

To all the secondary ELA teachers out there who have already recognized the promise of student reading practice and to those who are still reluctant to make it part of their reading instruction—I hope you find this research meaningful and that it allows you to promote literacy for all of your students.

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” –Dr. Seuss

To my beloved sons: Tucker, Tatem, and Tegan—I hope that when you learn to read you will realize that literacy unlocks your potential for success. I pray that you will find yourself in future classrooms where your love for reading and learning is nurtured. I also hope that the determination and resiliency I have displayed while conducting this research will always encourage you to never give up on your dreams.

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List of Abbreviations

Accelerated Reader (AR)

Daily Recreational Reading (DRR)

Daily Independent Reading Time (DIRT)

Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)

English Foreign Language Learners (EFL)

English as a Second Language Learners (ESL) or (ELL)

English/Language Arts (ELA)

Extensive Reading (ER)

FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test)

Free Voluntary Reading (FVR)

High Intensity Practice (HIP)

Independent Reading (IR)

Independent Silent Reading (ISR)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Motivation in Middle School (MIMS)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

National Reading Panel (NRP)

Schoolwide Enrichment Model—Reading Framework (SEM-R)

Student Reading Practice (SRP-operational)

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)

United States (US)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Literacy is a vital skill to master not just for success in school, but also for success as a contributing member of society. In this era of high stakes testing in which the United States federal government prioritizes making measurable gains in student reading comprehension, little progress has been demonstrated. In fact, mean reading scores for eighth graders in 2015 were equivalent to those reported in 2011 (National Assessment for Educational Progress, 2015). According to this report, eighth graders achieved a mean score of 265 (out of 500 points) in 2011, 268 in 2013, and a decline and return to 265 in 2015. All of these scores are below what the report describes as a *proficient* reading level, which requires a mean score of 280. What these statistics suggest is a need for improved reading instruction that features the use of practices intended to promote students' literacy and in turn, create lifelong readers. The reality is, however, that many ELA teachers are struggling to balance reading instruction with heightened standards-based curriculum as well as achievement demands. As pressures mount to meet these demands, instruction becomes more focused on skills and sometimes forces teachers to eliminate authentic reading practices like silent reading practice (SRP) or sustained silent reading (SSR) that promote lifelong reading for students (DeBenedictus & Fisher, 2007; Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998). Teachers are then left with a choice: to focus solely on skills and drill-based or direct instruction like those featured in commercial programs or to incorporate an opportunity for students to practice the skill of reading through the use of SRP (DeBenedictus & Fisher, 2007; Yatvin, Weaver, & Garan, 2003).

In this chapter I have provided the background of SRP as well as explained this study's situation to myself and my philosophical assumptions. I have provided a rationale for this study,

in addition articulating the problem, purpose, and significance of this research. This chapter concludes with the research questions and relevant definitions.

Background

The use of student reading practice as an instructional practice originated in the 1960s as a means to incite students' engagement in literature, improve comprehension, and generally improve literacy (National Reading Panel, 2014). The movement is succinctly summed up in these words: "A reader is not merely a person who *can* read, but a person who *does* read" (Sadoski, 1980b, p. 155). Hunt (1996) constructed the concept of Uninterrupted Silent Sustained Reading (USSR) in an effort to mitigate the frustrations felt by struggling readers whose teachers counted their many mistakes while reading out loud. Engaging in SSR allowed students to read in a format that tolerated their mistakes and lessened their frustrations in order to allow them to develop into better readers. This practice allowed students to feel powerful, confident, and more satisfied as readers. Even the acronym USSR was intended to associate power with the practice, but was later changed to SSR because of its negative sociopolitical connotation.

McCracken (1971) supported Hunt's (1996) philosophies and asserted "Our students are over-taught and under-practiced" (p. 583) when it comes to reading and dictated six rules for the implementation of SSR:

- (a) each student must read silently, (b) the teacher reads, (c) each student selects a single book, (d) a timer is used, (e) there are absolutely no reports or records of any kind (f) begin with whole classes or larger groups of students. (McCracken, 1971, p. 522)

He specified that in order for SSR to truly work, "students have to be responding to content in meaningful ways" (McCracken, 1971, p. 524). Such performances with reading would be defined by other theorists and researchers as internalization (Vygotsky, 1978), satisfaction

(Glasser, 1988), and engagement (Enriquez, 2011): constructs contributing to students' literacy.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, various formats of SRP have become widely documented in teacher preparation texts and are utilized and adapted by educators nationwide. During the 1990s, SRP became commercially endorsed and incentivized through companies like Pizza Hut via its *Book It* program (National Reading Panel, 2014). Since then, SRP has evolved to contain student accountability practices and school district involvement through paid instructional programs like Accelerated Reader. Programs like these give teachers the option to incentivize, individualize (based upon a student's reading level or reading "zone") and grade students' reading practice (Horne, 2014).

Student reading practice is operationally defined as class time devoted to students independently reading self-selected texts. SRP encompasses any variation of reading instruction that gives students the opportunity to practice reading during class. SRP includes practices such as uninterrupted silent sustained reading (USSR) (Hunt, 1996), sustained silent reading (SSR) (McCracken, 1971; Pilgreen, 2000), high intensity practice (HIP) (Oliver, 2001), drop everything and read (DEAR) (National Reading Panel, 2014), free voluntary reading (FVR) (Krashen, 2004; Krashen, 2008), daily recreational reading (DRR) (Daniels & Steres, 2011), or reading breaks (Petre, 1971). Independent silent reading (ISR) (Cuevas, Russell, & Irving, 2012) or recreational book reading (Merga, 2015) are forms of student reading practice in which teachers allow students to read self-selected texts (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Krashen, 2004; Merga, 2015; Merga & Moon 2016; Pilgreen, 2000) silently/independently for a period of 15-20 minutes per day (National Reading Panel, 2014; Pilgreen, 2000; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, Walpole, 1999). The general teaching philosophy and assumption behind student reading practice is that it gives students a chance to construct a love for reading and, in turn, promote their overall literacy.

Becoming literate is a construct that extends beyond formal schooling and is necessary for success throughout life and in order to make positive contributions to society (Glasser, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Students who reject the practice of reading will not only struggle in school, “they will have a very difficult time reading and writing at a level high enough to deal with the demands of today’s world” (Krashen, 2004, p. x). However, the mere act of providing students with reading instruction does not guarantee that they will become lifelong readers (Perez, 1986). Reading instruction must provide students with the opportunity to practice the skill of reading by actually reading. On the other hand, “classroom procedures that do not allow for students to read for their own purposes in materials of their own choosing ignore these important life-time reading skills” (Reed, 1978, p. 9).

Secondary English language arts (ELA) teachers can be viewed as influential social agents, tasked with infusing students with a desire to be literate (Merga, 2015; Nagy, Campenni, Estelle, & Shaw, 2000). A student reading practice like recreational book reading is positively associated with improving literacy levels when teachers allow students to self-select their own texts and read for pleasure. In-class practices like SRP that emphasize reading for pleasure as opposed to reading for testing allow students to view secondary ELA teachers more favorably and allow them to find encouragement in their own abilities to read (Merga, 2015). These positive associations with reading breed student satisfaction in the classroom leading to more positive desires to learn and pursue lifelong literacy (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Glasser, 1988).

As secondary ELA teachers begin to feel more constrained by high-stakes testing and demanding curriculum, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to prioritize SRP as a part of their daily reading instruction (Merga, 2015; Nagy et al., 2000; Pilgreen, 2000). As many of these teachers begin to focus increasingly on testing, “a disconnect develop[s] between the

theoretical characterization of reading and the situated application of classroom reading practices” (Sanden, 2014, p. 173). At this point, researchers and theorists alike are certain that in order for students to internalize reading and embrace literacy, their social and developmental needs must be taken into account by the teacher (Enriquez, 2011; Glasser, 1988; Glasser, 1998; Prior et al., 2011; Samuels & Wu, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978); the implementation of SRP is no different: teachers must be purposeful in their use of this practice (Sanden, 2014).

What’s clear is that “public education in the U.S. is in dire need of research-based methods that can address issues of literacy and reading comprehension in adolescents and young adults in secondary schools” (Cuevas et al., 2012, p. 463). Given the demands imposed by high-stakes, accountability-based instruction, middle school ELA teachers must do all they can to help students internalize reading and become literate. According to Prior et al. (2011), “Silent reading activities are thus important for the internalization process and should be used in the classroom” (p. 191). There is a consensus that forms of SRP create better, more literate readers (National Reading Panel, 2014) yet it remains unclear exactly how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use student reading practice to promote students’ literacy.

There is an urgent need to better understand not just the conditions (i.e., duration and habitual usage, student accountability when the practice is in use, considerations of students’ developmental and social needs, and the teacher’s philosophy of reading and literacy) but also the context (how and why) in which teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy. Researchers assert that reading practices like free voluntary reading (FVR) are means to stimulate literacy in students (Krashen, 2008; Siah & Kwok, 2010). There is agreement that SRP is a valued and effective instructional practice to develop literacy (National Reading Panel, 2014), and therefore, how and why teachers choose to use it in their classrooms warrants further

investigation. Explanations gleaned from this study addressing how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy provided valuable information to current practitioners, researchers, and educational stakeholders regarding the context for how to best use student reading practice in the middle school classroom. In an era of extreme accountability, the intended research provided evidence explaining how and why teachers choose to use this practice to better maximize and streamline reading instruction, which could bolster students' literacy nationwide and create a larger community of literate readers.

Current research, however, finds SRP and its variations to be much more than daily silent reading time and teacher modeling (Bryan, Fawson, & Reutzel, 2003; Sanden, 2012; Sanden, 2014) and that schools and teachers play a vital role in encouraging students to read “past the point of skill acquisition” (Merga, 2015; Merga & Moon, 2016, p. 123). Understanding teachers' approaches in using SRP could allow the practice to be used in more effective ways and even in place of traditional instructional approaches in the middle school classroom. Devoting additional time to independent reading (IR) and holding teacher-student conferences about reading can actually replace more traditional small and whole group reading instruction (Sanden, 2012) and lead to increased reading fluency and comprehension for middle school students (Little, McCoach, & Ries, 2014). Furthermore, fourth through 10th grade students ($N = 16,143$) that received a treatment of a silent reading instructional program made greater gains on state reading assessments than those not receiving the treatment (Rasinski, Samuels, Hiebert, Petscher, & Feller, 2011).

Sometimes, the mere exposure to print on a routine basis will not just improve students' competencies in reading but also lead to improved standardized test scores (Krashen, 2004). Devoting time to daily recreational reading increases students' engagement in reading, and in

turn, their literacy (Daniels & Steres, 2011). Middle school students, specifically those in seventh grade ($n = 25$), demonstrated higher levels of textual comprehension when reading silently as opposed to orally and therefore, “silent reading activities are important for the internalization process and should be used in the classroom” (Prior et al., 2011, p. 191). Silent reading can even take the form of an interventional practice used to assist struggling readers with their comprehension and literacy (Harmon, Hedrick, Wood, & Vintinner, 2011; Siah & Kwok, 2010). Overall, SRP is a component of reading instruction that has profound merit and implications for students’ achievement inside and outside of the middle school ELA classroom. Silent reading provides students an opportunity to embrace the benefits of literacy (Merga, 2013). It is vital that all educational stakeholders, especially ELA teachers, aim to create a more *literate citizenry* (Vygotsky, 1978) as well as understand the context for how and why they choose to use SRP in their classrooms.

Situation to Self

As a practitioner and researcher, I was interested in conducting this study to better understand the instructional use of SRP and how middle school ELA teachers, including myself, could best use it to serve students’ literacy needs. Time is short and content is enormous in today’s classroom; there is an urgent need for an instructional practice that will help all students develop literacy for their academic success and maintain a lifelong relationship with reading.

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions I held that influenced this study were ontological and methodological. My ontological approach was based upon my assumption that there are multiple realities related to the phenomenon of teachers’ use of SRP. Thus, I chose a design that accounted for the various perspectives related to the studied phenomenon. I sought to

understand the nature of teachers' use of student reading practice through the perspectives of many different participants, which I then reported in terms of common themes. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) described these themes as a "pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (p. 4).

Rationale for a Case Study Approach

My approach to this study arose out of the paradigms of case study, in which I, as the researcher and human instrument, was expected to continually revise my lines of inquiry based upon my experiences in the field (Yin, 2014). The paradigm that guided study was constructivism. As is the nature of most qualitative studies is to be interpretive and construct meaning from the data, I generated themes and explanations from the data in this study based upon my interpretations and understandings of the phenomenon. My ontological assumption was that there is not one universal truth, rather constructed realities regarding the phenomenon of teachers' choice to use student reading practice and that I constructed meaning based upon the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Data from this study was presented in the words of the participants in order to more fully reveal their unique experiences (Yin, 2014).

Problem Statement

In 2015, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that eighth graders in the United States scored an average of two points lower on the 500 point reading assessment than they did in 2013, matching the mean score of 265 in 2011. In light of this data, researchers recognized the need to stimulate literacy development of secondary students through components of reading instruction like student reading practice. Many schools choose to use silent reading programs as a means to address students' failure to read (Siah & Kwok, 2010). In a review of the literature, the National Reading Panel (2014) asserted, "There are few ideas more

widely accepted than that reading is learned through reading” (p. 209). Stated another way: “Reading is good for you” (Krashen, 2004, p. 37). When student reading practice is implemented in a student-centered manner, more common literacy pedagogies are not just enriched (Velluto & Barbousas, 2013) but can actually be replaced with silent reading (Little et al., 2014) to stimulate students’ literacy development.

The concept of student-centered implementation and even engagement are prolific phenomena in the literature and research has established that merely using SRP in the classroom will not necessarily support the literacy or lifelong reading of students unless teachers are mindful of students’ social (Glasser, 1988) and developmental needs known as their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Bryan et al., 2003; Reutzel, Petscher, & Spichtig, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural learning theory suggested that students achieve optimal learning when instructional practices like SRP are tailored to their ZPD. In choice theory, Glasser (1998) asserted that all learning is achieved through lifelong education as opposed to schooling (which involved rote memorization of facts and figures) and that all instructional practices should be *educational* in nature.

While there is a vast amount of literature since the 1960s supporting and investigating SRP as a classroom practice, no empirical studies have been published within the last seven years investigating how and why teachers choose to use SRP to support student literacy (Little et al., 2014; Sanden, 2014). There are ELA teachers who choose to implement SRP and create balanced classrooms featuring daily independent reading time to give students the opportunity to practice reading. These teachers have successfully created a unique learning environment in which more traditional reading pedagogies are balanced with time for students to read independently and work toward growth in literacy and a love for reading (Sanden, 2012). It is

important to increase awareness and understanding of these unique cases of teachers so that ELA teachers nation-wide can make informed instructional decisions. Knowledge gleaned from this research better contextualized how and why some middle school ELA teachers were able to balance instruction through their use of SRP in light of standards-based curriculum and assessments. The problem is there are no studies that explain middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote student literacy.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this holistic, multiple case study was to explain why and how middle school (grades six through eight) ELA teachers choose to use student reading practice to help support student literacy at four middle schools within Northern County Schools (pseudonym) in Virginia. Student reading practice was operationally defined as students' silent reading of a self-selected text for a predetermined amount of time within an ELA class setting (National Reading Panel, 2014; Siah & Kwok, 2010; Taylor et al., 1999). Each case in this study was bound by one middle school ELA teacher, six ELA students the teacher selected, and the building administrator. This study was framed by socio-cultural learning theory in which Vygotsky (1978) asserted that in order to internalize a skill like reading, instructional methods must utilize socialization and be situated within students' ZPD. This study was also framed within choice theory in which Glasser (1998) asserted that the purpose of education is to instill within students a desire for lifelong learning.

Significance of the Study

There are no empirical studies exploring the context for middle school ELA teachers' choice to use student reading practice to promote student literacy within the last seven years; this study has the potential to impact educational practitioners and researchers alike. This study

contributed to the body of knowledge regarding how teachers' use SRP, or what some authors call independent reading, as an instructional practice (Daniels & Steres, 2008; Harmon et al., 2011; Krashen, 2008; Little et al., 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Prior et al., 2011; Sanden, 2014). Several authors explored a relevant, yet different angle of this phenomenon: school wide reading culture (Daniels & Steres, 2008), teachers' use of reading programs with struggling readers (Harmon et al., 2011), independent reading that is divergent from the traditional SSR model (Sanden, 2014), differentiated reading instruction featuring silent reading (Little et al., 2014), social influence and high school recreational reading (Merga & Moon, 2016), independent reading (Sanden, 2012; Trudel, 2007), and reading comprehension of first through seventh grade students based upon oral versus silent reading (Prior et al., 2011).

From a theoretical perspective, there are several studies using Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning framework as the act of reading is often described as social, and there is a need for it to be internalized based upon a student's ZPD or based upon a student-centered approach in order for it to be acquired (Enriquez, 2011; Mermelstein, 2014; Prior et al., 2011; Sanden, 2014). The intended research added to this body of knowledge and provided further explanation regarding how middle school ELA teachers implemented SRP based upon socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) in addition to exploring in what ways middle school ELA teachers were already doing this for the betterment of their students' literacy. Furthermore, the literature does not reveal any studies that couple Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory in an attempt to explain middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote student literacy.

Research Questions

The nature of case study was to contextualize the *how* and *why* of a particular phenomenon. Thus, the format of the first two research questions addressed the *how* and *why* of the investigated phenomenon. These research questions were also situated within the framework of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) as a means to address the need to promote literacy for middle school students in the United States.

Therefore, the following research questions were intended to reveal the context within which middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP based upon the assertions contained in the literature and the aforementioned theoretical frameworks.

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

Understanding teachers' motivations and choices to use SRP as an instructional practice (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Merga & Moon, 2016; Velluto & Barbosas, 2013), in light of the high stakes testing era is essential for this study. A more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and the potential instructional recommendations could address lacking gains in middle school students' literacy nation-wide (Reutzel et al., 2012) and better articulate how reading practices like SRP can be used to promote literacy.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

As several researchers noted the need for further studies investigating teachers' use of student reading practice in addition to the instructional conditions which promoted that use (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Harmon et al., 2011; Merga & Moon, 2016; Sanden, 2014; Siah & Kwok, 2010), this question must be addressed in this research in order to reveal the true nature of

the phenomenon. Explanations gleaned from this study better contextualized how middle school ELA teachers are not only choosing to prioritize practices like SRP but also how they assimilate them with other components of reading instruction.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Glasser's (1998) choice theory have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

As this study was framed by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory, this question was designed to directly address the impact of these theories on the investigated phenomenon. Since there do not appear to be any other studies that couple these two theories in an investigation of the same phenomenon, an in-depth understanding of how these theories impact the phenomenon added to the existing body of literature.

Definitions

1. *Daily Recreational Reading (DRR)* - Daily recreational reading is the act of reading, on a daily basis, for a predetermined amount of time, a self-selected text (Daniels & Steres, 2011)
2. *Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)* - Drop everything and read is a predetermined time during the school day in which every member of the school reads a self-selected text (Siah & Kwok, 2010)
3. *Free Voluntary Reading (FVR)* - Free voluntary reading is an instructional reading practice that allows for students to have free access and choice of books to read either on their own time or during class time that is not graded (Krashen, 2008)

4. *High Intensity Practice (HIP)* - High intensity practice is a variation of SSR that allows students to apply the skills they already know to the practice of reading as an alternative to traditional reading instruction (Oliver, 2001)
5. *Student reading practice (SRP)* - Student reading practice is an instructional practice intending to promote students' literacy in which a middle school ELA teacher provides 15-20 minutes of silent reading per class session where students can self-select their own texts (operational definition).
6. *Independent Reading (IR)* - Independent reading is a variation of SSR during which students are not relegated to reading silently but independently in a manner conducive to supporting Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory. This gives students the opportunity to interact with other students and the teacher about what they read. This practice also features guidance of the teacher in selecting texts to read based upon students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This practice is the foundation of a reading workshop model (Sanden, 2012; Stairs & Burgos, 2010; Trudel, 2007).
7. *Independent Silent Reading (ISR)* - Independent silent reading is an instructional practice during which students read a text that has been assigned to them in either a text-based or computer-based format independently and silently (Cuevas et al., 2012).
8. *Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)* - Sustained silent reading is the practice of silently reading a self-selected text with no accountability on the part of the student (Bryan et al., 2003; Siah & Kwok, 2010; McCracken, 1971, Merga & Moon, 2016; National Reading Panel, 2014)

9. *Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)*- Uninterrupted sustained silent reading is the practice of silently reading a self-selected text with no accountability on the part of the student (Hunt, 1996).
10. *Zone of Proximal Development*- the level at which a student achieves optimal learning (Vygotsky, 1978)

Summary

Despite the rigors of standards-based education, student gains in reading are still not progressing as they should. There is an urgent need to explain how and why certain ELA teachers are able to prioritize the practice of reading as part of their instruction in light of increased curricular demands. Using Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory, this study explained how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use student reading practice to promote students' literacy.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explain how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy in light of heightened standards-based learning demands. The following review of the literature examines empirical research related to the use of SRP, explains its components and how it contributes to students' literacy, contextualizes other facets of reading instruction that feature silent reading components, and establishes the necessity of additional research needed to better understand the use of SRP by teachers in middle school classrooms to promote the literacy of students. This literature review is framed by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory as well as Glasser's (1998) choice theory.

Theoretical Framework

The nature of qualitative research is both existential and constructivist (Stake, 1995). Understanding a phenomenon "requires looking at a wide sweep of contexts" (p. 43) including a theoretical context. Theory not only provides the framework for inquiry and methodology but enables the researcher to engage in more meaningful analysis of qualitative data and *change the world* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), "If we don't read the theoretical and philosophical literature we have nothing much to think with during analysis except normalized discourses that seldom explain the way things are" (p. 614). This study aimed to explain why teachers choose to use student reading practice to promote literacy and how they choose to implement SRP as framed by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory.

Socio-cultural Learning Theory

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory is rooted in behaviorism. Like many theorists before him, Vygotsky investigated how children's behavior was related to their learning. He asserted that learning is a change process that is balanced between a human's biological state and his or her cultural development centered upon the child's play. This cultural or social setting creates an *authentic* environment that fosters a child's learning. Success of SRP is predicated upon the authenticity of its implementation, taking into account factors like overall appeal and distributed time to read (Pilgreen, 2000). Reading in the 21st century can be understood as a socio-cultural activity (Conradi, Jang, & McKenna, 2014). More specifically, "while silent reading requires students to construct personal realities from dialogues with the self, it is the expression of these inner dialogues through social interaction, which will collectively transform students' literary abilities" (Velluto & Barbousas, 2013, p. 6).

When situating SRP within the framework of socio-cultural learning theory, independent reading is no longer a silent and solitary activity, rather one that embraces the developmental appropriateness of growing readers (Sanden, 2014). Reading should be taught within a social context (Vygotsky, 1978) since it is not an isolated skill. According to Enriquez (2011), "Reading does not occur solely in the mind; rather experiences and interactions with texts are also felt, lived and enacted through the body" (p. 108). Literacy practices like silent reading should feature social interactions and discourse (Velluto & Barbousas, 2013).

These assertions speak directly to a more specific aspect of socio-cultural learning theory known as the ZPD. Vygotsky (1978) articulated the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration

with more capable peers” (p. 86). When contextualizing this theory within the intended research, a middle school ELA teacher must consider the current level of a student’s ability to read independently and the potential of that student to master the skill of reading. In fact, Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD is a future-oriented paradigm in which the teacher is consistently addressing and considering a student’s current level of development in relationship to his or her potential development (Levykh, 2008).

In support of Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD, in terms of SRP, “Silent reading activities are thus important for the internalization process and should be used in the classroom. Following Vygotsky’s model children would require many silent reading opportunities and instruction before they would internalize their mode of reading” (Prior et al., 2011, p. 191). Guthrie, Shafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1995) found that the amount of independent reading completed by adolescents is highly associated with the amount of social interaction comprising the practice. When ninth grade students have conversations about SRP in class, they report an enjoyment of reading (Parr & Maguiness, 2005). Thus, teachers must use SRP in a manner that supports socio-cultural learning theory in addition to a student’s ZPD if this instructional practice is intended to assist students in internalizing reading and promoting their literacy.

Choice Theory

While socio-cultural learning theory addresses the ideal conditions in which students can achieve literacy, it does not address students’ more basic psychological needs in a learning environment or a teacher’s consideration of those needs when designing instruction. As such, Glasser’s (1998) choice theory is an essential part of the framework of this study. In choice theory, Glasser (1998) posited that people have four essential needs: (a) love/belonging, (b) power, (c) freedom, and (d) fun. People typically rely upon social relationships and interactions

in order to help them meet these needs. When reading Glasser's (1998) choice theory through the critical lens of Vygotsky (1978), Louis (2009) asserted that social interaction/relationships are actually essential for student learning. Social interactions within the classroom allow for the sharing of psychological tools that produce cognitive development (Louis, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Tools like discourse and socialization should be manifested within the classroom through events like reading, writing, and speaking—these events are not just beneficial for cognitive development but actually necessary (Louis, 2009).

A teacher who designs an instructional practice like SRP with socialization in mind and “who embraces both Vygotsky's and Glasser's theories would create a classroom that focuses on effective social relationships as a key component of cognitive development” (Louis, 2009, p. 22). A teacher's mantra must focus upon how he or she can help students interact with one another using language, scaffolding, and the ZPD (i.e., the tenants of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory) (Louis, 2009). The teacher must *choose* to use social learning to foster the desire for literacy in students. A teacher choosing to recognize the vitality of socialization in learning recognizes that “an important purpose of education is to nurture a love for lifelong learning in all students” (Glasser, 1998, p. 242).

Choice Theory in the Classroom

Formerly referred to as control theory in the classroom, Glasser (1988) applied the premises of choice theory within an educational setting to create the sub-theory of choice theory in the classroom. In this theory, Glasser (1988) “contends that we choose our total behaviors to try to gain control of people or ourselves” (p. 51). In this manner, students and teachers alike make choices about their behaviors that function as a way for them to satisfy one or more of the following needs: (a) survival (b) love/belonging, (c) power, (d) freedom, and (e) fun. Students

meet these needs through socialization because they “need the support and interest of others” (Glasser, 1988, p. 77) in order to feel satisfied and be able to learn effectively. Teachers must design instruction in a manner that ensures student satisfaction, allowing them to meet their needs, otherwise they will not see the inherent and lifelong value of learning (Glasser, 1988).

Reading instruction is particularly vital to students’ lifelong learning and is a form of learning that students will avoid through their total behaviors if they so choose. If students do not have a picture of reading in their quality worlds they will not only avoid the task, but actually fake it in order to gain control and meet their needs for satisfaction. Teachers must recognize this avoidance and strive to design reading instruction that makes reading a more satisfying practice for students in order to preserve their chances for literacy and lifelong learning (Glasser, 1988). Using student reading practice, teachers can choose to give students the opportunity to discover “reading something enjoyable can lead to more reading—and how more reading leads to better reading” (Pilgreen, 2000, p. xvi).

Related Literature

The following section is a review of the literature related to student reading practice. It begins with an overview of the origins of SSR and then defines empirically-documented effects of SRP in the classroom. The review then details how silent reading is used to increase reading fluency and comprehension. The final sections of this review focus upon teachers’ use of SRP to promote students’ literacy in the secondary classroom. The contents of this review reveal the dearth of empirical studies within the last seven years investigating middle school ELA teachers’ choice to use SRP to promote literacy.

Origins and Variations of SRP

Empirical documentation of using SRP or silent reading as a component of reading instruction, dates back to 1925. In a study of teachers ($N = 75$) in rural Pennsylvania, the use of silent reading for a 10-week period created gains in reading between 25-50% for students in grades two through eight (Lowry, 1925). It is important to note, however, that this study did not adhere to the contemporary paradigms of educational research: the study lacked a control group, standardized pre- and post- assessment, and the teachers self-reported the data they collected. A similar study, in another one-room rural school of students in grades four through eight, was conducted in 1931. Heise (1931) asserted that students needed class time to practice reading and that the self-selection of texts was integral to this process. Organizing the classroom library according to reading level allowed students to select texts that were appropriate for their developmental reading level (or ZPD in today's paradigm). Using comprehension questions to assess students' ($N = 205$) comprehension, Heise (1931) reported an average reading level gain of 18 months using the Stanford and Gates-MacGinitie reading tests. This study was conducted over a period of two years but lacked a control group. Heise's (1931) model of student reading practice was premised purely on self-selected texts and allowed students to practice reading during spare instructional time. Heise concluded that the best way to encourage students' reading achievement was through the self-selection of texts that were differentiated based upon reading level (ZPD).

Heller (1940) supported Heise's (1931) assertions and stated that wide reading or reading practice should be diversified and that students must have the ability to self-select the texts that they read. Through a collection of descriptive statistics, Heller found that girls in the junior high grades (seven through nine) read more books than did boys. On average girls read 28 books over

the course of one year whereas boys only read, on average, 16. As students progressed through the junior high grades, they were more likely to read a variety of authors, provided that they had access to these texts in the classroom or at the school library. Allowing time for free reading during class encourages students to read for both quantity and quality (Heller, 1940).

One of the more well-known forms of SRP was a concept known as sustained silent reading or SSR. According to Smith (1983), “Throughout the 1970’s until the present time, SSR has continued in schools and classrooms as an integral part of the total reading program. It has provided the practice and drill of silent reading” (p. 23). Hunt (1996), originally in 1960, is credited with coining the term and concept of USSR as both a researcher and practitioner. Through the development of this instructional practice, it was Hunt’s intent for students to recognize that through silent reading, their mistakes with reading would be tolerated. Hunt’s philosophy was that the opportunity for students to read silently during class would allow them to feel less frustrated by reading, which would help them to develop into better readers. Hunt asserted that silent reading is the essence of reader power.

McCracken (1971) embraced Hunt’s (1996) philosophy about silent reading and expounded upon it. First, McCracken promoted changing the universal term from USSR to SSR because of the negative connotation associated with the former acronym. McCracken (1971) outlined six guidelines for the implementation of SSR: (a) students should read silently, (b) the teacher reads when the students read, (c) the student selects a single text to reading during the session, no changing of texts permitted, (d) a timer is used, (e) no reports or records are kept on the part of the student, and (f) the practice is most effective when used with larger groups of students. Through these guidelines, McCracken communicated to practitioners his philosophy that “Our students are over-taught and under-practiced” (p. 583) in terms of reading instruction.

To support this philosophy, McCracken (1971) recommended that teachers commit themselves to the instructional practice of SSR by creating daily reading sessions up to 30 minutes in length for students in grades K-12 in order to create more proficient readers.

Throughout the 1970s, due to SSR's ease of implementation and low cost, it continued to gain in popularity among teachers (Towner & Evans, 1975). Oliver (2001), originally 1970, expounded upon SSR and coined a new term: high intensity practice (HIP). This reading practice followed many of Hunt's (1996) original guidelines but emphasized that reading silently also helps teach students how to read for enjoyment. Oliver's variation on SSR-endorsed reading for enjoyment as much as it did reading for achievement. Since overall literacy was the primary goal of HIP, Oliver asserted that its use should invert the traditional model of reading instruction. Instead of spending 80% of class time devoted to drill and skill practice in reading, ELA teachers should instead allow students to read for 80% of class time and spend the remaining 20% working on skill-based reading instruction.

Independent Reading

A more contemporary variation of SSR is independent reading. This model of SRP differs from its predecessors because it is not inherently a silent activity. While students are practicing reading their self-selected texts, they are encouraged to dialogue with the peers and conference with their ELA teacher about what they are reading. This model is intended to whole-heartedly embrace Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and allow students to discourse about reading and internalize it as a lifelong skill. Independent reading is akin to a reading workshop model during which students conference with the teacher about their texts, seeking advice on what to read and support in setting reading goals. The bulk of class time is spent engaged in reading, conferencing, and responding to literature in an authentic fashion,

while the ELA teacher integrates mini-lessons focused upon literacy and course curriculum (Sanden, 2012; Stairs & Burgos, 2010; Trudel, 2007).

Independent reading is an effective variation of SRP in that it allows students to self-select texts with the support of the teacher and discourse about them. In addition, students gain independence and growth as readers as well as work toward a lifelong love of reading (Sanden, 2012). The use of independent reading in an eighth grade ELA classroom is most effective when it is student-centered, promoting students' engagement in reading and encouraging them to become lifelong readers (Stairs & Burgos, 2010). In a quasi-experimental investigation, Trudel (2007) found that students in grades three and four had more positive interactions with reading when the classroom model switched from a traditional SSR model to the more contemporary model of independent reading. The author cited increased student awareness of purpose for reading when using IR, more appropriate text selection, and increased engagement in reading as compared to SSR.

Classroom practitioners in both the elementary and middle school classrooms cite the value of implementing independent reading as an SRP that promotes literacy for students through a reading workshop model (Calkins, 1997; Towle, 2000). Holding conferences with students about reading allows teachers to differentiate literacy instruction for all students (Calkins, 1997) in a manner conducive with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory, suggesting that socialization is a key component of promoting literacy.

Over time, researchers and practitioners alike have begun to recognize a potential obstacle for the use of SRP as part of reading programs: "One of the problems authorities in the field of reading face in assessing SSR is that they must deal with the observable and make inferences regarding the unobservable" (Towner & Evans, 1975, p. 86). Researchers soon

realized that assessing the empirical merit of instructional reading practices like SSR would be challenging as it is difficult to determine whether or not students are actually reading as opposed to faking it, even when the practice of SSR is under observation. This phenomenon speaks to the adage: You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. Despite being presented with the opportunity to read silently and practice reading, students cannot be forced to read. Therefore, measuring the effects SSR may or may not have on reading proficiencies can be challenging from a quantitative standpoint (Garan & DeVogd, 2008). The effects of SSR on reading are time-oriented, which would require longitudinal studies to truly assess its effectiveness (Evans & Towner, 1975; Garan & DeVogd, 2008; Hong, 1981; Moore, Jones, & Miller, 1980).

As practitioners began to anecdotally report their successes and failures with the practice of SSR, researchers took note. It became clear that “what a teacher does during and after silent reading defines silent reading for children” (McCracken & McCracken, 1978, p. 407). In other words, the teacher must model the practice of SSR for his or her students as modeling is equally, if not more important than the implementation of the practice (Campbell, 1989; Hunt, 1996; Wheldall & Entwistle, 1988).

Key Components of SRP According to Practitioners

There is a general consensus among practitioners that the role of ELA teachers is to develop students who *will* read, not just those who *can* read—classroom reading practices must reinforce and foster the enjoyment of reading if teachers aim to promote literacy (Chambers, 1966; Galen & Prendergast, 1979; Jones, 1978; Moore et al., 1980; Pegg & Bartelheim, 2011; Petre, 1971). Providing class time for students to practice reading is not depriving students of valuable instructional time; the use of SRP is “ten minutes of giving, not taking away” (Gardiner,

2001, p. 35). As long as the use of student reading practice is not haphazard but routine and purposeful (Chambers, 1966), it will provide students with time to foster their literacy.

ELA teacher modeling. The successful implementation of student reading practice is predicated on the adage: Do as I do (Wheldall & Entwistle, 1988). In order to promote literacy and communicate to students that practicing reading is a worthwhile and enjoyable activity, ELA teachers must model reading. By reading concurrently with students during SRP, ELA teachers not only communicate the value of practicing to read, but also their positive attitudes toward reading (Galen & Prendergast, 1979) and belief that SRP is a valuable use of instructional time (Perez, 1986).

Concurrent modeling of SRP is even supported by empirical research. ELA teacher modeling of recreational reading during reading time can increase students' on-task behavior (Pluck, Ghafari, Glynn, & McNaughton, 1984) in some cases as much as 29% when an ELA teacher models reading for students in the primary grades (Wheldell & Entwistle, 1988). Teacher modeling during SRP can increase on-task reading behaviors for students who struggle to read or for those reading on an average level (Widdowson & Dixon, 1996).

Habitual, routine practice. One of the most appealing aspects of SRP is that it can easily become a routine part of reading instruction in the ELA classroom. In fact, the success of SRP is predicated on its daily, habitual usage. While some practitioners merely articulate its use as a controlled (Moore et al., 1980), reserved (Petre, 1971), or pre-determined (Allington, 1975) amount of time, others ascribe to daily time frames ranging between 10 and 30 minutes (Galen & Prendergast, 1979; Hong, 1981; Jones, 1978). One practitioner, Farrell (1982), used SRP for 40 minutes per day with eighth grade students and reported that 90% of these students improved their reading level by one or two years, according to Gates-MacGinitie reading test scores

administered in a pretest, posttest format. Ascribing to a routine amount of time not only establishes and nurtures the habit of reading (Hong, 1981), it communicates the value of reading practice (Galen & Prendergast, 1979) while giving more students the opportunity to create a lifetime desire for reading (Jones, 1978).

Access to texts and self-selection. The successful and effective use of SRP is premised upon two conditions related to texts: (a) students must have access to a plethora of books both in their ELA classroom and at the school library (Bergland & Johns, 1983; Chambers, 1966; Duffy, 1967; Galen & Prendergast, 1979; Ganz & Theofield, 1974; Ivey, 1999; Jones, 1978; Moore et al., 1980; Petre, 1971; Smith, 1983) and (b) students must be allowed to self-select these texts (Anderson, 2000; Chambers, 1966; Galen & Prendergast, 1979; Hong, 1981; Jones, 1978; Noland, 1976; Perez, 1986; Petre, 1971; Sadoski, 1980a). Students ($N = 160$) with access to books during SRP in their classrooms actually enjoyed the practice and described it as successful, according to descriptive data collected in a classroom-based practitioner study (Hofmann, 1978). Access to anthologies of short stories (or shorter texts) in ELA classrooms can help students who struggle with reading to find increased success with SSR compared to when they only have access to novels (Jensen & Jensen, 2002). The level of teacher involvement in helping students to self-select texts varies from teacher to teacher. Some teachers provide suggestions for what to read based upon students' interest and abilities (Perez, 1986), others provide opportunities for students to swap books and share reading with one another (Duffy, 1967; Perez, 1986; Petre, 1971; Smith, 1983; Valeri-Gold, 1995), some will read aloud to their students to pique their interests in particular texts (Hong, 1981), while others will engage the class and individual students in books talks (Chambers, 1966). In any case, the commonality in self-selection is that students cannot be forced to read a particular text. In order to promote the

enjoyment of reading, and subsequently literacy, students must be allowed to consider their own interests when selecting a text and read on their own terms (Noland, 1976).

Initiating and Sustaining SRP

Initiating SRP can be a challenge. Much of its success depends upon the ELA teacher's endorsement and promotion of it (Ganz & Theofield, 1974; Smith, 1983; Stevenson, 1980) as well how the teacher establishes the routine (Anderson, 2000; Berglund & Johns, 1983; Noland, 1976; Valeri-Gold, 1995). Whether teachers choose to ascribe to McCracken's (1971) guidelines or develop their own, it is essential that these be communicated to students at the time of initiation and that implementation occur on a daily basis (Anderson, 2000). Sometimes, however, sustaining SRP can be even more challenging than initiating it (Grubaugh, 1986). If ELA teachers notice students struggling to engage with SRP, they should take some time to assess students' perspectives either informally or through a survey (Grubaugh, 1986). ELA teachers must also be sure that they have not asked too much of their students too soon—teachers should begin SRP by asking students to read for about five minutes at a time and then gradually increase this time until students gain stamina are able to read for periods of 15-20 minutes (Anderson, 2000; Valeri-Gold, 1995). Awareness of students' stamina for reading silently at the outset will better equip ELA teachers to sustain its use long-term.

SRP as a Component of Reading Instruction

Student reading practice is a component of reading instruction in which students, based upon the instructional prescriptions of the teacher, are given a defined period of time to read, usually silently and typically for pleasure or for the purpose of learning new information (National Reading Panel, 2014; Siah & Kwok, 2010; Yoon, 2002). Research suggests that time for SRP should be implemented daily for a period of about 10-20 minutes (National Reading

Panel, 2014; Pilgreen, 2000; Taylor et al., 1999). Some researchers assert that “Reading should be a spark to ignite a fire. . . [within students] to become life-long readers” (Nagy et al., 2000, p. 10). Reading is much more than a student’s ability to separate phonemes and syllables or to identify a story’s conflict—reading is about instilling within students a desire to read for life and to stimulate their literacy development.

While there is a significant amount of research about teaching students to learn how to read, Merga and Moon (2016) asserted that there is a dearth of studies that investigate teaching and encouraging students how to read “beyond the point of skill acquisition” (p. 123). Implied within their findings is that there is value in knowing more about how and why teachers choose to promote students’ literacy and encourage them to become lifelong readers. Middle school ELA teachers who choose to design instruction in a manner that encourages reading as a holistic skill require specific investigation as they are able to prioritize reading practice in light of the demand to meet standards-based learning goals. Recent research clearly articulates a need for further investigation of the instructional use of SRP to promote literacy within adolescent students (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Harmon et al., 2011; Holt & O’Tuel, 1988; Little et al., 2014; Yoon, 2002).

Secondary teachers face unique challenges when implementing SSR in the classroom due to the heightened instructional demands of today’s high stakes testing model. Teachers today are tasked with goals and objectives that they must achieve within limited amounts of time (Nagy et al., 2000; Pilgreen, 2000). Teachers often feel pressured to deprioritize the practice of reading and instead, devote the majority of time to the instruction of reading skills. “They must consider how much—if any—of this quite limited time they will devote to SSR” (p. 6). When making instructional decisions, it is important for ELA teachers to remember that SSR allows students

the opportunity to practice reading and subsequently develop a potential lifelong relationship with it (Combs & Van Dusseldorp, 1984; Sadoski, 1980b).

Benefits and Effects of SRP

Student reading practice is a difficult phenomenon to quantify. Collecting numerical data about its use and effectiveness is challenging because it possesses catalytic effects that can only truly be measured over long periods of time (Summers & McClelland, 1982) or because its use is often associated with confounding variables like motivation or self-efficacy for which researchers are unable to control (Samuels & Wu, 2001). As a result, some studies that are not longitudinal in nature may not be able to measure and document correlations between the use of the practice and its intended or unintended outcomes (Garan & DeVogd, 2008). Studies such as these are typically only able to illustrate valid conclusions as opposed to statistically significant results. For example, the effects of SSR on reading comprehension and attitudes toward reading for urban, high school English students ($N = 61$) in a 5.5 month experimental study were not statistically significant; however, the authors concluded that students in the treatment group did not feel any less positive about reading after exposure to the practice of SSR and that the practice is still valuable because it is uncomplicated, inexpensive, and promotes lifelong reading (Reed, 1978). In another experimental study, when testing students in grade two through six ($N = 220$) for sharpened word recognition and comprehension, the results were not statistically significant between the control and experimental groups. The author concluded, however, that the students' teachers were more aware of students' reading interests and appreciation of literature as a result of using SSR as a classroom reading practice (Collins, 1980).

Several researchers noted the positive effects of student reading practices on reading achievement (Burley, 1980; Davis, 1988; Langford & Allen, 1983; Manning & Manning, 1984;

Ozburn, 1995; Samuels & Wu, 2001; Summers & McClelland, 1982; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990) while others documented the practice's statistically significant effects on students' attitudes toward reading (Chua, 2008; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Manning & Manning, 1984; Merga, 2015; Wiesendanger & Bader, 1989).

Time spent reading is important for reading growth; one study indicated that there is a statistically significant correlation ($N = 159$, $r = .37$) between time spent reading at school and reading achievement for fifth and sixth grade students (Taylor et al., 1990). To achieve these effects, it is important for teachers to allow students to read for 15 minutes per day at school and at home as the time spent reading per day is a key factor in the practice's effectiveness (Samuels & Wu, 2001; Summers & McLelland, 1982; Taylor et al., 1990). The statistically significant effects of student reading practice on reading growth and achievement is even stronger when students spend up to 40 minutes reading per day as compared to 15 minutes per day, according to an experimental study ($N = 725$) (Samuels & Wu, 2001). Samuels and Wu (2001) found a statistically significant difference in reading achievement between fifth and sixth through seventh grade students ($N = 1400$) when those in the experimental group were exposed to SSR for 15-25 minutes per day. Stanine standardized achievement scores on the ACER Progressive Achievement Test in the domains of vocabulary and reading comprehension were higher for male below average and average readers after the integration of SSR into the reading scheme (Kefford, 1981). SSR was the more effective practice compared to programmed material (i.e., textbooks, cassette tapes, reading development kits) in improving the reading comprehension of Black, economically-disadvantaged students ($N = 85$) in a summer literacy program. Using random assignment to group students to one of four reading practice groups, during which they practiced reading for 75 minutes per day, using an ANCOVA and the Scheffe post-hoc test, there

was statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in the improvement of reading levels of students in the SSR group versus those during the reading development kits. However, results of comparisons between SSR and the other programmed materials were not statistically significant. When comparing the impact of SSR on the reading gains of eighth grade students ($N = 56$) to that of directed reading, middle level readers exposed to the practice of SSR experienced reading gains 13 percentiles greater than those students in the directed reading group. These results were statistically significant $F(1, 18) = 5.86, p < .05$. Students reading above grade level attained five percentiles higher in reading achievement when exposed to SSR than those exposed to directed reading; these results, however, were not statistically significant (Davis, 1988). Students in grades five and six ($N = 250$) experienced a statistically significant ($p < .001$) gain in reading achievement when they were exposed to the treatment of USSR compared to those students who were not ($n = 119$) (Langford & Allen, 1983).

Allowing students time to practice reading using self-selected texts during class time on a daily basis, for a period of four months or more will not only help to create lifelong readers, but can also improve students' reading level by an average of 3.9 years. While these findings are not statistically significant, they are still meaningful because they reinforce the concept that allowing time to practice reading will not only promote lifelong reading, but also reading achievement for ninth grade students ($N = 60$) (Ozburn, 1995). Twenty minutes of SSR per day adhering to Hunt's (1996) guidelines for implementing USSR also had an effect on students reading habits and attitudes using a time-series design (Chua, 2008). An organized recreational reading program was statistically significant when analyzing students' ($N = 415; p < .01$) attitudes toward reading (Manning & Manning, 1984).

Student reading practice is necessary in the ELA classroom because it allows students to

foster and nurture a love for reading (Combs & Dusseldorp, 1984; Sadoski, 1980b; Stewart, Paradis, Ross, & Lewis, 1996). When teachers give students time to read silently and confront reading on their own terms instead of drilling them with skills practice and worksheets, students may even develop a more positive attitude toward reading, leading to enhanced reading achievement (Combs & Van Dusseldorp, 1984). Their survey of students' attitudes toward SSR for students in grades three to six ($N = 136$) revealed that 84% of students indicated they were always reading during SSR (as opposed to engaging in off-task behaviors), 87.4% of students hoped that SSR would continue in their school, and that 90% of teachers ($n = 14$) reported changes in students' reading habits since the school-wide implementation of SSR. Dwyer and Reed (1989) refuted these findings, however, and stated that SSR did not result in more positive attitudes toward the practice of reading in an experimental study of fourth and fifth grade students ($N = 40$). What is notable difference among these studies however, is that Combs and Dusseldorp (1984) predicated their study on an implementation of SSR that had already occurred school-wide whereas Dwyer and Reed (1989) designed their study to implement SSR as a practice used only by those students in the control group.

It is important to note that a school's reading culture can impact students' attitudes toward reading. This speaks to a common phenomenon that occurs when the school culture clashes with the teacher's theory and priorities, resulting in the underuse of common sense practices like SRP. Literature-based developmental reading programs featuring time for students to read self-selected texts independently are imperative if teachers are going to help students in grades seven through nine foster a love of reading. ELA teachers may feel that it is common sense to allow students time to practice reading during class, but the culture and philosophies of their school may not allow them to implement this practice. As a result, many ELA teachers

only choose to devote 20% of class time to SRP when they should actually be devoting 80% (Stewart et al., 1996). Students who participate in SSR programs or practices at school are more likely to engage in independent reading when school is not in session (Wiesendanger & Bader, 1989), value SRP over other classroom reading practices (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), and favorably view their teachers who use the practice to project their enthusiasm for reading (Merga, 2015).

Not all documented effects of SRP are beneficial. Although seventh grade students preferred USSR 2:1 compared to self-selected reading skills or self-selected reading games, students' mean rating of all the treatment groups (SSR, self-selected reading skills, and self-selected reading games) showed a statistically significant, $F(2, 126) = 3.85, p > .05$, decline in students' attitude toward reading. In this study of developmental readers ($N = 135$), 40% of students wanted to see changes in the reading treatments used in the class. While USSR may have contributed to a decline in students' attitudes toward reading (as did the other two treatments), 56% of students requested more time for USSR during class—only 22% of students wanted more time for reading games, and 21% wanted more time for self-selected reading skills (Mikulecky & Wolf, 1977).

Reading Silently

Much of a student's early education is predicated upon learning to read. Within this phenomenon, students are expected to learn how to decode words, read fluently, and comprehend the meaning of texts. A great deal of recent research has been dedicated to the investigation of the connections between a student's reading fluency (ability to read fluidly, either silently or orally) and level of textual comprehension—the implication of merely conducting this research

validates the necessity of reading fluency as a key factor in the process of students learning how to read.

In terms of secondary readers, “reading fluency cannot be assumed to magically emerge in readers during the elementary or middle years without explicit instruction, support, and encouragement across grades and text genres from knowledgeable teachers who focus on appropriate and consistent practice” (Paige, Rasinski, Magpuri-Lavell, & Smith, 2014, p. 147). These findings were derived from a quantitative, bivariate correlational study investigating fluency indicators and reading comprehension in ninth grade students ($N = 108$). Teaching students how to read and more specifically, develop their reading fluency, must be an intentional process. Mastering each of these reading-related skills is an important step for students on the path to developing literacy.

Reading Fluency and Comprehension

There is little debate among researchers that reading fluency and textual comprehension are correlated as a plethora of studies examined various facets of this phenomenon as it relates to both silent and oral reading fluency (Little et al., 2014; Paige et al., 2014; Price, Meisinger, Louwse, & D’Mello, 2016; Prior et al., 2011; Rasinski et al., 2011). Furthermore, “fluency is associated with reading achievement beyond the primary grades, and significant numbers of students beyond the primary grades have yet to achieve appropriate levels of fluency in their reading” (Rasinski et al., 2011, p. 77). Thus, secondary students’ abilities to read fluently merits additional research.

What has been discovered so far, however, is noteworthy and sometimes oppositional. For example, when using an intervention called Schoolwide Enrichment Model—Reading Framework (SEM-R) in an experimental study with middle school students ($N = 2,150$ students,

$N = 47$ teachers, $N = 4$ middle schools), the differences in students' levels of reading fluency and comprehension were *appreciable* but not significant, however, when compared to students not receiving the treatment (Little et al., 2014). When using the interventional program *Reading Plus* for at least 20 hours per week, high school students within four high schools ($N = 16,143$) experienced greater gains in reading fluency ($d = .01, .13, .34, -.04$) and comprehension ($d = .05, .14, .19, .06$) on the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) than those not exposed to the treatment in a quantitative, retrospective study (Rasinski et al., 2011). More specifically, silent reading fluency did not significantly contribute to reading comprehension for fourth grade students ($N = 106$) (Price et al., 2016). Moreover, Rasinski et al.'s (2011) findings in this quantitative study suggested,

The importance of differentiating between oral reading fluency and silent reading fluency interventions, especially as students reach the late elementary grades and the curriculum shifts from a focus on oral reading fluency and learning to silent reading fluency and reading to learn. (p. 195)

The implication of these findings is that there is a call for middle school teachers to focus their efforts on assisting students as they transition from oral reading to silent reading at the start of middle school, specifically during sixth grade. In an experimental study of students in grades one through seven ($N = 173$) investigating modes of reading: oral versus silent (without investigating fluency), the authors posited that while comprehension for first through fifth grade students is increased through oral reading, seventh grade students' comprehension was increased by silent reading. Comprehension for sixth grade students was not affected significantly by either reading mode, implying the middle school *transition*. The implications for silent reading and middle school students in this study are profound—seventh grade students have better reading

comprehension when reading silently (Prior et al., 2011). What this also suggests is that “much is lost in the material and cultural shift from primary school to high school (Merga & Moon, 2016, p. 135).

Silent reading is a valid instructional practice for developing the literacy of middle school students (Prior et al., 2011; Rasinski et al., 2011) as there exists a large correlation between automaticity (automatic word retrieval which allows the reader to collapse multiple decoding steps into a single step) and silent reading fluency. Automaticity, however, does not contribute any significant variance to silent reading comprehension when investigating ninth grade students ($N = 108$). While the results are confounding, the authors suggest a study investigating the relationship between fluency indicators and the reading comprehension of secondary students who struggle with reading (Paige et al., 2014). Further investigation is needed about the relationship of automaticity, silent reading fluency, and reading comprehension for secondary students, specifically those who might struggle with literacy.

Using SRP to Promote Students’ Literacy

The instructional use of silent reading is often related to reading comprehension. According to Merga (2015), “Recreational book reading is positively associated with improving literacy levels, both in the early years, and beyond” (p. 36). The authors observed in a narrative literature review that the evidence about this phenomenon is limited in both scope and size, but “instructional mechanisms,” like silent reading, do exist and can help students develop the literacy and comprehension skills they need in order thrive in modern society (Hiebert, Samuels, & Rasinski, 2012). The authors found that “while most students would likely benefit from higher allocations of time devoted to silent reading during the school day, silent reading events require careful design” (p. 119). Teachers should be intentional in their use of SRP as an

instructional practice. Its use should be purposeful and habitual (Pilgreen, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2014), ideally enhanced through some form of support or even scaffolding. When given the opportunity to read with the proper supports, students are likely to experience enhanced literacy (Hiebert et al., 2012; Reutzel et al., 2012). In an experimental study ($N = 201$), Holt & O'Tuel (1998) found that seventh grade students ($n = 97$) who read independently for 20 minutes per day, three days per week earned higher scores on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test than those students who did not read independently in addition to scoring higher on the Sager Writing Assessment. Eighth grade students ($n = 104$) in the same study, however, only scored significantly higher on the writing assessment. What is clear, however, is “that current pedagogical practices need to be enriched through the personalization of literacy learning” (Velluto & Barbousas, 2013, p. 7).

While adolescents in Australia are reading less than four books per month, overall, students' attitudes toward recreational reading are generally more positive or neutral than they are negative (Merga & Moon, 2016). Only 9% of this mixed-method study's participants ($N = 276$) claimed recreational reading was *uncool*, but nearly 40% of boys noted that they found recreational reading *unenjoyable*. When juxtaposing this data with Daniels and Steres' (2011) case study, data from the study suggested that a finite solution is threefold: schools must (a) make reading a top priority, (b) encourage teachers to model and support reading, and (c) create motivating learning environments that encourage students to read more. Researchers from these studies noted that student reading practice is a more perplexing phenomenon for students transitioning from elementary to high school (i.e., middle school students) (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Merga & Moon, 2016). During middle school, a cultural shift occurs in which students' engagement in SRP becomes an area of concern (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Merga & Moon, 2016).

Both studies focused solely on secondary school students, not elementary, implying that this transitional stage of education merits intense investigation. There is a need for more studies that investigate the role of schools and teachers when encouraging SRP in middle school students.

Students Who Struggle with Reading or Who Are Reluctant to Read

A promising aspect of the latest SRP research is its ability to foster the literacy skills of even those students who struggle to read or who are reluctant to read. Several researchers note the ability of student reading practices to help teachers focus on the individual reading needs of students and their overall literacy instead of merely upon their ability to pass high stakes assessments (Bryan et al., 2003; Enriquez et al., 2011; Harmon et al., 2011; Horne, 2014; Reutzel et al., 2012). However, it can be difficult for teachers to prioritize its use when they feel pressured by an educational regime predicated upon standardized testing; some teachers feel compelled to avoid “wasting” time with reading and spend more class time on content (Pilgreen, 2000). According to Reutzel et al. (2012), “In the contemporary era of high-stakes accountability, it becomes difficult for classroom teachers to justify the use of instructional practices that...are not sanctioned as evidence-based by the federal government” (p. 405). These findings were derived from their quasi-experimental study ($N = 158$).

Other researchers supported the aforementioned findings and asserted that the current educational regime is rife with courses and teachers training struggling readers to pass high stakes assessments but is limited in its understanding of how teachers are using practices like SRP to assist struggling readers and encourage them to embrace literacy (Harmon et al., 2011). Furthermore, teachers must be aware of struggling readers’ tendencies to act out their melancholy and feelings of exclusion when engaged (or disengaged) with student reading practice—middle school students often act in ways that give the impression they are reading or

pretend to read in an attempt to mask their struggles with it (Bryan et al., 2003; Enriquez, 2011; Glasser, 1998). When considering the instruction of fourth grade students ($N = 4$), in a case study, it was found that merely giving students time to read and allowing them to select their own texts does not guarantee engagement with SRP. In a case study of eighth grade students ($N = 4$), students would vary their behaviors with reading to give others the impression that they did not actually struggle with literacy (Bryan et al., 2003). Teachers must be aware of this phenomenon in order to best assist struggling readers and inform their instruction, specifically their use of SRP.

When teachers design the practice of SRP so that it allows third grade students the opportunity to read, relax, reflect, respond, and rap-up, students not only increase their reading stamina, but also improve their engagement (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006). Teachers also need to be mindful of students' reading ability, especially for students who read at lower levels as it is highly correlated with the amount of time students will spend reading silently ($r = .63$) (Wilkinson & Anderson, 1988). Interestingly, however, students who struggle to read can be incentivized to read independently through the use of grades. These findings arose from a causal-comparative dissertation investigating the use of Accelerated Reader with eighth grade students ($N = 1,438$) in middle school (Horne, 2014). While the study cannot conclude that grading IR helps improve struggling students' literacy or comprehension, it suggests that doing so encourages students to read more frequently. Students who struggle with reading will in fact read during IR—about 90% of students ($N = 44$) in grades two through six have demonstrated on-task reading behaviors during daily, 10-15 minute reading sessions using USSR (Mayes, 1982). Above all, ELA teachers must remember that students must enjoy the practice of reading before they can improve their reading comprehension and achievement (Lee, 2011).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) Readers

An intervention called Extensive Reading (ER), a form of silent reading, was designed to help improve the reading levels of English as a foreign language learners (EFL) (Mermelstein, 2014). While the author noted an appreciable difference between the reading levels of the collegiate students receiving the intervention, the treatment effect was not statistically significant when compared to those students not receiving the treatment. Thus, independent reading time offered to these university students during their courses did not impact their ability to read English. The author, however, defined extensive reading as a “learner-centered activity” (p. 223) that is focused on the individual reader’s needs and advocated a future study that might investigate the tracking of independent reading by the student in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Pilgreen and Krashen (1993) noted similar effects when observing English as a Second Language Students in grades 10-12. Students exposed to daily SSR gained 15 months of reading ability, $N = 125$, $t = 10.916$, $p < .001$. It is important to note, however, that these statistics are merely suggestive as there was no control group for this study. Therefore, the use of SRP in the classroom with students learning English suggests appreciable benefits for their reading abilities.

SRP: Motivation and Attitude

Researchers of one study found that a primary component in effective reading instruction is students’ motivation to read (Conradi et al., 2014). In fact, studies find that when secondary students participate in an independent silent reading (ISR) module (in both textbook and computer-based formats), they experience not only increased rates of reading comprehension but also increased motivation to read when compared to students who do not participate in an ISR

module (Cuevas et al., 2012). There is also empirical evidence to suggest that students performed better within independent reading events when they participated in a structured IR program like Accelerated Reader (AR) and when this program was implemented with grades as a form of student accountability (Horne, 2014).

Students' attitudes toward reading or motivations to read have an impact on their ability to read independently and embrace literacy. One researcher asserted that "assessing motivation-related aspects of literacy can contribute to developing effective instructional practices and to fostering students' active engagement in literacy practices, which might in turn, lead them to become life-long readers" (Conradi et al., 2014, p. 157). These findings were posed in a narrative and systematic review of the literature related to motivation terminology in reading research. There was statistically significant, albeit low correlation ($r=.19, p < .01$) between reading attitude and number of books read during Recreational Reading by sixth grade students ($N = 868$) (Sauls, 1974). These findings suggested the need for more student reading practice in ELA classrooms since more time to read leads to more books read, which leads to improved attitude and translates to improved literacy.

Furthermore, the classroom teacher plays a significant role in encouraging students to read independently. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to engage in SRP and be mindful of its implementation, not just to promote students' overall literacy but also confront common roadblocks for readers like attention span and cognitive fatigue (Merga & Moon, 2016; Yoon, 2002). The use of SSR with students ($n = 111$) in grades 9-12 had a statistically significant impact ($p < .05$) on certain aspects of reading attitude compared to students ($n = 138$) who were not exposed to SSR. What was even more impactful about this study is that the students in the control groups and treatment groups attended different high schools. Notably,

those students in the treatment groups attended a high school where SSR was implemented school-wide in order to create a culture of lifelong reading (Cline & Kretke, 1980). ELA teachers of sixth grade students ($N = 250$) believed that students exposed to the treatment of USSR had better attitudes toward reading than those students who did not receive the treatment (Langford & Allen, 1983). These findings speak directly to the ELA teacher's choice to use to SRP to promote literacy; in theory, if teachers are creating enjoyment of reading through the use of SRP then they are potentially working toward creating lifelong readers and promoting literacy for their students.

ELA teachers must be mindful of how they implement this practice as research documents that it can impact students' attitudes toward reading in both positive and negative ways (Aranha, 1985; Merga, 2013; Minton, 1980). Fourth grade students in India demonstrated a statistically significant increase in attitudes toward reading ($p < .05$). Students' exposure to the practice of SSR twice per week allowed students to focus on a love for reading as opposed to their traditional emphasis on rote reading strategies (Aranha, 1985). Australian students in years eight and 10 ($N = 20$ schools; $n = 520$ surveys; $n = 34$ interviews) reported via surveys and interviews that they had positive attitudes toward silent reading because they did not view the practice as work—rather they enjoyed the uninterrupted reading time. There were students, however, who reported that they found the silent reading time to be too quiet and would have preferred a more contemporary independent reading model that incorporated socialization. In any case, Merga (2013) argued that silent reading has an important place in secondary schools as a means to promote literacy for students.

The ELA Teacher's Role

The middle school ELA teacher, as the primary agent of his or her students' learning, is

responsible for crafting and using SRP in a manner congruent with aiding and guiding his or her students throughout the transition from elementary to high school and addressing their vital need for literacy. Students must emerge from classroom knowing how to read for pleasure and for the purposes of learning new information if they are to become literate, and this is why “there is widespread agreement among educators on the importance of encouraging students to develop lifelong, voluntary reading habits” (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986, p. 331). Yoon (2002) found in a meta-analytic review of the literature that merely giving students (in grades lower than four) the opportunity to engage in silent reading can foster and promote, not just students’ involvement in reading, but also their literacy as a whole. In a summary of longitudinal studies and their own research, Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) found that teachers should provide students with as many experiences with reading as possible since reading build students’ cognitive abilities. Whether students are encouraged by their teacher to engage in independent reading inside or outside of school, this guidance is essential in order to promote students’ overall literacy (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Greaney & Quinn, 1978; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008). Often, teachers unintentionally discourage students’ lifelong reading through classroom practices that do not promote the enjoyment of reading (Lee, 2011).

In studies spanning 30 years, researchers define the necessity for teachers to design reading instruction that promotes students desire to read on their own. Teachers can influence how much time fifth graders ($N = 155$) spend reading during school through instructional practices like SRP (Anderson et al., 1988). Fifth graders ($N = 920$) can also be encouraged to engage in leisure-time reading or reading outside of school through the teacher’s instructional reading practices (Greaney & Quinn, 1978). It is also important that teachers promote students’

self-selection of texts (Heathington, 1979; Moje et al., 2008) as well as provide students with suggestions for what texts to read (Moje et al., 2008).

The Need for SRP in Light of Standards-Based Demands

As demands for student achievement gains in reading mount, many ELA teachers feel pressured to make their instructional time count. ELA teachers must be mindful that an emphasis on reading skills development will not necessarily promote voluntary reading or literacy among their students (Larrick, 1987). Teachers and schools should emphasize developing students' desire to read as opposed to their standardized testing scores (Halpern, 1981; Lee, 2011; Morrow & Weinstein, 1986). SRP should be used by ELA teachers as an authentic practice (Gambrell, 2015; Ivey, 1999) that nurtures literacy (Morrow, 1985) by providing time for students to practice reading (Mork, 1972; Morrow, 1985). Pressures induced upon ELA teachers by high-stakes achievement tests have led to the deprioritizing of SRP and an increased emphasis on skill-based instruction (Fisher, 2004; Mork, 1972; Sanacore, 2000). Fisher (2004) asserted that "Given the increased pressure for student performance, teachers and administrators question the use of every instructional minute and wonder if providing students with time to read is a wise investment" (p. 138). Since society honors literacy (Morrow, 1985) and an individual must be literate in order to become a contributing citizen (Vygotsky, 1978), ELA teachers must give lifelong reading "equal status" with skills-based instruction in the classroom (Sanacore, 2000, p. 157). By allowing time for SRP, ELA teachers are giving SRP higher priority than workbooks or skill-based exercises (Mork, 1972), which better communicates to students the value of literacy and lifelong reading.

In a study of junior high (grades six through nine) ELA teachers ($N = 35$), only 50% provided their students with daily opportunities for SSR (Worthy et al., 1998). Authors of this

study found varying implementations of SRP, but those ELA teachers who used it felt that it brought balance to their ELA curriculum. Teachers who implemented the practice strongly endorsed the concepts of self-selection, teacher modeling, and sharing reading among students. Starting practices like SSR is difficult; however, it can be difficult to get students engaged in reading so teachers must (a) model reading and conference about it with students, (b) create daily class time for SSR, and (c) allow at least seven months for the practice to show its effects on students' literacy (Lee, 2011). The use of USSR or other forms of student reading practice is not a panacea for short-term literacy gains among students. When students ($N = 44$) in grades two through six were given daily class time to practice reading (10-15 minutes per day), it was found that it could still take months for the benefits of the practice to manifest within students. Thus, ELA teachers should not feel discouraged about choosing to use SRP (Mayes, 1982).

There is, however, a need to better investigate the strengths and weaknesses of teachers' use of student reading practices like USSR due to a lack of teacher modeling, conferencing about books, and student engagement with the practice of reading (Halpern, 1981). Even practitioners acknowledge that the failed success of SSR is rarely a flaw with the program itself but rather with the ELA teacher's implementation of it (Humphrey & Preddy, 2008). When ELA teachers feel that their students are not engaged with SRP, they must consider what the reading selections are within their classrooms. ELA teachers may lament that their students are not reading during SRP when in fact, it is more likely that about 90% of those students on task during this practice time (Mayes, 1982; Von Sprecken & Krashen, 1998). Since the authors of this study found a statistically significant correlation between the number of sixth through eighth grade students ($N = 11$ classes) reading during SSR and the number of books available to read in the ELA

classroom ($\rho = .74, p < .01$) (Von Sprecken & Krashen, 1998), it is a potential factor to consider when designing SRP to promote students' literacy.

Teachers using SRP to promote literacy are charged with communicating the value of reading to their students via their instructional practices. The literacy practices teachers choose to use are shaped by their own beliefs about literacy. About 25% of teachers ($N = 31$) generally view literacy as a holistic skill (as opposed to a set of sub-skills) that is an agency of student learning; 17% of teachers believe that literacy is *everything* in the classroom (Braithwaite, 1999). In fact, 90% of elementary teachers ($N = 65$) who valued reading the most gave daily SSR time in their classes (McKool & Gespass, 2009). In order for SRP to be effective in the ELA classroom, teachers must view reading as a holistic skill that is part of a lifelong literacy process (Davidson & McNinch, 1992).

Teachers must employ *purposeful* strategies when designing independent reading (one model of SRP) (Sanden, 2014). ELA teachers need to be mindful of the reading and developmental needs of their students in order to more properly craft the effective use of student reading practice for both elementary and secondary students (Merga & Moon, 2016; Sanden, 2014). More succinctly, it is “important to understand the conditions that enable SSR programs to be effective so that program developers can apply SSR to more suitable contexts to create expected outcomes” (Siah & Kwok, 2010, p. 169). Overall, teachers need further understanding about issues related to reading programs and phenomenon if they are to transition students to life-long readers—far beyond skill acquisition and even meeting minimum achievement standards (Harmon et al., 2011).

Supporting Secondary Readers

Highly-prepared high school English teachers commonly use student reading practice

time to enhance the literacy of struggling high school readers as a component of their reading program, according to in a descriptive study (Harmon et al., 2011). When investigating the reading performance of middle school students, in an experimental study of four middle schools ($N = 2,150$), research showed that student reading practice is a valid instructional strategy that is “as least as effective as more traditional approaches in the middle school classroom” (Little et al., 2014, p. 398). There is a desperate need for studies that investigate the role of student reading practice and other such phenomena to promote literacy in the middle school classroom (Harmon et al., 2011; Little et al., 2014). Therefore, research indicates that the literacy needs of secondary readers extends to students’ ability to internalize reading (Vygotsky, 1978) and become lifelong readers as well as learners (Glasser, 1998).

Social Influences on Reading

Reading is a social event. Adolescent readers are likely to act upon reading based upon not just their perception of reading but also their social perceptions of reading. In short, adolescents’ peers and those comprising their social surroundings in school can sometimes dictate their performances and attitudes toward it. Teachers must be mindful of students’ cultural and social interactions with reading if they hope to craft an effective reading program (Enriquez, 2011; Glasser, 1988; Merga & Moon, 2016). Furthermore, students must *perform* with texts (Enriquez, 2011) in order to *internalize* them. Reading is therefore a behavior that is enacted within a sociocultural scenario (Glasser, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978), and teachers should use the instructional practice of student reading practice in this way in addition to ensuring that SRP is satisfying to students and allows them to meet their individual needs (Glasser, 1998).

Summary

While researchers have written volumes about the ways in which students are taught how

to read, there is far less research related to the ways in which teachers, specifically those in middle school, encourage reading practice through SRP to promote students' literacy. Current research addresses the varying facets of reading fluency (Little et al., 2014; Paige et al., 2014; Price et al., 2016; Prior et al., 2011; Rasinski et al., 2011), how to promote overall literacy as well as reading comprehension (Harmon et al., 2011; Hiebert et al., 2012; Holt & O' Tuel, 1998; Reutzel et al., 2012; Velluto & Barbosas, 2013), how to motivate students to read (Bryan et al., 2003; Conradi et al., 2014; Cuevas et al., 2012; Daniels & Steres, 2011; Horne, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016), how to assist students who struggle with reading (Bryan et al., 2003; Enriquez, 2011; Harmon et al., 2011; Reutzel et al., 2012), and how to use empirically-based strategies to enhance reading instruction (Sanden, 2014; Siah & Kwok, 2010; Yoon, 2012).

There is little known about the phenomenon of how and why teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' lifelong reading. Educators, researchers, and theorists alike recognize that within each child lies the potential to become literate—a student possessing the skills needed to succeed in life beyond academia. However, educators need to know more about how they can encourage students to read long after they have acquired the skill (Merga & Moon, 2016). Furthermore, there is a *desperate* and *dire* need for research-based practices, like SRP, that can address issues of literacy in the secondary as opposed to elementary classroom (Cuevas et al., 2012; Harmon et al., 2011; Little et al., 2014; Sanden, 2014).

A review of the current literature has yet to identify any evidence that contextualizes the phenomenon of how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use student reading practice to promote students' literacy. Furthermore, "Reading is one of the most essential components of learning" (Cuevas et al., 2012, p. 446). There is a need for research investigating the

phenomenon of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy and lifelong reading.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explain how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy. The conceptual framework for this study included Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory. Findings in this study will not just streamline instruction intended to create measurable gains in reading for students nationwide, but give teachers the power to equip students with the vital skill of literacy—a skill they will need to succeed for the rest of their lives. This chapter provides an explanation of the design for this qualitative holistic multiple case study and its setting, participants, procedures, data collection, trustworthiness, and adherence to ethical guidelines.

Design

The intended research featured a qualitative method. The purpose of the qualitative method is to reveal the multiple realities of the phenomenon via the participants retelling of their experiences. Using a qualitative method allowed me to “tell the same tale from different points of view” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5) and explore middle school ELA teachers' context for choosing to use SRP to enhance students' literacy.

The design of the research was a holistic multiple-case study as it aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within the case boundaries, which is an intensive, transferrable understanding of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It was intended to contextualize how and why middle school teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy using a holistic and real-world perspective. Multiple-case study was the appropriate design for this study because (a) the main research questions were *how* and *why* questions, (b) the researcher had no control over behavioral events, and (c) the focus of the study was a

contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The bounded system for this holistic multiple-case study was middle school ELA teachers who choose to use SRP in their ELA classrooms and who were able to present the phenomenon of SRP as a *concrete manifestation* within their instruction (Yin, 2014). A multiple-case study design allowed for an in-depth investigation of middle school ELA teachers from four schools within one school division who chose to use SRP to promote students' literacy.

The intended approach took the form of a collective and holistic case study including six individual cases (two middle school ELA teachers from each of the middle school grade levels: six, seven, and eight) embedded with their own context. A holistic case study was most appropriate because I aimed to understand the phenomenon in a global nature with unarticulated subunits. This study featured a collection of multiple cases since all the participants were teachers within the same school division. Multiple case studies are best employed when the research aims to investigate schools or teachers use of innovative curriculums wherein each teacher could be the subject of her own study or be investigated within the context of the school system as a whole (Yin, 2014). Each of the cases within this study were part of a “specific, complex, functioning thing” (Stake, 1995, p. 2). This study intended to investigate six middle school ELA teachers, recommended by a building administrator within the same school division, in addition to six of their ELA students within focus groups. Each grouping (i.e., the ELA teacher, the building administrator, six ELA students) was its own *object* within a *bounded system* (Stake, 1995). Each individual case was considered part of a collection of cases bounded together in their manifestation of the phenomenon of interest. As a researcher, I strove to maintain a balance between the individual cases and the collective quintain both in data collection and analysis (Stake, 2006).

After the data was collected, the study's preliminary propositions (see Appendix K) were revised and the evidence was examined holistically in order to conduct an iterative analysis which involved backtracking, consideration of alternative propositions and/or rival theories, and finding the *analytic path* (Yin, 2014) in order to make sense of the data (Stake, 1995). The preliminary proposition regarding why middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy is that these teachers value students' abilities to become lifelong readers as much, if not more than, their singular ability to pass standardized reading assessments. The preliminary proposition regarding how middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy is that they implement the practice in a manner that allows students the opportunity to practice the skill of reading while still allowing class time for direct instruction that covers the content mandated by standards-based learning.

Research Questions

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy?

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy?

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

Setting

The setting for this study was Northern County Schools (pseudonym) in Virginia. This school division is both rural and suburban. It contains 11 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative school. Membership division wide for 2015-

2016 was 11,155 students; 2,601 students were in grades six through eight (Virginia Department of Education, 2015-2016a). While the demographic composition of each middle school varies primarily based upon its geographical location in the county, overall 24.49% of the school division's students qualify for free and reduced lunch (Virginia Department of Education, 2015).

The *Nation's Report Card* (2015) shows that reading scores for eighth grades in rural and suburban schools have decreased nationwide as compared to students in other sub-groups. The selected school division provides a fitting sample of teachers (and students) in need of a comprehensive understanding of their instructional reading practices for two reasons: (a) the school is both rural and suburban—a population in jeopardy of not making gains in reading and (b) reading achievement data from Northern County schools shows inconsistency in scores within the middle school populations based upon state-wide reading assessments (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2015). Reading achievement for the 2014-2015 school year was comparable to national data with a division wide pass rate of 80% in reading. Scores per grade level revealed a 78% pass rate for sixth grade students, an 85% pass rate for seventh grade students, and an 80% pass rate for eighth grade students (Virginia Department of Education, 2014-2015). Based on achievement in the 2015-2016 school year, 76% of all sixth grade students passed, 86% of seventh grade students passed, and 76% of eighth grade students passed in Northern County Schools (Virginia Department of Education, 2015-2016b). While scores for students in grades six and eight both increased slightly, those for students in grade seven actually declined. Looking at the progression of scores from grades six through eight in both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, little progress was made (Virginia Department of Education, 2014-2015; Virginia Department of Education, 2015-2016). Both sets of scores reveal comparable mean scores to that of the national average of 80% (National Assessment for

Educational Progress, 2015). Therefore, this population provides an ideal sample of students who are not making gains in literacy, as is the trend nationwide (NAEP, 2015; Virginia Department of Education 2015-2016). Teachers and students in this school division are need of empirically based strategies like SRP to help promote students' literacy.

Participants

I used criterion sampling or cluster techniques (Yin, 2014) based upon teachers whose school administrators identified them as those ELA teachers choosing to use SRP to promote students' literacy. In order to participate in the study, teachers were using SRP in their classrooms on a daily basis for around 15-20 (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2014; Pilgreen, 2000) uninterrupted minutes and chose to adhere to this implementation for the duration of the school year. Based upon empirical data, students reading at this interval for at least one year will have positive effects on students' reading comprehension (Krashen, 2004; Pilgreen, 2000). I aimed to use maximum variation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and selected teachers who were representative of each of the middle school grades levels (six through eight)—teaching in various circumstances within four of the five middle schools within the school division. Participants were not selected from the fifth middle school as this is my base school and was the site of the pilot study. Piloting not only helps prepare the researcher for data collection during interviews, but allows for appropriate revisions before formal data collection begins (Stake, 1995).

Middle school ELA teachers were qualified to participate in this study based upon the recommendation of their building administrator (either principal or assistant principal) who had knowledge of the teacher using the practice of SRP on a habitual basis throughout the school year for a period of about 15-20 minutes per class period.

This study included six middle school ELA teachers (see Table 1) as part of a collection of cases. This design is ideal, according to Yin (2014), when studying curricular innovations within schools. In this instance, each school [or teacher] might be the subject of an individual case study, but the “study as a whole covers several schools [or teachers] and in this way, uses a multiple-case design” (Yin, 2014, p. 56). Ideally, two teachers would have been selected from each middle school grade level; however, those selected by their administrators were not representative of this. Three of the six teachers taught sixth grade, two taught seventh grade, and one taught eighth grade (see Table 1). Ideally, the sample would have been representative of both genders and multiple ethnicities in order to create maximum variation in the sample. All of the participants, however, were Caucasian females, yet they represented ages varying from early 20s to mid-70s. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) encouraged the use of three to four cases of varying circumstance to achieve maximum variation. I planned to select two teachers from each of the middle school grade levels—the varied circumstance being the grade level to which the teacher is assigned, to meet the prescribed criteria. Selecting participants in this manner created balance and variety within the cases, providing me with more opportunity to learn from the participants (Stake, 1995). Based upon the nature of criterion sampling and the recommendations for participants provided by the building administrators, I was limited to the sample described above.

Table 1

ELA Teacher Participants

Name	School	Grade Taught	Endorsement(s)
Carol	Fall MS	6	Pre-K-8 th & Administration
Emma	Fall MS	8	English 6-8 & Gifted Education
Samantha	Winter MS	6	English 6-12 & Gifted Education
Lucy	Winter MS	6	K-6
Christy	Spring MS	7	English 6-12
Jessica	Summer MS	7	Pre-K-8

As part of this study, I also included one focus group of ideally, six students from each teacher-participants' ELA class allowing for 33 student participants (see Table 2). One student each, originally selected for the focus group who had consent to participate, was absent from Emma, Samantha, and Christy's focus groups. Students were selected by their teacher to participate in the focus groups—the groupings were homogenous since students were already assigned to each teacher by grade level. I instructed teacher participants to select two students from their classes reading above grade level, two students reading on grade level, and two students reading below grade level in order to create maximum variation of student abilities and responses within the focus groups. ELA teachers were able to make selections for the focus group using data from the Star Reading assessment (a division of Renaissance Learning), which was administered division-wide at the start of the school year. This test offered data in the form

of reading levels when compared to students of the same grade level nationwide. The Star Reading assessment has been evaluated to determine its validity and reliability as a diagnostic instrument.

Table 2

Student Focus Group Participants

Name	ELA Teacher	Grade	Reading level based upon STAR score
Cami	Carol	6	B
Cora	Carol	6	B
Cassie	Carol	6	O
Carl	Carol	6	O
Cody	Carol	6	A
Candace	Carol	6	A
Earl	Emma	8	O
Ella	Emma	8	O
Ernest	Emma	8	A
Elizabeth	Emma	8	A
Eddie	Emma	8	A
Samuel	Samantha	6	O
Stacey	Samantha	6	O
Sarah	Samantha	6	A
Sophie	Samantha	6	A
Stephen	Samantha	6	A
Layla	Lucy	6	B
Larissa	Lucy	6	B
Laura	Lucy	6	B
Larry	Lucy	6	O
Lexi	Lucy	6	A
Luke	Lucy	6	A
Joy	Jessica	7	B
James	Jessica	7	B
Julie	Jessica	7	O
Joe	Jessica	7	O
Jada	Jessica	7	A
Jack	Jessica	7	A
Chanda	Christy	7	B
Chase	Christy	7	B
Carmen	Christy	7	O
Claire	Christy	7	O
Conner	Christy	7	A

Note. B=below, O=on, A=above.

Procedures

The following section details the procedures for the proposed study including the procedures for the expert review and a description of how setting, site, participant, and IRB permissions will be obtained. The intended means of data collection, interviews, observations, and focus groups are described in detail in addition to outlining my role as the researcher and how I intend to create trustworthiness in my study and adhere to ethical guidelines.

In order to determine the face and content validity of my data collection tools, my interview questions, focus group questions, and observational protocol were reviewed by two qualitative research experts. These experts or auditors have increased the rigor of my study and therefore its validity (Creswell, 2013) by reviewing my data collection tools and the content therein prior to my conducting this study. The experts who reviewed my data collection tools are considered to be qualitative research experts due to their roles on dissertation committees that includes teaching and guiding doctoral candidates on how to develop, execute, analyze, and report qualitative research. These experts specifically commented on the design of the observation form and that its layout would easily facilitate and help to organize my observations while in the field, in addition to making them easy to follow during data analysis. Therefore, no revisions were made to this tool. There were also no revisions of the interview nor the focus group questions. The experts found them to be sound in structure along with the supporting literature that justified their use.

Prior to collecting any data, I obtained permission from the superintendent of the school division where I conducted this study. I then applied to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to gain permission to conduct the study. Upon receiving IRB approval (see Appendix A), I spoke with the principal or assistant principal at each of the four middle schools

in the school division and acquired his or her recommendation regarding teachers who use the practice of SRP within their ELA classrooms.

I then submitted recruitment letters (see Appendix B) to those teachers meriting recommendation asking for participation in the study along with the Teacher Consent Form (Appendix C) and the Demographic Questionnaire (See Appendix D). I either spoke directly with each of these teachers at their school site or via email. I placed the aforementioned forms in sealed envelopes in their school mailboxes. I distributed the letters and questionnaires by the second week in September. If I did not receive a response from a teacher within one week of the receipt of these documents, I placed, in their school mailbox, a second teacher recruitment letter (see Appendix E) to be returned within one week's time.

After I received consent from all six of the teacher participants, I conducted the interviews. At this interview, I scheduled the three upcoming observations and I asked each teacher, using the STAR reading scores, to recommend six student participants. Each of these students was from one of their ELA classes. These students participated in focus groups with me. I collated and sealed the Student Recruitment Letter (see Appendix F), Parent Consent Form (see Appendix G), Student Assent Form (see Appendix H), and Reader's Survey (see Appendix I) into stamped, sealed envelopes and gave them to each teacher participant. Each teacher addressed (as I did not have access to students' home addresses) the envelopes to the perspective student participants. Students receiving consent to participate returned these forms and surveys to their teachers. I retrieved them when I returned to the school sites to conduct the observations. I was in contact with the teachers via email and phone to ensure that all forms were returned. If a selected student and their parent did not consent within two weeks, the teacher was asked to select another student and the same procedure for distributing the aforementioned documents

was followed until six student participants per teacher were secured.

After acquiring IRB approval for this study and prior to collecting any data, I conducted a pilot study at my base school (the fifth middle school within Northern County Schools.) Conducting a pilot study allowed me to “develop, test, or refine the planned research questions and procedures that will later be used in the formal case study” (Yin, 2014, p. 240). Conducting a pilot study allowed me to practice conducting my study on a smaller scale using my building administrator, one middle school ELA teacher participant, and six of his or her students. This pilot study adhered to the same procedures described in this proposal in order to determine if any of these procedures and/or research questions should be altered. Based upon the pilot study, no modifications to data collection methods was necessary and thus, no revisions were made. None of the data from the pilot study was used in this study’s final report (Yin, 2014).

I conducted a semi-structured interview with each of the six the teacher participants using the interview questions (see Appendix L). I transcribed each of the interviews and then coded each of them individually before conducting a cross-case analysis. I then scheduled times to observe the teacher participants’ ELA classes using SRP at least three times. Each of these observations was scheduled in order to ensure that the phenomenon under investigation was taking place during the observation. I reviewed the field notes following each observation and coded them first by case and then conducted a cross-case analysis.

Following the observations, I scheduled a day with the teacher to conduct the focus groups during the students’ lunch periods (so they did not miss any instruction). Before convening the focus groups, I ensured that students had obtained signed parental consent to participate in this study and also given their own written assent to be a member of a focus group. Students were incentivized to participate in the focus groups during lunch because I provided

them with a pizza lunch. I created journalistic notes capturing the experiences of the focus groups (Stake, 1995), coded them by case, and then conducted a cross-case analysis.

The Researcher's Role

For this study, I was the human instrument who analyzed the data. As is the intent of qualitative research, my job was to make the world visible or showcase the stories and experiences of each teacher participant through my interpretations and presentations of the collected data in this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In order to avoid bias and remain subjective throughout data collection, I embodied the following values of a case study researcher, as defined by Yin (2014):

- (a) asked good questions—and interpreted the answers fairly, (b) was a good listener not trapped by existing ideologies or preconceptions, (c) stayed adaptive, so that newly encountered situations could be seen as opportunities, not threats, (d) had a firm grasp of the issues being studied, even when in an exploratory mode, (e) avoided biases by sensitive to contrary evidence, also knowing how to conduct research ethically. (p. 73)

As I collected data, I was aware of my own biases regarding the practice of SRP since I have used this within my own ELA classrooms. As I analyzed the data, I was continually aware of the “continuous interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected” (Yin, 2014, p. 72) in order to avoid confirmation bias. I also created a Reflective Journal (see Appendix Q) that allowed me to record my biases throughout the study. I strove to adhere to the values of a case study researcher (Yin, 2014) as I collected and analyzed the data.

My assumptions regarding middle school teachers' use of SRP to promote student literacy were that it is something many ELA teachers are using haphazardly within their

classrooms. Many teachers seem to delight in the concept of its use as they espouse the educational philosophy that “reading is learned through reading” (NRP, 2014, p. 209) or that “Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammatical competence, and the only way we become good spellers” (Krashen, 2004, p. 37). However, many teachers feel overwhelmed by the curricular and instructional demands imposed upon them in the current era of high stakes testing. Many start the year with the intention to implement SRP on a daily basis but eventually feel so overwhelmed by content and pressed for time to teach it that they abandon the practice (Pilgreen, 2000). It is also my assumption that some teachers would indicate that they felt pressured by the results of high stakes tests and the accountability they face in light of those tests that pressured them to deprioritize student reading practice. Those teachers using SRP are likely interested in promoting student literacy through its use because they recognize that the frequent use of this practice can lead students to lifelong reading (Pilgreen, 2000), but it still remains unclear exactly how and why teachers are choosing to use SRP in today’s educational regime.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study took three forms in order to create triangulation or convergence of the findings (Yin, 2014). Teacher participants were first interviewed individually. Then, I conducted a minimum of three observations of their ELA classes using SRP. Finally, I conducted six focus groups (each with six students) from each ELA teacher participant’s class. Using these data collection measures created validity in the intended study and created a chain of evidence (Yin, 2014).

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D) was given to teacher participants to complete prior to the interviews along with the Teacher Consent Form. Teachers were asked to complete the questionnaires at the time they complete the Teacher Consent Form and return it to me at the interview. I reviewed each questionnaire prior to interviewing the teacher. The questionnaire was not intended to provide any data for this study but merely to contextualize the teacher as a practitioner. These responses proved useful as informal talking points before the start of the interview to relax the participant.

Interviews

One form of data collection for this study was interviews. I conducted one-on-one, intensive interviews with each of the teacher participants resembling a guided conversation, intending to satisfy my line of inquiry but also remain nonthreatening to the participants (Yin, 2014). All interviews were recorded. Following each interview, I wrote down some key ideas and episodes from the interview in order to glean as much meaning as possible since “the interview is the main road to multiple realities” (Stake, 1995, p. 64). I then transcribed the interviews.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions (Appendix L).

- (1) Why and how did you decide to become an ELA teacher?
- (2) Why and how did you decide to teach at the middle school level?
- (3) What are your philosophies about teaching reading and literacy to your students?
- (4) Please describe a typical day in your classroom.
- (5) What conditions exist within your classroom that make student reading practice an effective practice for your students?

- (6) What, if any, training have you had that has helped you design your instruction using SRP?
- (7) What, if any, parameters accompany students' selection of books read during SRP?
- (8) What, if any, accountability measures do you use for SRP?
- (9) How do you assist students in choosing texts for SRP?
- (10) How would your students describe the use of SRP in your classroom?
- (11) What consideration do you give to a student's ZPD when designing SRP in your classroom?
- (12) What are the biggest instructional priorities in your classroom?
- (13) How would you describe today's educational climate regarding reading instruction?
- (14) How would you describe the value of literacy to today's students?
- (15) How would you characterize students' attitudes toward reading in this school?
- (16) How would you characterize students' attitudes toward reading in your classroom?
- (17) How has your use of reading practices changed since you first began teaching?
- (18) What, if anything, were you taught about SRP during your teacher preparation program?
- (19) What caused you to choose to implement SRP in your classroom?
- (20) Please share your thoughts regarding this statement: Reading is learned through reading.
- (21) Please share your thoughts regarding this statement: SRP in an intervention.
- (22) In what ways, if any, does your use of SRP allow you to meet the social and developmental needs of your students?
- (23) How do you make SRP a satisfying experience for your students?

(24) How does your use of SRP allow you to nurture students' love for lifelong learning and literacy?

(25) How does your use of SRP allow your students to meet their needs for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in your classroom?

The purpose of the questions related to how teachers choose to use SRP was to understand the context for the instructional decision-making process related to ELA teachers' implementation of SRP within their classrooms. Question one was based upon Siah and Kwok's (2010) assertion that it is "important to understand the conditions that enable SSR programs to be effective so that program developers can apply SSR to more suitable contexts to create the expected outcomes" (p. 169). Questions two through eight were derived from Daniels and Steres' (2011) case study investigating school reading culture and middle school teachers. Questions nine and 10 were based upon the findings of Bryan et al. (2003) that merely modeling SRP and allocating time for its occurrence are not enough to ensure that this practice is fully engaging for all students. Question 11 was directly aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory, in which he asserted that students learn skills, like reading, more optimally when instruction occurs within their developmental level. The purpose of the questions related to why teachers choose to use SRP was to understand the instructional decision making processes and instructional values associated with teachers choosing to use SRP. Questions 12 and 13 were based upon the assertion of Reutzell et al. (2012) that it can be difficult for teachers to prioritize silent reading as part of instruction in an era of high stakes testing and accountability. Question 14 was based upon Krashen's (2008) assertion that Free Voluntary Reading is an instructional means to stimulate students' literacy development. Questions 15 through 17 were derived from a case study investigating school reading culture and student

engagement in a middle school in which the researchers interviewed teachers about their use of Silent Sustained Reading. Questions 18 through 20 were based upon the NRP Report (2014) that SRP-type programs are featured in “nearly all” teacher preparation texts and that forms of SRP are practiced nationwide as well as the tenant that “reading is learned through reading” (p. 209). Question 21 was based upon the assertions of Siah and Kwok (2010) that SRP is not merely a practice, but also an intervention to help students with reading comprehension. The purpose of the questions related to what factors determine middle school ELA teachers’ choice to use SRP to promote students’ literacy was to more directly address and investigate the theories that frame this study: Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural learning theory and Glasser’s (1998) choice theory. Question 22 was focused upon both Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser’s (1998) choice theory in the classroom. Both theorists claimed that literacy is best learned within social and developmental scenarios. Questions 23 and 24 were based directly upon Glasser’s (1988) choice theory in the classroom in which he asserted that students need satisfying experiences in the classroom in order to be successful learners—this satisfaction can help the teacher to nurture lifelong learning and literacy within students as well. Question 25 was based upon Glasser’s (1998) choice theory in which he asserted that students need to meet the basically psychological needs of belonging, power, freedom, and fun in the classroom in order to become successful learners.

Observations

A second means of data collection for this study was observations. Direct observations allowed me to reveal social and environmental conditions for the ELA teachers’ use of SRP or Independent Reading (Yin, 2014). I conducted 18 teacher observations (three per teacher participant). These observations allowed me to view the participants in “*their* everyday

situations” (Yin, 2014, p. 88) and classroom settings. The observations were scheduled and occurred at a frequency based upon the teacher’s convenience to ensure that SRP was in use during my presence. I was a non-participant observer during these observations. Each observation lasted for at least 15-20 minutes to ensure that I viewed implementation of SRP in its entirety. I created an observation form to use throughout the observations (see Appendix N). This form allowed me to track which teacher I was observing as well as to record descriptive and reflective notes about the observation.

Reader’s Survey

A reader’s survey was mailed to the parents of student participants with the consent and assent forms. The survey helped to contextualize students’ attitudes toward reading and books prior to the focus groups. The Reader’s Survey can be found in Appendix I. I obtained the author’s permission to revise, use, and publish Pilgreen’s (2000) Reader’s Survey (pp. 128-130) (see Appendix I). This form required short answer responses and posed 15 questions to both students and parents. I reviewed these responses before conducting the focus group sessions and used the student responses to generate discussion about SRP in their classrooms.

Focus Groups

A third point of data collection for this study was student focus groups. There were six focus groups (one per teacher participant) comprised of up to six middle school ELA students: two students reading above grade level, two students reading on grade level, and two students below grade level—as nominated by the teacher and using data from the Star reading assessment. Thus, their assigned ELA teacher grouped students homogenously. I obtained permission from each building principal to provide a pizza lunch (or an alternative lunch for those with food sensitivities or allergies) for the student participants in the focus groups and

disclosed this to the IRB. Conducting focus groups allowed me to moderate a discussion about their ELA teacher's use of SRP in their classroom (Yin, 2014).

Focus Group Questions (Appendix O).

- (1) What can you tell me about reading in your classroom?
- (2) What does your teacher do to encourage you to read independently/on your own?
- (3) Why do you think your teacher gives you class time to practice reading?
- (4) Which parts of SRP do you enjoy?
- (5) Which parts of SRP do you wish you could change?
- (6) What does it mean to be literate? What is literacy?

Questions one and two were designed to probe students' knowledge of the types of reading instruction that are taking place. The effectiveness of SRP is premised upon students' attitudes, engagement, and autonomy with reading (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Merga & Moon, 2016; Velluto & Barbosas, 2013). Question three asked students to potentially identify why their teacher is choosing to use SRP in the classroom (Glasser, 1998). Question four was intended to uncover more information regarding each teacher's consideration of meeting students' needs as well as fostering lifelong literacy (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Glasser, 1998; Merga & Moon, 2016; Velluto & Barbosas, 2013). Question five was intended to gauge students' ownership of the practice of reading as a lifelong skill (Glasser, 1998; Merga & Moon, 2016). Question six was of my own design and intended to help qualify the thoughtfulness of the previous responses. Sometimes the most basic constructs can elude middle school students, yet they can still define more complex phenomena (like their teacher's choice to use SRP). Their responses should serve as an indicator of their engagement with literacy and reading.

Data Analysis

Foremost, I was the human instrument as a qualitative researcher for this study. I helped myself to engage in this process by memoing throughout data collection in an attempt to engage in a conceptual cycle based upon my research questions (Yin, 2014). I was aware that as a case study researcher, I should be prepared for the focus of my phenomenon to evolve as I collected data and allowed my methods to adapt accordingly (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014).

Individual Case Analysis

I transcribed the interviews before conducting the analysis. At this point, member checks of the interviews using the transcriptions were conducted to create trustworthiness. When analyzing the data, I first engaged in direct interpretation and drew meaning from single instances until “something [could] be said about them as a class” (Stake, 1995, p. 74). As I poured through the data (Yin, 2014), I looked for an analytic path that I could follow in order to inductively use and make meaningful connections and patterns (Stake, 1995) within the data. I analyzed or coded the repetition of categorical data by reviewing each transcript line-by-line, using a matrix to list the codes as they corresponded to each theme. This matrix or an enumeration of data table (see Appendix M) was created and is included in the appendices. I established patterns by looking for correspondence between two or more subunits for each type of data using a matrix to organize the units and themes. Data were analyzed across cases using coded aggregation within a matrix (Stake, 1995).

Since observations were not recorded or transcribed, I wrote down my key ideas and interpretations of the episodes throughout and immediately following the observations using an observation form (see Appendix N). I analyzed the observation by (a) reviewing raw data for possible interpretations, (b) searching for patterns in the data, (c) seeking linkages between the

instructional arrangement of SRP, its activities, and outcomes, and (d) drawing tentative conclusions (Stake, 1995).

Analysis of data revealed within the focus groups was conducted beginning with my own written account of the key ideas and episodes. I coded students' responses in a similar manner to the interviews using a matrix to categorize the prevalent themes while looking for correspondence between each theme (Stake, 1995).

Cross Case and Multicase Analysis

As a multi-case researcher, I began my analysis with the quintain, interpreted patterns within individual cases by each data type (i.e., interviews, observations, focus groups) and then analyzed findings across the cases to create assertions about the collection of cases (Stake, 2006). Using Stake's (2017) *Worksheet 4: Estimates of Ordinariness of the Situation of Each Case and Estimates of Manifestation of Multicase Themes in Each Case* (see Appendix R), I first coded the ordinariness of each individual case in order to determine initial themes. After coding the themes for each case individually, I used Stake's (2017) *Worksheet 5: A Map on Which to Make Assertions for the Final Report* (see Appendix S) to graphically organize themes by cases and eventually reach findings. In the final phase of analysis, I used Stake's (2017) *Worksheet 6: Multicase Assertions for the Final Report* (see Appendix T) to propose assertions and findings across cases.

Throughout data analysis, I addressed rival theories and explanations as a general analysis strategy. I engaged in explanation building as an analytic technique as this was best suited to address the how and why aspects of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Explanation building served as a form of iterative analysis as preliminary propositions were revisited from a new perspective and revised. These revisions were then applied throughout the collective cases

leading to a *refined set of ideas*. Finally, I developed naturalistic generalizations: generalizations that “shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts or principals” (Yin, 2014, p. 40) that educational stakeholders could learn from based upon the findings. In this instance, the theoretical principals were based upon a new understanding of middle school ELA teachers’ choice to use SRP to promote student literacy.

Trustworthiness

I constructed trustworthiness, sometimes called validity in case study, by: (a) creating credibility through triangulating data collection, (b) creating dependability/confirmability through the implementation of a case study protocol, and (c) creating transferability through thick, rich descriptions of the studied phenomenon, using maximum variation in the sample, and memoing throughout data collection (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Using strategies such as these helped to better ensure that the findings of my study have merit and value or trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I also avoided sharing any of my personal information and experiences regarding the researched phenomenon to better ensure bracketing of myself out of the data collection process. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) described *analytic bracketing* as a process of alternating focus upon the *whats* and *hows* of *interpretive practice* in order to contextualize the everyday language within a study.

Credibility

Credibility refers to constructing internal validity. I increased credibility by triangulating my data collection using interviews, observations, and focus groups. Triangulation is the convergence of data from three points to confirm the consistency of the findings (Yin, 2014). I addressed rival explanations and theories (plausible alternatives used for case study data analysis) of my phenomenon in the literature as well as conducted member checks of transcripts

(before the transcripts have been analyzed) and findings (after analysis of each case as well as after the cross-case analysis). Member checks allowed for the study's participants to review the transcripts as well as analyses to confirm their accuracy or look for possible errors on the part of the researcher (Yin, 2014).

Dependability/Confirmability

Dependability refers to creating reliability in a study's findings through the use of, in this instance, a case study protocol—a procedural guide for collecting the data for a case study, including field questions to represent the researcher's *mental agenda* (Yin, 2014). I increased dependability in my intended study by creating neutrality and minimizing bias and adhering to good research ethics (Yin, 2014). I avoided bias in this case study by: (a) interpreting answers with fairness, (b) being an open-minded listener during interviews, (c) remaining adaptable during data collection, (d) having a profound understand of the phenomenon when collecting data, and (e) being sensitive to *contrary evidence* (Yin, 2014). Finally, I maintained an audit trail (see Appendix P) by creating a case study database—a systematic archive of all the data from the case, organized in such a fashion that it can be retrieved and reviewed by an outside reader (Yin, 2014).

Transferability

Transferability refers to creating external validity to help ensure that the findings of the intended study can be generalized beyond the study's design. In order to increase transferability in this case study, I engaged in thick, rich descriptions of findings related to my phenomenon, employed maximum variation in my selected sites and sample (determining, in advance, some criteria that differentiate the sites or participants and then selecting those that are quite different in the criteria), and kept a reflective journal (see Appendix Q) as a means of memoing (the act of

writing down ideas about an evolving explanation) throughout data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2014).

Finally, I had my final data and analyses reviewed by a peer who possesses both a doctoral degree and knowledge of qualitative research data analysis. Doing so better ensured that the potential findings of my study could be generalized (Yin, 2014). Once I conducted my data analysis and formed my final conclusions, they were reviewed by a peer who holds a doctoral degree and who is familiar with case study research. This peer was someone who was not yet familiar with my study so that he could conduct a purely objective review of my analyses and conclusions. The purpose of this peer review was to provide an external check of the data analyses and conclusions in order to better ensure their accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). After conducting this check, the peer reviewer recommended that I revise my enumeration of data matrices (see Appendix M) to include more direct quotes/evidence from the participant interviews to enhance and strengthen the conclusions/answers that I provided to the research questions at the start of each matrix. This feedback was addressed and resubmitted to the peer reviewer for approval and was found to be sound. All other data analyses documents were found to be sound by the reviewer at the initial review.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that I, as the researcher, and the parameters of my study adhered to sound ethical standards, I first and foremost ensured that I had obtained IRB approval and site approvals before collecting any data or contacting any potential participants. I ensured that my participants, teachers and students, knew that their participation was voluntary within their informed consent (teachers and parents of student participants) and assent of student participants.

I also ensured that the participants knew that they will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality was of utmost importance during this study. All school sites and participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. Data was stored in locked cabinets and any electronic data was password protected to ensure its security. Data will be stored for three years and will then be destroyed/deleted. All manners of written notes, journals, etc. will be shredded and all electronically stored files will be permanently erased from the flash drives and Google Drives that stored them.

None of my student participants revealed anything of a sensitive nature to me, but if they had, I would have referred them to a school counselor. Additionally, as a teacher in the Commonwealth of Virginia, I am a mandated reporter of abuse and I would have made a report to Social Services should the need have arisen.

Summary

In summary, the intended research took the form of a qualitative holistic multiple case study of six middle school ELA teachers in Northern County Schools in Virginia. The purpose of this study was to contextualize how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote student literacy. I collected and analyzed data according to a case study protocol in a manner that created trustworthiness in this study's potential findings. Finally, I conducted the intended research in strict adherence to ethical research guidelines and IRB permissions.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this holistic, multiple case study was to explain how and why middle school language arts teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy. This study was framed by both Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory (1998). In the following chapter I have provided a brief description of each of the study's six participants and presented the data in the form of themes from the individual cases as well as the multicase analyses. I have concluded this chapter by providing answers to this study's research questions.

Participants

This study featured six participants, all of whom were female. Each of these women were middle school ELA teachers with years of experience varying from two to 35. These teachers were unique cases in that they chose to implement SRP within their language arts classes on a routine basis despite the other demands and curriculum they faced in their classrooms. Each of these teachers chose to prioritize SRP in order to promote their students' literacy. These participants were recommended for participation in this study by their building administrators.

Carol

Carol teaches sixth grade language arts at Fall Middle School (pseudonym). She is a seasoned educator with 35 years' experience having taught elementary school as well as sixth and eighth grade language arts. Additionally, she spent eight years in school administration and has a rare but complete perspective of the job of a K-12 educator. She has taught middle school language arts for five years and is passionate about reading and writing. When returning to the

classroom after serving as an administrator, she knew that she wanted to teach language arts and instill within others a passion for literacy as she noted that “I’ve always loved reading. I’ve been a natural reader and writer also; I’ve always been a writer since high school, especially, so when I was ready to move back to the classroom and enter middle school, I knew that Language Arts would be the best spot, the best match, in terms of my skills” (Interview, August 29, 2017).

Carol is a fascinating and rare case of not just a seasoned educator, but one who left the classroom after more than 20 years of teaching elementary school to become an assistant principal and principal. After eight years as an administrator, she made the difficult decision to return to teaching because she “missed the students” and chose language arts because of her passion for literacy and reading.

Emma

Emma is an eighth grade language arts teacher at Fall Middle School (pseudonym). She is a veteran teacher of nearly 30 years. She has always taught language arts, primarily at the middle school level and attributes this to her love of reading and writing. She currently teaches all three middle school grades, but solely those students tracked into honors sections. Therefore, some of her students are labeled as gifted/talented. She is endorsed to teach students with the gifted/talented designation and enjoys doing so. In her classroom, however, she also has reluctant readers—students who read well but are not interested in engaging in reading. She also has some students who have been “pushed” into her classes who are reading below grade level. Emma teaches language arts “because all my life I’ve been a reader and a writer” (Interview, September 11, 2017). She wants to instill within students not just a love for reading but also the ability to read well and become truly literate citizens.

Samantha

Samantha teaches sixth grade language arts. She has been a language arts teacher for 28 years at the very same middle school, Winter Middle School (pseudonym), that she attended. She chose to teach language arts because “I’ve loved reading since I can remember,” and she described that teaching her students to read well is “one of the biggest jobs I have” (Interview, September 13, 2017). She thrives at the middle school level because she enjoys inspiring students to become readers as opposed to being responsible for teaching students how to read [i.e., word attack skills, phonics, etc].

Lucy

Lucy began her teaching career as an elementary school teacher but currently teaches sixth grade language arts at Winter Middle School (pseudonym). After spending three years as an elementary teacher, she wanted a change and chose to teach sixth grade language arts. This is her seventh year in the classroom. She explained that she kind of “fell into” language arts by accident, explaining that she originally wanted to teach middle school math. After becoming a language arts teacher though, she explained that she would “never touch math.” She loves language arts because “I feel as though it’s [my] job to facilitate their love for reading” (Interview, September 13, 2017).

Christy

Christy teaches seventh grade language arts at Spring Middle School (pseudonym). She has just begun her second year of teaching language arts and feels that it’s part of her identity as a teacher. Christy said,

For me language arts was never really a question. I knew I was doing something with it. Always loved to read, I've always loved to write. Every part of me that's ever connected to anything is somehow connected to Language Arts. (Interview, September 14, 2017)

She believes that her students need to be literate in order to be successful and strives to facilitate that for them as part of her class. She stated,

If they don't like to read it's going to be a lot harder, just their whole life. So I think it's important to let them read books they like, let them spend time reading; they don't necessarily always read at home, so time in the class reading [is important]." (Interview, September 14, 2017)

Jessica

Jessica has been a teacher for 16 years, starting her career as an elementary school teacher. She currently teaches seventh grade language arts at Summer Middle School (pseudonym). She describes feeling "burnt out" and "exhausted" and in need of a change, so she chose to move to middle school where she could focus on one subject: language arts. Jessica is a unique case in that she is the only language arts teacher at her school giving students daily time to read during her class. She has been inspired by several author-educators' books and explained her philosophies in this manner:

I still feel like I have a lot of kids who don't want to read. Who won't open books, who've flat out said in surveys, 'I don't read unless I have to'. . . But I still feel that I need to get kids to read or like to read." (Interview, September 20, 2017)

Jessica has a classroom library that is likely unrivaled by other educators with 1,000 books cataloged by lexile level, zone of proximal development, and AR point value. She engages in a

variety of daily routines and practices that help to facilitate the success of student reading practice in her classroom.

Focus Group Participants

There were six participants in Carol's focus group, all of whom were sixth graders. Their reading abilities ranged from fourth grade to nearly 12th grade. Two of the students had lexile levels below sixth grade, two students were reading on grade level, and two students were reading above a sixth-grade level. There were two boys and four girls in this focus group. Emma's focus group had five participants as one student was absent the day of the session. These students were all in eighth grade. Their reading abilities ranged from eighth grade to post-high school as this was an honors class. Two of the students had lexile levels on grade level, one of the students was reading on a 12th grade level, and the other two students were reading at post-high school levels. There were three boys and two girls in this focus group. Samantha's focus group had five sixth graders; one student was absent the day of the session. Reading abilities in this group ranged from the beginning of sixth grade to post-high school. Two of the students were reading on a sixth grade level and the other three were reading at levels eighth grade and above. There were two boys and three girls in this group. Lucy's focus group had six participants with reading levels ranging from third grade to post-high school. Three of these students were reading below grade level, one was reading on a sixth grade level, and two were reading above a sixth grade level. This group was comprised of four girls and two boys. Six students participated in Jessica's focus group. Their reading levels ranged from fourth grade to ninth grade. Two students were reading below a seventh grade level, three were reading on grade level, and one was reading above grade level. There were three girls and three boys in this focus group. Christy's focus group had five participants. One student was absent the day of the

session. Their reading levels ranged from fifth grade to nearly ninth grade with two students reading below grade level, two students reading on grade level, and one student reading above grade level. This group had three girls and two boys.

Regarding the sampling for the focus groups, it's important to note that while each teacher was instructed to select two students reading below grade level, two students on grade level, and two students reading above grade level, this was not always possible. In Jessica's case, for example, she did not teach any honors ELA classes so her population of students reading above grade level was limited. The reverse was true of Emma's students; all of them were in an honors class, so her population of students reading below grade level was limited. In all cases, teachers were limited to selecting focus group participants who were able to complete and return the Reader's Survey (Pilgreen, 2000) as well as the consent and assent documents.

Results

The results of this study were determined by first coding the data by type (i.e., interview, observation, focus group) within each case and then determining what these codes said about each case as a whole, creating the individual case results. Aggregating these codes created statements of each case data set as a class leading to the multicase analysis. This was achieved through coding the ordinariness of each case to determine initial multicase themes, leading to assertions and findings across cases. Revisions of the preliminary propositions led to a refined set of ideas and finally naturalistic generalizations about the phenomenon of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote literacy.

Individual Case Results

The following is a narrative description of the themes that emerged within the individual cases as well as how these individual case themes answered this study's research questions.

These themes were generated based upon the codes located in the interview transcripts—giving emphasis to participants’ voices in the interviews, observation forms, and focus group session recordings. The codes and their corresponding themes are located in Appendix M. This section begins with an overview of the results in each case organized by the research questions and then moves to the breakdown of themes within the quintain.

Carol chooses to use SRP in an intentional manner in order to promote literacy for her students. One of the most common themes in her case was using SRP to promote enjoyment. She stated, “I want them to read because they enjoy it,” “I want them to say, ‘I just enjoyed it,’” and “I want them to enjoy reading, to get caught by it” (Interview, August 29, 2017). She also modeled SRP to promote literacy and stated, “I modeling to build their independence as readers” and “I model to instill literacy” (Interview, August 29, 2017). Another common theme in her case was giving students time to practice reading through the use of SRP and prioritizing that time. She stated that “they need regular reading practice,” “they need time at school to practice,” and “reading practice is a gift” (Interview, August 29, 2017). She also chose to use SRP to help create more literate students or a literate citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978). She explained that “Reading is everything,” “Reading is an integral part of literacy,” and “I’m building a community of readers” (Interview, August 29, 2017) through SRP. As Carol is consistently using SRP time to model reading, talk with students about what they are reading, track their progress, and help them set goals, her use of the practice is not haphazard or without purpose. She does not use SRP time to conduct her own classroom business or merely keep her students quiet. She does not view the time as a missed opportunity for other “instruction” because she is teaching her students about literacy through the use of SRP.

Answers to this study’s research questions based upon Carol’s case included:

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Carol chooses to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy because she wants to promote the enjoyment of reading. She explained in her interview:

Well I had a student this is true, this was three years ago, who during the snow days was stuck at home and just read, read, read, read, read. And she came back and she said, 'Oh I couldn't go anywhere, I couldn't see anybody, I just enjoyed my books.' And she got caught by reading and that year because she got by reading her SOL score jumped 40 points and she went from not passing, into the passing zone because she enjoyed it; she got caught. (Interview, August 29, 2017)

This anecdote succinctly sums up how and why Carol believes in the power and potential of SRP as a means to promote literacy for her students.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Carol promotes students' literacy through the use of SRP by giving her students time to practice reading and prioritizing that time as well as modeling reading for her students during the practice time. She explained that reading, specifically SRP is an effective practice for her students because

...that 20 minutes a day is huge. And we have discovered that they really do need that regular silent, engage in your own independent reading time. They don't read enough at home, for whatever reason, so providing that time here at school is huge. And that doesn't mean as teachers that we are just sitting back and they're reading on their own. You know, we have a lot of things that they're doing. One most important right now is that I'm modeling reading during that 20 minutes time so they see me engaged as they are engaged. And so, we're really developing that culture of, 'yes' you can sit there for 20

minutes and enjoy a book. (Interview, August 29, 2017)

With this statement she synthesized the necessity of routine practice as well as modeling through her use of SRP, very clearly articulating how she chooses to implement it in order to promote literacy for her students.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy? Carol's use of SRP embraces Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory because she believes that the use of it will help her students to become members of a more literate citizenry through the habitual practice of reading and the application of literacy skills in life beyond academia. As Carol reflected upon how her use of reading practices has changed since the start of her teaching career nearly 40 years ago, she explained that reading is a skill that is meant to be internalized (Vygotsky, 1978). She stated,

And I can remember teaching first grade, 20 years ago, when we went straight through a basil and you know, we did word families and gosh, it was...they enjoyed it, they had fun with it, but it wasn't anywhere as connected as it is now. And so, to me, now it's just so much more, you're trying to make reading an integral part of what they do, so they see just as part of themselves. (Interview, August 29, 2017)

As she noted the necessity of students' connection with reading, she implied that they take ownership of the skill, making it a "part of themselves" and internalizing it, just as Vygotsky (1978) articulated in socio-cultural learning theory.

Emma is a routine user of SRP who uses it in a manner that supports students' overall literacy (i.e., reading, writing, communication). One of the most common themes presented within Emma's case was requiring students to interact with what they were reading. She stated,

“We talk a lot about being an active reader,” “I want them to be thinking about what they are reading,” and “I want them to talk about what they are reading” (Interview, September 11, 2017). In her case, she also promoted the overall enjoyment of reading and stated that her students “Like the silence of reading,” “Enjoy the structure of silent reading,” and that “They enjoy choosing the books they are reading” (Interview, September 11, 2017). Finally, she used reading to help students become more literate citizens for their success beyond school. She emphatically explained that “I think that they must, must be able to read in order to be successful!” (Interview, September 11, 2017). Emma uses SRP with purpose, making it engaging for her students as well as instructionally meaningful. She uses what they are reading during SRP as a platform to engage and promote their literacy skills.

Answers to this study’s research questions based upon Emma’s case included:

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students’ literacy? Emma chooses to use the practice of SRP to promote students’ literacy because she wants to promote the enjoyment of reading, which she feels will enhance their overall sense of literacy. She explained in her interview that her students “enjoy when there’s a quiet time because middle school is such a busy place. I think they enjoy the structure of it [SRP]...they like the time and they generally like the book they’ve chosen” (Interview, September 11, 2017). It is clear that she is pleased to see her students enjoying SRP as well as the texts they are choosing to read during this time. It seems that she allows the enjoyment and pleasure of the practice to promote their literacy in a meaningful way.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students’ literacy? Emma promotes students’ literacy through the use of SRP by requiring her students to engage with what they are reading through purposeful dialogue, the use

of dialectical notebooks, and frequent analysis of their chosen texts. She stated,

Well, I'm always trying to do something different. And this year, I have to write that up there [gestures to board] to make me remember. Frequent small group purposeful talk: FSGPT. So I've been trying that with my sixth grade. I haven't tried yet with, sort of experimenting. But they have a partner and it's going to be their partner for a long time. And I'll say, "Ok, I want you to talk" and I'll time it so it's not more than two minutes long. "Talk with your partner about some characteristic your main character exhibits" or I might say "Talk about the setting. What do you know or are given?" (Interview, September 11, 2017)

Emma clearly has a variety of instructional strategies in place which she couples with her use of SRP to enhance students' understanding of what they choosing to read, requiring them to engage with the texts in analytical fashions. Through these strategies, she uses SRP to promote overall literacy for her students.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy? Emma's use of SRP embraces Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory because she believes that the use of it will help her students to become members of a more literate citizenry by not only having them read, but requiring them to engage with what they are reading through communication and writing. She uses SRP with the aim to mold her students into truly literate individuals who will transfer these skills to their lives outside of and beyond formal schooling. She explained the value of literacy to her students in the following words:

Well I think it's invaluable. I think that they must, they must be able to read to be successful. I don't care if they're going to be a plumber; I don't care where they're going or if they ever go to junior college or wherever, but I really think that to be an educated person that you're going to have to be able to read the manual. Truly. It's important that we connect all the pieces. I'm going to try to do it this year. I have so much I have to do. I'm going to try to give all the leveled articles to read from the newspaper or the magazine or somewhere and have conversations. I find that they don't know how to have a conversation about a book. So, I'm hoping that through the Frequent Small Group Purposeful Talk that we'll be able to foster some ways of talking about books. (Interview, September 11, 2017)

Emma wants all of her students to become truly literate citizens (Vygotsky, 1978) and referenced the necessity of socialization or “talk” to internalize the skill of reading as Vygotsky (1978) articulates in socio-cultural learning theory. Thus, she chooses to use SRP to promote literacy by embracing this element of socio-cultural learning theory.

Samantha chooses to use SRP with intention and purpose. She is most emphatic about the routine use of SRP and that students are afforded time to read in her classroom for the purpose of becoming more literate. One of the most common themes within Samantha's case was giving students time to practice reading as part of their instructional routine. She stated in her interview, “We start every day with 10, sometimes it goes into 15 minutes of silent reading,” “The more you do it the better you read,” and “Just knowing that I don't have time in English class every day to devote a solid day's worth of reading, but I figure if I can at least get them 50 min. a week, that's better than nothing” (Interview, September 13, 2017). In her case, she also used SRP to promote the enjoyment of reading. She believes that “If I get them started here at

school with the right book, that maybe they'll learn to like it...maybe they'll learn to like it when they realize that it's a good book" and that "The more you do it, the better you get it, the more you like it." She also stated, "I would hope they would see that I like it and that if I enjoy it as an adult that maybe they could see that it's valuable" (Interview, September 13, 2017). A final theme that was prevalent in her case was espousing both Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory as part of her implementation of SRP. She addressed socio-cultural learning theory when she stated, "I'm trying to talk to them more about what they are reading" and embraced choice theory when she explained that "I do not put any restrictions on what they read" (Interview, September 13, 2017). Samantha's role in implementing SRP extends far beyond simply monitoring students while they read; she is consistently dialoging with students about what they are reading, reinforcing that they can choose to read what they wish, and giving them an opportunity to engage in meaningful talk with peers about those books.

Answers to this study's research questions based upon Samantha's case included:

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Samantha chooses to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy because she wants to promote the enjoyment of reading, which she feels will enhance their overall sense of literacy and in turn, make them lifelong readers. When she explained her philosophies about teaching reading she stated, "I think that's one of the biggest jobs I have. Teaching them, well *inspiring* them, I would hope, to enjoy reading" (Interview, September 13, 2017). It is clear that one of the primary reasons why she chooses to use SRP to promote literacy because she feels that this is an integral role for her as a language arts teacher. She feels that it is her job to promote literacy for her students by instilling within them a love for reading.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Samantha is able to promote her students' literacy through her use of SRP by giving them time to read on a routine basis. She stated, "The more you [read] the better you get it, the more you like it" and "If I'm devoting 10 minutes of our class every day, then it's important" (Interview, September 13, 2017). She believes that the more they read, the better readers they will become. Therefore, giving them time to practice in her classroom will make her students stronger and better readers.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy? Samantha embraces both Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory through her implementation of SRP. Not only does she give her students the opportunity to socialize and dialogue about what they are reading in order to internalize the skill (Vygotsky, 1978), she also provides many opportunities for freedom, fun, belonging, and power (Glasser, 1998) for her students as part of the SRP routine. She explained, "I have some kids in my honors class who are reading the same series right now. So they are just chat, chat, chat, chatting about all that. So I think that helps too when there is common thread there for them" (Interview, September 13, 2017). By allowing her students to dialogue with one another about what they are reading, she is helping them to internalize the skill of reading—a strategy aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory. She also embraces Glasser's (1998) choice theory by allowing them the freedom, power, fun, and belonging to choose to read them same books during SRP and chat about those texts.

Lucy truly wants her students to spend more time reading, not just for their overall sense of literacy but also so they develop a love for lifelong reading. One of the most predominate themes within her case was time to practice reading. She explained that, “We take the first 10 minutes of class to read, every day” and “They know to bring their books to class every day” (Interview, September 13, 2017). In her case, she also promoted the enjoyment of reading to foster lifelong literacy. She stated,

I feel as though it’s our [language arts teachers’] job to facilitate their love for reading. Especially in our demographics. A lot of these kids aren’t and never have been read to at home. So, to kind of foster that love for reading here; I think that it’s important because if it doesn’t happen here, it might not happen for these kids at all. (Interview, September 13, 2017)

Lucy recognized that many of her students are not taking the time to read at home, so she feels that the use of SRP within her classroom is vital to the development of her students’ literacy. A final common theme in her case was the use of both socialization to internalize reading (Vygotsky, 1978) and the philosophies of choice theory (Glasser, 1978). In terms of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), she explained that “I talk to them, engage their interests, see what types of books they’re into and just try and help them out” (Interview, September 13, 2017). She explained that her use of SRP embraces choice theory by stating:

A lot of these kids are reading books that are about teenage adolescent kids and they’re learning they’re not the only one out there. If they can make a connection [they will feel a sense of belonging]. So more [about addressing] emotional needs and trying to get them to connect to something else, other than what they know. And showing them there are so many other things out there in this world. (Interview, September 13, 2017)

Therefore, her use of SRP allows her students to meet their needs for socialization (Vygotsky, 1978) and belonging (Glasser, 1998) within her classroom in order to best promote their literacy.

Answers to this study's research questions based upon Lucy's case included:

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Lucy chooses to use SRP within her classroom because she feels that it will promote the enjoyment of reading for her students, in turn, fostering their sense of overall literacy. She explained that her students "Love it [reading]" and that

If you make it fun then they're going to want to continue to read. So if you make it enjoyable and you don't make it a frustrating and you make it, when it comes to novel units, we do novel units, I'm not going to make a boy who's into about trucks and tractors read about a story about two teenage girls. I mean trying to make it enjoyable is going to make them want to continue reading and continue finding books that they enjoy. But making them read a book that's so boring they can't even get through it is going to be counter-productive. So making it enjoyable to keep them reading, so I mean I guess back to our other questions, reading practice doesn't make reading perfect. But continuing to read books that you want to read does foster a love for it, I guess. (Interview, September 13, 2013)

It is clear that her students' level of enjoyment with reading, in her mind, will translate to their overall literacy skills, making them better, more willing readers.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Lucy is able to promote her students' literacy through her habitual usage of SRP within her classroom. She values and prioritizes this time to practice reading because she feels that it is integral to fostering literacy for her students. When she articulated her

philosophies regarding reading instruction she stated,

Clearly it's important to me. I, we, take the first 10 minutes of every class to read, just drop everything and read for at least the first 10 minutes of class. I feel as though it's our job to facilitate their love for reading. Especially in our demographics. A lot of these kids aren't and never have been read to at home. So, to kind of foster that love for reading here, I think it's important because if it doesn't happen here, it might not happen for these kids at all. (Interview, September 13, 2017)

Here, Lucy articulated that the routine and habitual usage of SRP is a means to promote literacy for her students since they are not getting the practice they need at home. She gives priority to this reading practice time so that she can continue to emphasize the value of reading and literacy to her students.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy? Lucy embraces both Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory through her implementation of SRP. She gives her students the opportunity to talk to each other and her about what they are reading in order to better internalize the skill (Vygotsky, 1978). She explained that "I foster lifelong literacy through making connections with them and what they are reading" (Interview, September 13, 2017). She also provides many opportunities for freedom, fun, belonging, and power (Glasser, 1998) for her students as part of the SRP routine. She stated that

I think that's basically in the fact that they get to choose whatever book they want to read. They can read whatever book they want to read, obviously within limits, but that is a time when they get to read what they want to, not what I want them to, nothing out of a

textbook. And if we read a novel sometimes I'll have them use that time, but it gives them the opportunity of choice. (Interview, September 13, 2017)

Within these quotations and explanations, Lucy communicated that aspects of both choice theory (Glasser, 1998) and socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) are integral to her implementation of SRP to promote her students' literacy.

Christy values SRP as a time when her students can actively engage with a book. One of the most common themes in her case was giving students time to read in class. She stated,

It seems really easy just to say, 'I need that day so we're not going to read.' I think that's something I've been thinking about since last year. It's not like we're doing nothing, we're reading. And that's improving their reading. (Interview, September 14, 2017)

She values SRP as part of her instructional routine and finds the practice to be necessary for her students and the development of their literacy. She also explained, "You have to teach how to read and then it's learned how you read well. And then you practice that by reading" (Interview, September 14, 2017). She views SRP as a way to actually teach students how to read—the practice time is a method to facilitate their development as readers, and in turn, promote their literacy. She chooses to use SRP because she feels her students do not have enough time to read at home, so providing this time is making a meaningful contribution to their instruction, not wasting minutes. Another common theme within her case was promoting her students' engagement in reading. She stated,

I try to encourage them and make sure that they're focused on reading and then the ideal scenario is when I can read alongside them. And hopefully, eventually not have to monitor and prompt so much. They'll just want to read their books. (Interview, September 14, 2017)

Based upon the statement above, Christy seems to be using SRP to help students improve their engagement with reading, building their independence as readers, so that they can increase their levels of literacy. A third prominent theme within her case was that she takes their ZPD into consideration and uses it to help them choose books to read in order to most effectively promote their literacy. In terms of Vygotsky's (1978) theory regarding the value of a student's ZPD, she explained that "I think the thing about getting them to read is finding books that are on their level and that they're interested in" (Interview, September 14, 2017). She clearly recognizes the necessity of helping students find books within their ideal reading zone in order to best promote their literacy. She also embraces choice theory and provides her students with many opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging (Glasser, 1998) within her classroom. She states, "They get to choose what they read" and "I love to talk about reading so if I'm talking to someone about what they're reading, they really feel like I'm interested in them; that's a way for us to connect [to belong]" (Interview, September 14, 2017). The opportunities for freedom, power, and belonging Christy provides for her students as part of SRP is directly aligned with Glasser's (1998) choice theory.

Answers to this study's research questions based upon Christy's case included:

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Christy chooses to use SRP within her classroom because she wants to promote her students' engagement in reading. She explained that

So I think there's those two parts. Having to teach and work through this is how you understand something, and when you understand it, you'll enjoy it more because it will be a lot more confusing if you don't. And also trying to encourage them to find things that they're interested in and things that they want to read. Like graphic novels is

somewhat of an argument sometimes because not everyone loves the idea of them reading graphic novels, but I love it because it's like, if they're reading they're reading. And if they love it, then they're loving reading. So, for me that's a big thing. Trying to find things they're actually interested in. Even though a lot of them last year wanted to read about sports and that's not necessarily for me, but I was super happy for them.

(Interview, September 14, 2017)

It seems that Christy believes that if her students like what they are reading, they will be engaged with reading, and this will help to foster their overall sense of literacy.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Christy chooses to promote literacy through her use of SRP by giving time for students to practice reading during her class. She feels they need this time as they do too little reading at home. She feels this practice time is valuable and not wasted because students are working on developing their skills as readers. When explaining her philosophies about teaching reading she stated:

If they don't like to read it's going to be a lot harder, just their whole life. So I think it's important to let them read books they like, let them spend time reading, they don't necessarily always read at home, so time in the class reading as well. So I think it's important letting them read things they're interested in and not just things I pick.

(Interview, September 14, 2017)

SRP is a necessity in her classroom because her students need to spend time reading and spend meaningful time with books because they are not doing so at home. She values the ability to let them choose what they read to make the practice more personalized for them and in turn, promote their literacy.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy? Christy embraces both Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory through her implementation of SRP. Not only does she give intentional consideration to students' ZPDs when helping them choose what to read, she feels that this process helps her students to become part of a more literacy citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978). She explained that

What I like to do is give them the numbers... But I'll tell them the numbers and give them their zone and tell them that's a good range for you. If you're in this range you're learning and you're growing. So look for books like this. (Interview, September 14, 2017)

She also provides many opportunities for freedom, fun, belonging, and power (Glasser, 1998) for her students as part of the SRP routine and a means to promote literacy. She stated, "I think the one that hits most of those [Glasser's (1998) psychological needs: freedom, fun, power, and belonging] is that they get to choose what they read" (Interview, September 14, 2017).

According to Christy, giving her students a choice in what they reading during SRP gives her students power, freedom, makes reading fun, and instills within them a sense of belonging in her classroom.

Jessica chooses to use and implement SRP with extreme strategy. Truly, she could be the subject of her own case study since she is so methodological regarding its implementation. A predominant theme within her case was knowing students and making connections with them about what they read. She stated,

So I just think it gives me time to get to know the kids, to get to know their reading interests, to get to know the types of books that they're reading and the levels that they're reading so that I can better help them choose other books. Because I don't think that every other week in the library does it. I just couldn't. So it gives me time to check-in with students, it helps me gauge where they are. (Interview, September 20, 2017)

Jessica meets with each of her students on a rotating schedule during SRP, about five students per day. She chats with them about their books and how much progress they are making. She also uses this time to help recommend books for students and/or help them find a better fit if they seem disinterested or if they are not making sufficient progress with it. Another common theme in her case was that she gives great priority to the time allotted for SRP as well as its habitual and routine usage. She explained, "But that's what got me started wanting to do SSR because I think if we're going to show them that reading's important, we have to give them time to read" (Interview, September 20, 2017). She also embraces socio-cultural learning theory by using SRP to help students become part of a more literate citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978). She stated, "I don't know how anything thinks kids in this world can survive if they can't read" (Interview, September 20, 2017). She also embraces choice theory (Glasser, 1998) by giving her students ample opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in her classroom. She explained that "They have few limitations on what they read," "They don't always need me to check out a book [from my library]; they can just go over and sign it out," and "In the winter, we have a read-in and I serve hot chocolate" (Interview, September 20, 2014). She is passionate about using SRP and continues to use it despite being discouraged to do so by colleagues and administrators in her building. She feels that her purposeful implementation of this reading practice is just a valuable, if not more so, than other forms of more traditional reading instruction.

Answers to this study's research questions based upon Jessica's case included:

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Jessica chooses to use SRP because she finds value in the reading time and finds it integral to the development of her students' literacy. She explained that her students, "They probably say, 'Gosh she just won't give up, she just keeps making us read'" (Interview, September 20, 2017). She is clearly relentless in her aim to use SRP habitually and make it part of students' daily routine as well as a means to improve their literacy.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy? Jessica chooses to promote literacy through her use of SRP by giving time for students to practice reading during her class. She feels they need this time to practice reading and that it also affords her the opportunity to meet with student and help them select books that will help them develop as readers. She stated,

It gives me time to check-in with students. It helps me gauge where they are . . . My goal [was] to make a log, so when I'm pulling kids back I can say, 'When we talked to you before, you were on this page. How are you progressing?' (Interview, September 20, 2017)

Having time to meet with her students during SRP to discuss their interest in books as well as their progress is her means of tracking their progress with reading on a path toward literacy.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy? Jessica embraces both Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory and Glasser's (1998) choice theory through her implementation of SRP. Not only does she give intentional consideration to students' ZPDs when helping them choose

what to read, she feels that this process helps her students to become part of a more literacy citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978). She dialogues with them about books through her daily meetings and book talks to help them internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978) and become more literate. She explained that she gives intensive consideration to students' ZPDs and that she gives them a sticker with their reading zone to put on their reading logs. She stated,

Well, it's right in their face, it's on their log. I don't call it the ZPD for them, it's just their reading range. 'Try to select books in here; if you want to do something that's a bit little higher, come see me and if I know the book and I know how you've been working,' then I might say, 'This would be a good one for you now' or I might say, 'Let's wait on this one.' So, they have it; it's right there, it's supposed to guide them, and then all my books are labeled that way. So, I hope that it's all as it should be. (Interview, September 20, 2017)

She is consistently talking with them about their reading goals as well as how their reading development will lead to success later in life, regardless the paths they choose. She stated, "This is our life skills class; I don't care if you're a plumber, a lawyer or the greeter at Walmart, you cannot leave school without knowing how to read, write, listen, and speak. That's what drives me" (Interview, September 20, 2017). She also provides many opportunities for freedom, fun, belonging, and power (Glasser, 1998) for her students as part of the SRP routine and a means to promote literacy.

I'm, in my mind I would hope that if my kids would answer this they would say for freedom that they have few limitations on what they can read. I want them to be somewhere around their range, but I don't limit their book choice. Fun: I'm trying to provide so many different books for them to read. . . I'm going to jump to belonging

because I think they really sense that we are, that reading's a focus of the class. That if you're in Mrs. Jessica's English class, we are readers. Our class library, and they're like "We can check these out?" They get very astonished. No late fees, no due dates, you take one book at a time until you have the time to finish it. I think that also it does go into their sense of power because they go over, they don't need me, they choose whatever they like and sign it out. They have it until they are ready to return it. So there is a sense of, at least, trust there. (Interview, September 20, 2017)

Based upon this statement, it is clear that Jessica uses SRP in a manner directly aligned with choice theory (Glasser, 1978) as students have the opportunity to meet all of their psychological needs: freedom, fun, power, and belonging within its implementation.

Multicase Themes and Results

The multi-case themes below were generated using Stake's (2017) Worksheet 4: Estimates of Ordinarity of the Situation of Each Case and Estimates of Manifestation of Multicase Themes in Each Case (see Appendix R). The following presents each of the multicase themes accompanied by evidence to support their manifestation within each of the six cases. The multicase themes in this study were: promoting the enjoyment of reading, providing time for students to practice reading, prioritizing SRP, addressing students' ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978), creating a literate citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978), embracing choice theory (Glasser, 1998), and employing aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

Promoting the enjoyment of reading. Carol, Emma, Samantha, and Lucy's cases all featured a high manifestation of this theme, and Christy and Jessica's cases featured some manifestation of it. Each of the participants articulated a desire to use SRP to promote the enjoyment of reading for their students.

Carol stated, “If somebody’s not finding something that they’re interested in, that they are enjoying, then you [have to] work at it” (Interview, August 29, 2017). During observation one, Carol’s students were observed to demonstrate a high level of engagement with their books during SRP, and Carol was observed to be encouraging this behavior. This high level of engagement indicated the enjoyment of reading for her students (Observation 1, September 12, 2017). A student in her focus group, Cody, remarked that “Extended reading time (SRP) is enjoyable for us” (Focus Group, September 27, 2017).

Emma stated, “They enjoy [SRP] it. . .they know they are going to read their book. I think they like that time and they generally like the book they’ve chosen” (Interview, September 11, 2017). During all three observations, Emma was observed to give particular emphasis to students’ engagement with their books. Students were reading intently and were seemingly interested in what they had chosen to read (Observations, September 14, 15, 19, 2017). During the focus group, Elizabeth remarked that Emma’s use of SRP “helps us like reading. . .it opens up a world of possibilities for us” and Eddie stated that Emma uses SRP so that “we have the opportunity to enjoy a book” (Focus Group, September 28, 2017).

Samantha explained, “That’s one of the biggest jobs I have—teaching them, well inspiring them, I would hope, to enjoy reading” (Interview, September 13, 2017). Similarly to Emma, Samantha was observed to encourage high levels of engagement in reading among her students by keeping them on task and encouraging them to read (Observations, September 19, 21, 22, 2017). During the focus group, Sarah said, “[SRP] keeps us hooked on our books!” (Focus Group, September 29, 2017). Being hooked on reading likely indicates enjoying it. Stacey said, “A lot of reading time is sometimes not enough” (Focus Group, September 29, 2017). She clearly has a passion for reading and enjoys it. Samuel said, “I like to read and go on

my own. I wish we could read for longer and that language arts class was longer” (Focus Group, September 29, 2017). Samuel clearly enjoyed reading as well as SRP time.

Lucy stated in her interview that she feels it her job to “. . . kind of foster a love for reading here because if it doesn’t happen here, it might not happen for these kids at all” (Interview, September 13, 2017). In two out of three observations, Lucy’s students were observed to be highly engaged in what they were reading; they were enjoying SRP and therefore, their books (Observations, September 21, 22, 2017). During the focus group, Lexi said, “I enjoy and appreciate the time we have to read” (Focus Group, October 2, 2017). In this instance, the statement speaks for itself.

Christy stated in her interview, “If they love [the book they are reading], then they are going to love reading]” and “[I try] to encourage them to find [books] that they’re interested in and things they want to read” (Interview, September 14, 2017). Across all three observations, students in Christy’s class were observed to be highly engaged in what they were reading during SRP (Observations September 15, 29, October 6, 2017). Their level of engagement implied that they were enjoying what they were reading. During the focus group, Conner stated, “I wish we had even more time to read because I like reading” (October 6, 2017). Clearly, Conner correlated enjoying SRP with enjoying reading in general. Chase remarked, “I like how she [Christy] doesn’t make it a job to read, but she pushes you” (Focus Group, October 6, 2017). Chase finds enjoyment in SRP—it does not seem tedious or job-like to him. Carmen noted, “I like how we have our own book” (Focus Group, October 6, 2017). The fact that she gets to choose the books she wants to read during SRP makes reading enjoyable for her.

Jessica stated that, “I still feel like it’s my job to get kids to read or to want to read” and “I want them to say, ‘Hey, wow! I would pick up a book and read for fun now’” (Interview,

September 20, 2017). It is clear that her choice to use SRP is predicated on her promoting the enjoyment of reading for her students. At the end of her first and third observations, she concluded SRP by book-talking several new additions to her classroom library, talking about each book's plot, and what they might like about them. She said things like "If you enjoyed book *x*, you should try this book!" (Observations, September 26, 28, 2017). During the focus group, Jack explained, "[SRP] helps us, it's enjoyable, and it gives us a break before class" (October 4, 2017). It is clear that Jack enjoys SRP and reading in general.

Providing time for students to practice reading. Another prominent theme across the cases was using SRP as a means to provide time for students to practice reading. This theme featured a high manifestation in five of six cases, and Emma's case featured some manifestation.

Carol was very articulate in her purpose for providing SRP time for her students. In her interview, she remarked "I'm committed to 20 minutes per day of silent reading. . . They don't read enough at home for whatever reason, so providing that time here at school is huge. . . Reading time is a gift!" (Interview, August 29, 2017). Across her observations, and especially during observation three, Carol demonstrated via her language with her students that she places high value on SRP and the time provided to read silently in class. During this observation she said, "I'm sorry the clock is always pushing at me and you need your 20 minutes of reading time, so we're going to move on" (Observation, September 18, 2017). Using this language, she communicates to her students that values and prioritizes providing reading practice time (SRP) for her students. Students in her focus group agreed with her implementation of SRP and noted, "It's better [than previous language arts classes] because you have more time to read" (Candace, Focus Group, September 27, 2017) and "Extended reading time is enjoyable" (Cody, Focus Group, September 27, 2017).

Samantha was also committed to providing SRP time for her students and said, “We start every day with 10, sometimes it goes into 15 minutes of silent reading” (Interview, September 13, 2017). Across all three observations, Samantha was observed to communicate the priority of reading practice via her use of SRP by consistently reminding her students to get started reading, and if a student asked her if he or she could work on homework, she would respond with, “Nope, it’s time for reading!” (Observation, September 19, 2017). Students in Samantha’s focus group were quite perceptive of this and said things like, “People talk a lot in other classes when we read, but not in this one” (Stacey, Focus Group, September 29, 2017), “It can be hard to concentrate when reading elsewhere” (Sarah, Focus Group, September 29, 2017), and “There are fewer distractions when reading in this class; there’s no talking while we’re reading” (Sophie, September 29, 2017). Clearly, Samantha’s students are appreciative of her efforts to value and protect SRP time so that reading practice can truly take place.

Lucy uses SRP as part of her daily routine. She explained, “We take the first 10-15 minutes of every class to read. . . They know to bring their books and that we read for at least 10 minutes every day” (Interview, September 13, 2017). During all three observations, Lucy consistently ensured that students came to class with their books, sat promptly, and stayed on task while reading. If they were missing a book or off-task, she would remedy this by insisting they get their book or redirecting their attention to reading (Observations, September 19, 21, 22, 2017). One of her students even remarked, “I wish we had even more time so that we could really read” (Larry, Focus Group, October 2, 2017). Another stated “[SRP] is good because we get 10 minutes to read—10 minutes of quiet time” (Layla, Focus Group, October 2, 2017). Lucy’s students perceived that she protects and values reading practice time in her classroom and wish they had even more time—SRP is just that great!

Christy recognizes and articulates the need for reading practice time during her classes as well. In her interview, she explained, “I think it’s important to let them read books they like, let them spend time reading, they don’t necessarily always read at home, so time in the class reading time is [valuable as well]” (September 14, 2017). During an observation, Christy clearly communicated to her students the value of SRP by saying things like “I want you to read right now, not study” and “let’s get back to reading” if students were somehow distracted or off-task (Observation, September 15, 2017). Several students in Christy’s focus group were keenly aware of her intentions when providing time to practice reading during class. Claire said that Christy provided SPR time so that they could “Get better at reading” (Focus Group, October 6, 2017). Conner explained that Christy provides time to read “To make us better readers; so we read more often; so we get sucked up into another world” (Focus Group, October 6, 2017). Chase remarked that Christy provided SRP because “We are too busy to read at home” (Focus Group, October 6, 2017). It is clear that Christy’s students understand the value of SRP and understand her dedication to the practice.

Jessica explained that she provides reading time because “But that’s what got me started wanting to do SSR because I think if we’re going to show them that reading’s important, we have to give them time to read” (Interview, September 20, 2017). She explained that students “just have to keep reading” (Interview, September 20, 2017) in order to promote their literacy. During her observations, she protected reading practice time by using a timer to ensure an equitable amount of reading time each day (Observations, September 26, 27, 28, 2017). This is also notable because she was the only one of the participants observed to be using a timer during SRP. The use of this timer speaks not only to best practice when implementing SRP, but also a best practice use of classroom management. It is notable that Jessica may in fact possess

superior classroom management skills, making her implementation of SRP all the more seamless in her classroom. Many of the students in Jessica's focus group were cognizant of the fact that she used SRP to ensure their progress with reading. Julie said that Jessica chooses to use SRP so that "we finish our books and she can check on us" (Focus Group, October 4, 2017). Joe explained that "She uses [SRP] because it helps us finish our books quicker and so she can help people who don't like to read books" (Focus Group, October 4, 2017). Jada remarked that during SRP, Jessica will "help you find a book" (Focus Group, October 4, 2017). James explained that they need SRP because "it's hard to find time to read at home" (Focus Group, October 4, 2017). Evidently, Jessica's students are aware of her motives to use SRP to provide them with the reading practice time they need in order to promote their literacy.

Emma's case was the only one that featured some as opposed to high manifestation of this theme. The manifestation of this theme was not present in her interview, but became more prevalent during the observations. During each of the observations, Emma's students were engaged in the routine of reading for the first 10 minutes of every class. She also gave them a clear purpose for their reading during this time by requiring a short written response to what they read or a few moments of purposeful small group talk following the reading time (Observations, September 14, 15, 19, 2017). During observation two, Emma verbally prioritized SRP over the presentations students were required to give that day in class. When a student asked if they should shorten SRP to ensure time for the presentations, Emma said, "I'm not worried if reading time runs over and we run out of time for the presentations" (Observation, September 15, 2017). The manifestation of this theme was most prevalent during Emma's focus group. Students remarked that Emma uses SRP "So that we can read at our own pace" (Elizabeth, September 28, 2017), "Since many of us are too busy to read after school" (Eddie, September 28, 2017), and

“So we can relax and catch up on what we are reading” (Ernest, September 28, 2017). Students in Emma’s classes are noticeably appreciative of the fact that she chooses to provide time to practice reading and appear to enjoy SRP.

Prioritizing SRP. The theme of prioritizing SRP was prominent in three of the six cases. In both Lucy and Jessica’s cases, this theme featured a high manifestation while it had only some manifestation in Samantha’s case.

In her interview, Lucy stated,

I realized how important it was and how great it was. And how they really do sit and they really do read and it helps them get into a book. And if they can just read, and if I provide 10 minutes, 15 minutes in the day for them to start a book and then they get hooked into it. (Interview, September 13, 2017)

Evidently, Lucy values SRP and gives it priority in her classroom, recognizing the impact it is having on her students’ literacy. She also expressed, “I feel as though reading practice is important, but I also feel as though the more you read the easier it gets for you” (Interview, September 13, 2017) and implied that reading is becoming easier for her students the more they are practicing it. Therefore, this justifies the time spent for SRP in her classroom. During all three observations, Lucy clearly placed emphasis on her use of SRP by continually prompting students to get settled and start reading, also ensuring they came prepared to class with their books (Observations, September 19, 21, 22, 2017).

Jessica communicated placing a high value on providing time for her students to read when she stated, “My focus is always on the reading” (Interview, September 20, 2017). She also stated, “They just need to read. I just think it’s a huge difference. They see that I’m serious about it” (Interview, September 20, 2017). During all three observations, Jessica used a timer to

start and stop SRP time. However, during observation three, she initially forgot to set the timer, but a student said, “Wait! You forgot to set the timer!” And she promptly set it (Observation, September 28, 2017). Jessica’s use of the timer implies her protecting and prioritizing SRP so that students are getting adequate time to practice reading during class. The fact that a student remembered the timer and insisted it be set showed that he valued SRP as well. In the focus group, one student remarked “Sometimes the timer interrupts the good parts” (Joy, Focus Group, October 4, 2017) implying that when it goes off and ends SRP time, students do not always enjoy having to stop reading and move on with class. So while the timer is functional and helps the teacher keep the class on track, it can sometimes frustrate the students. Julie explained that Jessica’s prioritized use of SRP “helps [students] be more prepared for class” (Focus Group, October 4, 2017). Clearly, Jessica’s choice to prioritize reading has several positive impacts on her students and their experiences with reading.

Samantha explained in her interview that “If I’m devoting 10 min of my class every day, it’s important” (Interview, September 13, 2017). What she implied here is that it can be difficult for ELA teachers to give priority to SRP in light of other instructional practices, but Samantha is a teacher who values the practice and feels that it’s important to help the literacy of her students. She also stated, “Just knowing that I don’t have time in English class every day to devote a solid day’s worth of reading, but I figure if I can at least get them 50 minutes a week, that’s better than nothing” (Interview, September 13, 2017). During observation one, when prompting students to end SRP and start class, there were several moans and groans. Samantha stated, “I know that it’s too bad when we have to stop reading at the good parts” (Observation, September 19, 2017). She clearly gives priority and value to SRP and so do her students, based upon their moans and

groans at the end of it. Since Samantha's case only featured some manifestation of this theme, it was not evident during the focus group or addressed by any of her students.

Addressing students' ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978). This theme was prominent in four out of the six cases, with a high manifestation in Christy's case and some manifestation in Carol, Samantha, and Jessica's cases. However, it should be noted that this theme only manifested within teachers' interviews as it is difficult to observe in person and was not a question or topic that was addressed in the focus groups.

Christy explained, "So for independent reading what I like to do is give them the numbers" (Interview, September 14, 2017). Christy's reference was to the numbers is the students ZPD reading range. She explained that she tells students what their ideal reading zones are and encourages them to choose books within that range in order to be promote their reading development and literacy. Christy clarified this and explained:

I want to just let them read to see what they're interested in and then I'll push them to try a little more advanced ones on the higher scale [ZPD scale] and then also be able to figure out better if the scale is accurate for other students because some students just don't test well. (Interview, September 14, 2017)

She also articulated that one of the challenges when implementing SRP is "Trying to figure out where they are and getting books on that level" (Interview, September 14, 2017). Here, she implied that as students' interests and developmental reading levels change, it can be hard to help students find the ideal books to keep them reading and progressing.

In Carol's case, she continually referenced her elementary education training and past experience as an elementary school teacher as a knowledge base for her consideration of students' ZPDs. During her interview, she consistently emphasized the careful consideration she

gives to students developmental reading levels in order to best promote their literacy: “I take their ZPD into consideration,” “Knowing their ZPDs is important,” and “I’m naturally thinking about their ZPDs” (Interview, August 29, 2017).

Samantha explained that she uses students’ ZPDs to help her individualize reading instruction for her students and to help them find the books that will be promote their literacy. “Sometimes I tell them, ‘I’m not sure that’s the book for you, now. It can be, but maybe not at this time’” and “I’ve spent more time this individualizing it with students this year I think than I used to” (Interview, September 13, 2017).

Jessica’s attention to students’ ZPDs is quite purposeful. During her interview, she explained that she addresses their ZPDs by “[Giving] them a sticker to put on their reading log with their ZPD from the STAR test and so I [say], ‘Try to stay in here’” (Interview, September 20, 2017). It is her intention that the ZPD stickers make it more feasible for students to learn what their ZPD ranges are and that she can have them refer to them during her conferences with them. She explained that “[The ZPD ranges] are right there in their face” (Interview, September 20, 2017) and that they should be choosing books that fall within this range in order to best promote their literacy.

Creating a literate citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978). As part of his socio-cultural learning theory, Vygotsky (1978) spoke of developing readers who become part of a literate citizenry—those students who become literate enough to excel outside of academia and make meaningful contributions to society. With this implication, Vygotsky (1978) asserted, as many of the ELA teachers in this study did, that students cannot become successful future citizens without being literate. Four of the six cases in this study (Carol, Emma, Christy, and Jessica) featured a high manifestation of using SRP to promote literacy with intention of making students more literate

citizens, and therefore, directly support Vygotsky's (1978) assertions regarding the purpose of literacy.

In her interview, Carol stated, "Reading is everything" (Interview, August 29, 2017) with the implication that students cannot be successful in life without it. Using this premise, she explained that one of her many purposes in using SRP is to "teach them to read critically...and [build] critical readers" (Interview, August 29, 2017). Carol felt responsible for ensuring that her students could read and create judgments about the information they were reading—this, she believes, is a vital skill in their literacy skills that they will need later in life. Her choice to use SRP allowed her to work toward this goal with her students. During observation two (September 15, 2017), Carol was intentionally addressing critical reading strategies and asking the students to apply them while they were reading silently (i.e., summarizing, analysis, synthesizing).

Emma emphatically explained that "I think that they must, *they must* be able to read to be successful" (Interview, September 11, 2017). This philosophy was a part of her choice to use SRP to promote literacy for her students. Throughout the observations, she consistently required students to interact meaningfully and critically with what they were reading silently via dialectical notebooks and frequent purposeful small group talk (Observations, September 14, 15, 19, 2017). Both of these strategies required students to think critically about what they were reading, making judgments, synthesizes information, and making connections with the text. Several of Emma's students addressed this phenomenon during the focus group and said things like SRP "Opens a world of possibilities" (Elizabeth, Focus Group, September 28, 2017), "Helps in everyday life" (Ernest, Focus Group, September 28, 2017), and "You can't get a job without being literate" (Ella, Focus Group, September 28, 2017). Clearly, these students understand that

Emma's choice to use SRP is bigger than just a classroom activity—that she is trying to make them literate citizens of the world.

Christy explained in her interview:

Any profession you think about, if you want to be a mechanic, you have to be able to understand that. And literacy's not just reading, it's communication and writing and the way we understand things. It's everywhere and I think the goal, the best thing would be, once they start seeing that it's everywhere: it's in civics, in science, in math that they see reading is cool and it's cool to be literate. And it's cool to learn and know and grow. . .

And so I think the challenge is getting them to see that this is something that will matter in [their] [lives]. (Interview, September 14, 2017)

Here, Christy directly addressed her desire and choice to use SRP to make her students literate citizens who will be successful in life beyond academia.

Jessica explained that she wants her students to be literate in life beyond school when she stated, "I try to tell them that you're going to have to be reading out there whether you go to college, whether you get a job, there's reading all around you. . . I don't know how anyone thinks kids in this world can survive if they can't read" (Interview, September 20, 2017). During the focus group, James remarked that Jessica's use of SRP "improves our skills [as readers]" (Focus group, October 4, 2017), and Jada said that it will "help you to read when you're older" (Focus group, October 4, 2017). It is evident that the students' perceive Jessica's use of SRP to have a purpose that extends beyond that classroom—a purpose that will make them more successful later in life.

Embracing choice theory (Glasser, 1998). In choice theory, Glasser (1998) articulated that all educational events should instill within students a love for lifelong learning and literacy.

By allowing students to have opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in the classroom, teachers can move beyond contrived learning activities to more meaningful and authentic learning events that instill within students a desire to pursue learning after formal schooling has ended. Five of the six cases in this study featured a manifestation of ELA teachers embracing choice theory within their implementation of SRP and in turn, aiming to promote literacy for their students. Samantha, Lucy, and Christy's cases all featured a high manifestation of this theme, and Emma and Jessica's cases featured some manifestation of it.

Samantha explained that her students have several opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging with her implementation of SRP. "They have power in that they can choose what they read," "I don't put too many restrictions on what they read...I don't have any limitations on what they read" and this gives them freedom, and "When there is a common thread between them and what they are reading" they experience a sense of belonging (Interview, September 13, 2017). During observations two and three, Samantha afforded her students many freedoms during SRP: they could snack while they were reading, visit her classroom library or the school library if they needed another book, take an AR quiz if necessary, or read from audio books (September 21, 22, 2017).

Lucy explained that students have the opportunity for freedom during SRP because they can take an AR test, go to the library, and read whatever they like (Interview, September 13, 2017). They can also increase their sense of belonging "If they can make a connection. So more just emotional needs trying to get them to connect to something else, other than what they know" (Interview, September 13, 2017). Also, "the fact that they get to choose whatever book they want to read. They can read whatever book they want to read, obviously within limits, but that is a time when they get to read what they want to, not what I want them to, nothing out of a

textbook” (Interview, September 13, 2017) gives them an opportunity for freedom, power, and fun. During the second observation, several students were making use of the freedoms afforded by SRP and visiting the school library to check out new books and take AR quizzes (September 21, 2017). During the focus group, Laura and Layla addressed their opportunity for freedom and choice during SRP. Laura said, “You can get a book you like” (October 2, 2017), and Layla said, “We can read something that we know we like, that we’re interested in. . .but I wish we had even more time to read what we like!” (October 2, 2017). Evidently, these students recognize and appreciate their opportunities for freedom during SRP.

Christy explained the following about her ability to embrace choice theory during SRP, “I think the one that hits most of those is they get to pick their books” (Interview, September 14, 2017). Here, she explained that just giving them the flexibility to choose what they reading during SRP allows them to experience freedom, fun, and power in the classroom. Belonging, she explained, is addressed when students are able to make connections with others based upon the conversations they have about the books they are reading. “I love to talk about reading so if I’m talking to someone about what they’re reading, they really feel like I’m interested in them, that’s a way for us to connect” (Interview, September 14, 2017). She believes the same to be true for the students in her classroom and their book-based conversations with one another. During observations two and three, students had the opportunity to sit where they wanted (i.e., on the floor, in beanbag chairs, beside a friend), giving them some freedom and power during SRP (September 29, 2017 & October 6, 2017). During the focus group, Carmen said, “I like how we have our own book” (October 6, 2017), and Claire said, “I like how we get to choose [our books] because some books don’t always interest me” (October 6, 2017). In the case of Christy’s students, they recognize and appreciate the powers and freedoms that they have when

choosing books for SRP. This is notably aligned with what Christy had envisioned when choosing to implement SRP.

Emma's use of SRP embraces choice theory (Glasser, 1998) in the following way:

I think the fact that we make it important time and they get to choose what they want to read and they know they have 15-20 minutes that during that time if they want to go to the library and exchange their book they can. (Interview, September 11, 2017)

With her implementation of SRP, Christy affords students the freedom and power to not just read, but go to the library and check-out new books. Students are not limited solely to reading silently for the duration of SRP time but can make the choice to go find new books if they need to do so.

Jessica embraces choice theory (Glasser, 1998) in a similar fashion to Emma. She explained that:

I have computers set up where they can take AR tests during the reading time so they know that SSR is the sustained reading, but it's also time to renew, check out a book from my class library, take a test, get help checking out a book. (Interview, September 20, 2017)

In this case, students have the freedom and power to choose how they use SRP time as long it is directly linked to choosing a book to read. Jessica also finds her "very few limitations on what they read" (Interview, September 20, 2017) affords students freedom during SRP as well.

Additionally, they have fun choosing books from her classroom library: "They go over there, they don't need me, they choose whatever they like and sign it out. They have it until they are ready to return it. So there is a sense of trust there, at least" (Interview, September 20, 2017).

Not only do students have the freedom to check out books and take AR quizzes during SRP time,

they also have the freedom to talk with Jessica about books and get her recommendations for what they should read next (Observations, September 27, 28, 2017).

Employing aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). As part of socio-cultural learning theory, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that reading is a skill that must be internalized in order for it to be mastered. In order to best internalize reading, there should be a component of socialization involved. In other words, reading is not a skill that can be learned in isolation. If students are to be truly literate, they must learn to internalize the skill of reading through educational experiences that have some component of socialization. All six of the cases in this study featured a manifestation of this theme with only Carol's and Christy's cases being some manifestation and all of the others being high manifestation.

Emma's implementation of SRP embraces socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) because she consistently integrates aspects of socialization into her use of it. In her interview she explained, "I think there has to be discussion about what they are reading," "I think there has to be conversation about what they are reading," "[We have] frequent small group purposeful talk about reading," and "They are trying to influence what their friends are reading while in the library" (Interview, September 11, 2017). It is clear that she wants her students to talk meaningfully about the books they are reading and does not discourage their authentic conversations about books while in the library. Socialization is an important component of SRP to Emma.

Samantha explained that socialization is part of her use of SRP because she "tries to talk with them about what they are reading" and that she "[tries] to get them to share what they're reading and why it's really good with one another" (Interview, September 13, 2017). Another strategy she uses is the following:

Sometimes I'll just tell them to choose a random page number, everybody turn to page 12, count down so many lines, and write the first sentence that shows up. And then we write the title so that we know what the book is. (Interview, September 13, 2017)

With this strategy she tries to get the students interested in the other students' books and spark conversation about these interesting lines that they have pulled from it. She also remarked that "I have some kids in my honors class who are reading the same series right now. So they are just chat, chat, chatting about all that. So I think that helps, too, when there is common thread there for them" (Interview, September 13, 2017). She recognizes that socialization is important part of her students internalizing the skill of reading. Several students in Samantha's focus group commented on the opportunities they have to socialize about what they are reading. Samuel said, "We can talk to each other about books so that we understand them better" (Focus Group, September 29, 2017). Sarah said, "She talks to us and helps us understand what we are reading" (Focus Group, September 29, 2017). Sophie explained, "[She] allows us to talk to each other so we can hear other people's points of view on books" (Focus Group, September 29, 2017). Stephen remarked that "She lets us discuss common books" (Focus Group, September 29, 2017). Samantha's students have not only perceived that they have opportunities to socialize about what they are reading, but have actually understood Samantha's purposes for doing so.

Lucy uses socialization in the following manner: "I help them choose books by talking to them, engaging their interests. . . I foster lifelong literacy through making connections with them and what they are reading" (Interview, September 13, 2017). At the end of SRP during observation one, Lucy took a few minutes to ask the students about what they were reading and chat with them regarding whether or not they enjoyed it and why (September 19, 2017). Several of the students in the focus group noticed and appreciated the opportunities for socialization as a

part of SRP. Lexi stated, “We talk about books, share what we’re reading, and get her input . . . it’s nice to see what others are reading and talk to others” (Focus Group, October 2, 2017).

Layla reported, “She lets us talk about books with each other” (Focus Group, October 2, 2017).

It is notable that these students are aware of the chances they have to socialize and that they are using these opportunities to better internalize the skill of reading.

Jessica views SRP as a meaningful and appropriate time to talk with students about books. She remarked that without SSR time, she is unsure when she would have time to talk with them about books and choose new ones. “I will pull them aside during SSR, I will give them time to choose books during SSR” (Interview, September 20, 2017). She also explained that she book-talks the books at the end of SRP time, giving brief overviews and comparing their plots to other similar novels. This type of talk gets the students engaged and helps them to internalize the skill of reading. She has also read every single book in her 1,000 book classroom library and has given a book-talk on every single one. She explained that reading the books prior to adding them to the classroom library is vital. She stated, “I try to read the books so I know a lot of books [and can talk about them]” (Interview, September 20, 2017). During each of the three observations, Jessica not only conferenced with students about what they were reading, but also ended SRP time by allowing any student who wished to briefly share something about what they were reading, in addition to book-talking one to two new classroom library books each day (Observations, September 26, 27, 28, 2017). During the focus group, several students addressed socialization as part of SRP in their classroom. James explained that “[SRP] helps her have time to talk with us. . . She introduces us to new books, gives book talks, and has book displays” and Jack stated, “She suggests and loans us books” (Focus Group, October 4, 2017). Clearly, the students appreciate the conversations Jessica has with them as well as the book talks—they seem

to be motivated by this and working toward internalizing reading via this socialization.

Carol noted in her interview that she embraces SLT (Vygotsky, 1978) and utilizes socialization to help students internalize reading when she stated, “We talk about books . . . discussing books is important . . . we read together. . . I’m conferencing with them about reading” (Interview, August 29, 2017). Additionally, she explained that “[Students] are excited to go to the library as a class” (Interview, August 29, 2017) because this visit affords them an opportunity to talk to each other about what they reading—they enjoy the socialization that accompanies what they reading.

Christy explained that she always takes notice of students who love to talk about what they are reading. She said, “I had a group last year who loved talking about their books” (Interview, September 14, 2017). She also created a “speed dating” activity to incorporate socialization during which students gave quick books talks to each other and then had to choose which book(s) they would like to read based upon the talk (Interview, September 14, 2017). This type of activity is exactly what Vygotsky (1978) was likely referring to—one in which students are learning about books and reading from one another, not in total isolation.

Multicase Assertions

The following multicase assertions were developed by first graphically organizing the themes within each case and using those themes to reach findings based upon Stake’s (2017) Worksheet 5: A Map on which to make Assertions for the final report (see Appendix S). Final assertions were articulated and developed using Stake’s (2017) Worksheet 6: Multicase assertions for the final report (see Appendix T). The final assertions were as follows:

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use the practice of SRP to promote students’ literacy?

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy because it is a way to allow students to have time to practice reading. As they practice more, they will improve as readers and begin to enjoy reading more. As they improve and enjoy their reading, they will become more literate.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to implement the practice of SRP to promote students' literacy?

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy through valuing and prioritizing SRP via its routine implementation. As SRP becomes habitual for students, the consistent practice time will enhance students' skills as readers and promote their literacy.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

The philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have a marked impact on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy because giving intentional consideration to a student's ZPD allows teachers to promote literacy because they are embracing Vygotsky's (1978) idea zone for reading and learning. Encouraging students to read within this zone promotes literacy skills in an optimum manner. Integrating aspects of SLT (Vygotsky, 1978) as part of SRP helps students become more literate because they are socializing which helps them to internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978). Integrating aspects of choice theory (Glasser, 1998) gives students the opportunity for freedom, fun, power, and belonging, which promotes lifelong reading and literacy.

Explanation Building

The following multicase explanations were generated via revision (when appropriate) of this study's preliminary propositions (see Appendix K). This was done according to Yin's (2014) protocol for explanation building in which a researcher attempts to explain, in a narrative form, why and how a phenomenon occurred based upon a presumed set of causal links. This process begins with preliminary propositions based upon the relevant literature and theories, which are then revised, if necessary, based upon the findings to create the final multicase explanations (Yin, 2014). The multicase explanations are listed below and the accompanying justifications for their revision are located in Appendix V.

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

- (1) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they recognize the need for encouraging practices like recreational reading and want to devote class time to promoting lifelong literacy.
- (2) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they want to make reading a priority for students.
- (3) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy in order to enrich other reading practices and make reading more personal and enjoyable for students.
- (4) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they recognize the need for socialization as part of mastering the skill of reading and that students should be reading texts within their ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978).

- (5) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they want to use an instructional method that meets their basic needs of their students: (a) belonging, (b) power, (c) freedom, and (d) fun (Glasser, 1998).

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

- (1) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that seeks to motivate students to become lifelong readers, in order to promote their overall literacy.
- (2) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages reading growth.
- (3) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages socialization as part of internalizing the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).
- (4) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that “nurture[s] a love for lifelong learning in all students, not kill[s] it” (Glasser, 1998, p. 242).

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers’ choice to use SRP to promote students’ literacy?

- (1) Middle school ELA teachers choose to incorporate socialization as part of the implementation of SRP in order to help students better internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).
- (2) Middle school ELA teachers choose to consider a student’s ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) when making textual selections and recommendations.

Refined Set of Ideas from the Explanations

The following ideas were developed and articulated by applying the above explanations across the cases (see Appendix W).

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

(1) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they are mindful of the need for encouraging practices like recreational reading and want to devote class time to promoting lifelong literacy (Merga & Moon, 2016).

(2) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they want to make reading a priority for students.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

(1) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that seeks to motivate students to become lifelong readers, in order to promote their overall literacy (Harmon et al., 2011, Siah & Kwok, 2010).

(2) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages reading growth (Sanden, 2014).

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

(1) Middle school ELA teachers choose to incorporate socialization as part of the implementation of SRP in order to help students better internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).

- (2) Middle school ELA teachers choose to consider a student's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) when making textual selections and recommendations.
- (3) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they want to use an instructional method that meets their basic needs of their students: (a) belonging, (b) power, (c) freedom, and (d) fun (Glasser, 1998).
- (4) Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that "nurture[s] a love for lifelong learning in all students, not kill[s] it" (Glasser, 1998, p. 242).

Naturalistic Generalizations

The following generalizations (see Appendix X) were generated in order to shed empirical light on the phenomenon of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy. These generalizations are intended to be meaningful findings that educational stakeholders and researchers alike can benefit and learn from.

RQ1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students literacy because they not only want to students to enjoy reading, they want them to make it a priority. Practices like SRP such as Recreational Book Reading (Sanden, 2014), Free Voluntary Reading (Krashen, 2004), and Sustained Silent Reading (Pilgreen, 2000) have been documented as instructional methods to help promote the enjoyment of reading for students. As students engage in the practice of reading through SRP, participants in this study asserted, they will find reading enjoyable as well as make it a priority and part of their lives. Data from these cases suggest that the coupling of these two phenomena will promote literacy for students.

RQ2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages students to become lifelong readers (Harmon et al., 2011; Siah & Kwok, 2010) while also encouraging their reading growth (Sanden, 2014). Data across these cases demonstrates that these teachers are able to promote students' literacy using SRP by giving this time value and priority within their classrooms. As SRP becomes habitual for students, the consistent reading practice will enhance their skills as readers and in turn, promote their literacy.

RQ3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

Data from these cases indicates that the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have a significant impact on the teachers' choice to use SRP to promote literacy. In certain cases, teachers gave intentional consideration of students' ZPDs, allowing these teachers to promote literacy by embracing Vygotsky's (1978) ideal zone for reading and learning. By encouraging students to select and read books within this zone, these teachers aimed to promote students' literacy skills. By integrating other key aspects of SLT (Vygotsky, 1978), teachers in certain cases were promoting literacy by allowing and requiring students to socialize with peers about the books they were reading in addition to dialoguing with the teacher about them. By integrating aspects of choice theory (Glasser, 1998) into their implementation of SRP, teachers afforded students the opportunity for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in the classroom, which Glasser (1998) would assert promotes lifelong learning, reading, and literacy.

Summary

In summary, there were seven themes that emerged from within the individual cases in response to this study's research questions. Those themes were (a) promoting the enjoyment of reading, (b) providing time for students to practice reading, (c) prioritizing SRP time, (d) giving consideration to students' ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978), (e) creating a literate citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978), (f) embracing choice theory (Glasser, 1998), and (g) employing aspects of SLT (Vygotsky, 1978). These seven themes led to the multicase assertions that were used to revise the preliminary propositions and create a refined set of ideas. This set of ideas led to the creation of the naturalistic generalizations that form the conclusions for this study. In short, middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they want students to enjoy reading and to prioritize it; middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy in a manner that helps their students become lifelong readers, and that both SLT (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have a significant impact on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote literacy.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this holistic, multiple case study was to explain how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy as framed by Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory (1978) and Glasser's choice theory (1998). In this chapter, I have provided a discussion of the study's findings as well as its implications as framed by the relevant literature and the aforementioned theories. I have also presented an overview of the study's limitations and have concluded with my recommendations for future research based upon this study's findings.

Summary of Findings

The findings for this study are presented in the form of naturalistic generalizations, intended to be interpreted and used by educational stakeholders and researchers alike. The first finding in this study is in response to Research Question One, which asked, "Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy?" Based upon the interviews, observations, and focus groups conducted with this study's participants and their respective students, it can be generalized that these teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they want their students to enjoy reading and also to make it a priority. Data from the study suggested an almost theory-like assertion that as students enjoy reading more, they will begin to make it a priority, and in turn, promote their literacy. In response to Research Question Two, which asked, "How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy," the generalized answer would be that middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that creates lifelong readers—students who will choose to read and be able to efficiently do so in life after formal schooling. As teachers implement SRP with

value and priority in their classrooms, the habitual reading practice enhances their overall literacy and ideally, transforms them into lifelong readers. In response to Research Question Three, “What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers’ choice to use SRP to promote students’ literacy,” data from this study revealed that philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) had a significant impact on middle school ELA teacher’s choice to use SRP to promote students’ literacy. Data from these cases showed teachers (a) giving intentional consideration to students’ ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978) when helping them select books to make marked progress with reading, (b) embracing aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) by incorporating socialization as part of SRP to better help students *internalize* the skill of reading, and (c) embracing choice theory (Glasser, 1998) by providing opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging as part of SRP to make the practice more authentic for students and ideally, creating lifelong readers. What is most notable, however, is that half of the participants in this study were using elements of both socio-cultural learning theory by incorporating both socialization and taking students’ ZPDs into account (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) simultaneously as part of their implementation of SRP. Across all six cases, teachers aligned their implementation of SRP with the philosophies of at least one of the two theories framing this study. This finding speaks to the high quality of teacher participants in this study based upon their intuition to use SRP in a manner aligned with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998).

Discussion

This study is novel in two ways. Firstly, it appears to be the only holistic multiple case study of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote literacy within the last seven years. Secondly, this study appears to be the only one investigating the phenomenon of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote literacy to couple socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) as a theoretical framework within the last seven years. For these reasons, its findings add to the existing body of literature. Furthermore, data from this study sheds light on a potential instructional method for addressing lack of gains in literacy for middle school students in the era of high stakes testing and accountability.

Findings in Light of the Theoretical Framework

Both Vygotsky (1978) and Glasser (1998) made assertions in their respective theories that a primary goal of education should be to develop students into lifelong readers and learners. What differs about these assertions, however, is the instructional means required to do so. In socio-cultural learning theory, Vygotsky (1978) asserted two things: (a) reading is a skill that is best internalized via socialization—it cannot be learned and mastered in complete isolation and (b) optimum learning and growth in any skill (reading included) occurs best within a student's ZPD. By coupling the integration of socialization and direct attention to students' ZPDs, teachers have the power to help students internalize the skill of reading, ideally making them lifelong readers and promoting their literacy. Data from this study revealed just this: middle school ELA teachers do integrate socialization as part of their implementation of SRP—students are not expected to improve as readers within isolation. Teachers are giving students opportunities to talk with others about books, share what they are reading with the class, and

conference with the teacher about what they are reading and how they are progressing. By integrating attention to the students' ZPDs, several teachers in this study were using these numbers to help students find books on their ideal reading level or within their reading zone so that they could best progress as readers.

Glasser (1998) asserted in choice theory that the means to learning authentic for students and transform them into lifelong readers and learners was to provide opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging as part of classroom instruction. Many of the teachers in this study embraced choice theory and made SRP an authentic educational experience during which students had the freedom to choose what they read and how they used their SRP time (i.e., reading, visiting the library, taking AR quizzes), experience fun when they dialogued with their peers about what they were reading, had a sense of power when they controlled what books they read, and possessed a sense of belonging when they were able to connect with what they were reading and that they were part of a community of readers. What's more is how seamlessly these two theories work together within a classroom setting. Data from the study suggested that when providing opportunities for socializing as part of reading and embracing socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1998), students seemed to experience freedom, fun, power, and belonging (Glasser, 1998) as part of SRP. When harnessing the power of these two theories simultaneously, middle school ELA teachers are likely heightening the potential literacy and lifelong reading for their students.

Findings in Light of Empirical Research

While this study is novel in its theoretical framework, the findings are aligned with previous empirical research. In response to Research Question One, middle school ELA teachers are choosing to use SRP to promote literacy by promoting the enjoyment of reading. SRP and

other practices like recreational reading have been documented to promote literacy for students because they promote the enjoyment of reading (Merga & Moon, 2016). Furthermore, as SRP becomes habitual, the routine practice of reading will become more comfortable and enjoyable for students, which will in turn, make students better readers and promote their literacy (Sanden, 2014; Velluto & Barbosas, 2013). Middle school ELA teacher also choose to use SRP to promote literacy to make it a priority for students (Daniels & Steres, 2011). Where these study's findings diverge, however, is that teachers' choice to use SRP did not necessarily promote autonomy for students as readers as Daniels and Steres' (2011) findings asserted.

Answers to Research Question Two support previous research as data from this study suggests that middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy in a manner that seeks to create lifelong readers (Harmon et al., 2011, Siah & Kwok, 2010). Middle school ELA teachers also choose to use SRP in manner that promotes reading growth for students (Sanden, 2014). However, the findings of this study did not address fostering independence as readers as did those of Sanden (2014).

The alignment of these study's findings with that of previous research demonstrates meaningful consistency for educational stakeholders, especially teachers, when using this research to make educational decisions. It is clear that the participants of this study were espousing many of the guidelines for reading practice set forth by these prior studies. It is important to note that their instructional decisions are consistent with what researchers have asserted over the last seven years. This study's findings add to the body research in that, this is the only holistic multiple case study within the last seven years investigating the phenomenon of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy. This in-depth and very personalized analysis of teachers' choices via interviews, observations, and focus groups

has provided a new level of detail in terms of this phenomenon. What this study's findings have added to the body of research lies within theoretical frameworks and this study's participants' seamless integration and coupling of both socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) to create lifelong readers and promote literacy for their students.

Implications

The findings derived from this study are primarily targeted at classroom educators, specifically middle school ELA teachers. As the study was premised upon investigating the choices of middle school ELA teachers, the findings are intended to best serve their decision-making processes regarding using SRP to promote students' literacy. These findings would also be useful as both pre-service and in-service training for ELA educators and even administrators. Receiving training on the use of SRP would only bolster its successful implementation and likely give teachers more assurance when integrating it with other forms of reading instruction. Knowing more about the best practice usage of SRP might incline some reticent administrators to condone and support its use within schools.

In light of Research Question One, the findings from this study suggest that using SRP is means to promote literacy for middle school ELA students so long as ELA teachers use the practice with the intention of making reading enjoyable for students. Implicit in these findings is that a middle school ELA teacher's use of SRP should not, in any way, make reading less enjoyable for students. Instead, SRP should embrace students' choices and allow opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in the classroom (Glasser, 1998). Middle school ELA teachers' use of SRP should also help students prioritize reading, making it part of their educational routine. Teachers' habitual use of the practice, coupled with making it an enjoyable

experience will help reading become more routine, enjoyable, and a higher priority—all of which ideally translate to promoted literacy for students.

Implicit in the findings related to Research Question Two is that middle school ELA teachers should implement SRP in a manner that encourages lifelong reading, not discourages it. This implication relates to the findings for Research Question One in that SRP should make reading enjoyable for students. When students enjoy reading and prioritize it, logic dictates, they are more likely to espouse it as a lifelong practice as opposed to abandoning it after the end of formal education. Thus, middle school ELA teachers should aim to implement SRP in a manner that embraces the philosophies of both Vygotsky (1978) and Glasser (1998) by instilling within students a desire for lifelong learning and reading, not discourage it.

In terms of Research Question Three, the findings of this study imply that middle school ELA teachers should give direct and intentional consideration to the philosophies associated with both socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998). When considering socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), teachers should give intentional consideration to students' ZPDs, helping them to find and select books within their ideal developmental reading range—this will best optimize increases in students' literacy. ELA teachers should also intentionally integrate opportunities for socialization as part of SRP, ensuring that reading is not practiced in complete isolation, as Vygotsky (1978) asserted that socialization is necessary to *internalize* the skill of reading. ELA teachers should also embrace choice theory (Glasser, 1998) and provide students with opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging as part of SRP. Doing so will encourage lifelong reading through more authentic implementation and instruction as opposed to discourage it (Glasser, 1998) and promote literacy for students. Furthermore, those ELA teachers who are able to harness the power of both of

these philosophies and couple the paradigms underlying both socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) simultaneously, will create an even stronger link between the use of SRP and literacy for their students.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was primarily delimited by its investigation of only middle school ELA teachers and their students as opposed to elementary and high school teachers and students. This sample was purposefully selected based upon a dearth of literature focused upon the use of SRP and practices like it in the middle grades as well as the lack of literacy gains being made by students in grades six through eight. Furthermore, a part rural, part suburban school division was selected for sampling because its standards-based assessment data mirrored that of the national data and showed a lack of gains in literacy.

The limitations of this study are primarily inherent in its design. Firstly, data was only collected within one school division, limiting the generalization of findings to these rural and suburban demographics. Secondly, teacher participants were recommended by their building administrator. Recommendation of these participants for this sample was inherently restricted to each administrator's knowledge of the instructional practices and use of SRP within that teachers' classroom. It is quite possible that a potential candidate was over-looked for recommendation by an administrator based upon their limited knowledge of day-to-day instructional occurrences. Furthermore, all the participants recommended for participation were Caucasian females. Although an ideal sample would have featured participants representing various races, ethnicities, and genders, it was restricted by the criterion sampling and who administrators chose to recommend for participation. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot necessarily be generalized to include teachers of other races and gender.

As this was a case study, the bulk of the findings were derived from semi-structured interviews during which teachers self-reported their own data. Therefore, the findings are limited by the subjective nature of using a data collection method based upon self-reporting. Teacher participants also selected the students for participation in the focus groups. While each teacher used standardized criteria (STAR reading scores by grade level) to select students, there were certain instances in which a student could not participate because they were not able to return the consent forms. Losing this student as a participant in the focus group and being forced to select another may have limited the scope of data provided during the focus group. While many teachers aimed to diversify the sample of students in the focus group by gender, race, ethnicity, etc., they were sometimes unable to do so based upon (a) the reading level required to participate in the group (each group ideally contained two below grade level readers, two on grade level readers, and two above grade level readers) or (b) the students' (and their parents') willingness to participate in the study. The focus groups were also based upon students' self-reporting data and answering questions subjectively. This limits the generalizability of their responses. Lastly, this study's findings could be limited by the timing of the study—data was collected at the beginning of the school year, in September and October. There is a likelihood that some students were more compliant to SRP since it was still novel to them. Generally, middle school students have a tendency to be more engaged at the start of the school year. Conducting observations and focus groups later in the school year may have elicited different behaviors and responses from the student participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the findings in this study, there are many other aspects of this phenomenon that could be explored in new ways, adding to the growing body of research. Based upon the

limitations of this study's sample, a future study could investigate teachers from various school divisions, especially those featuring a different set of demographics (i.e., urban, private, non-secular, etc.). A future study could also investigate teachers of various races and ethnicities, in addition to include male teachers to broaden the scope of the potential findings. A future study may also consider a different manner of obtaining a sample that might increase its diversity—perhaps a manner of participants volunteering based upon the selection criteria or the investigator selecting teachers based upon the criteria. Also, the methodology of this study could be replicated at the elementary and high school levels in order to see how the findings compare across the K-12 spectrum. The nature of this study's phenomenon could also lend itself to a mixed-methods investigation whereupon a researcher might use pre- and post-test reading level data to track progress and/or gains in reading based upon ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to facilitate these potential gains. Based upon the review of the literature, there does not appear to be any mixed-methods studies investigating the phenomenon of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote literacy within the last seven years.

Summary

In closing, this qualitative holistic multiple case study investigated the phenomenon of middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy. The findings of this study generated implications and recommendations for ELA teacher educators regarding the best practice uses of SRP. In short, middle school ELA teachers should use SRP because it promotes the enjoyment of reading and helps students make reading a priority; they should implement SRP in a manner that encourages lifelong reading, not discourages it; and they should espouse the philosophies of Vygotsky (1978) and Glasser (1998) simultaneously when designing and implementing SRP in order to best optimize promoting literacy for their students. While this

study was an in-depth investigation of six unique cases, it is limited in its scope based upon the site, sampling procedures, and self-reported data. Future research should continue to investigate this phenomenon by widening the sample population, collecting data from various school divisions, and potentially using a mixed-methods research design.

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Appendix A

IRB Permission Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 8, 2017

Laurel A. Sviatko

IRB Approval 2939.080817: Student Reading Practice: A Choice for Teachers, a Chance for Students, a Holistic Multiple Case Study

Dear Laurel A. Sviatko,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, M.A., CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter to Teachers

September 1, 2017

[Recipient]
ELA Teacher
_____ Middle School
[Address 1]
[Address 2]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting dissertation research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how and why middle school ELA teachers choose to use student reading practice (i.e., SSR, DEAR, DIRT, etc.) to promote students' literacy and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

You have been recommended by your principal to participate in this study, and if you are willing to participate, you will be asked to (a) complete a 10-minute demographic questionnaire (b) participate in a 1-hour interview, (c) allow me to observe your ELA classes using student reading practice a total of 3 times for approximately 15-20 minutes each time, and (d) recommend 6 of your ELA students to participate in a focus group using their STAR scores to help select them. It should take from September until December to complete the above procedures, but the timeline could extend into the spring semester. Your name and other demographic information will be requested as part of your participation; however, you will be assigned a pseudonym to ensure that your information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me within 2 weeks to schedule an interview. You may call or text me at [phone number redacted] or send me an email: lsviatko@liberty.edu.

A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview. Along with the consent document, there is a demographic questionnaire. Please fill that out prior to the interview as well and return it to me when we meet for our interview.

Sincerely,
Laurel A. Sviatko
ELA Teacher
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Appendix C

Teachers Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
8/8/2017 to 8/7/2018
Protocol # 2939.080817

CONSENT FORM

Student Reading Practice: A Choice for Teachers, a Chance for Students, a Holistic Multiple
Case Study

Laurel A. Sviatko
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of English/language arts teachers' use of student reading practice to promote literacy. You were selected as a possible participant because your administrator recommended you based upon your habitual use of student reading practice like SSR, DEAR, DIRT, as a middle school ELA teacher. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Laurel A. Sviatko, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study. Mrs. Sviatko is a language arts teacher within this school division.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand how and why language arts teachers choose to use student reading practice (i.e., Independent reading time, SSR, DEAR, DIRT, etc.) to promote student literacy.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a 10-minute demographic questionnaire, prior to the interview.
2. Participate in a 1-hour interview about your use of student reading practice. This interview will be audio recorded.
3. Allow me to observe your classes 3 times during reading time, for about 15-20 minutes each time.
4. Recommend 6 students (2 below grade level readers, 2 on grade level, and 2 above grade level), using STAR data from this school year, to participate in a 30-minute focus group during which I would ask the students to verbally respond to 6 questions in a discussion-based format.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Should a student

disclose items of a sensitive nature, I will report them to their school guidance counselor. As a mandated reporter, I am also responsible for reporting child abuse or neglect and will do so should that need arise.

The Liberty University Institutional
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this document for use from
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Protocol # 2939.080817

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include insight about the use of student reading practice and how it can enhance literacy. Teachers like you could expect more guidance on how to best design instruction.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name during data collection, analyses, and the final report. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. After three years, all data will be disposed of and no other persons will have access to this data at any time. Interviews will be conducted in a private area, like a classroom or conference room where we cannot be overheard.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your school division. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, you should contact me at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Laurel Sviatko. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at lsviatko@liberty.edu/[phone number redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Verlyn Evans, at [email redacted].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio record my interview as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. How long have you been an ELA teacher?
4. How long have you taught at this school?
5. In what state and at which college did you complete your teacher training?
6. What are your areas of endorsement/certification?

Appendix E

Second Teacher Recruitment Letter

September 15, 2017

[Recipient]
ELA Teacher
_____ Middle School
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. Two weeks ago, a letter was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up letter is being sent to remind you to respond if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is September 29, 2017.

You have been recommended by your principal to participate in this study, and if you are willing to participate, you will be asked to (a) complete a 10-minute demographic questionnaire (b) participate in a 1-hour interview, (b) allow me to observe your ELA classes using student reading practice a total of 3 times, for approximately 15-20 minutes each time and (c) recommend 6 of your ELA students to participate in a focus group using their STAR scores to help select them. It should take until December to complete the above procedures, but the timeline could extend into the spring semester. Your name and other demographic information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me within 1 week to schedule an interview. You may call or text me at [phone number redacted] or send me an email: lsviatko@liberty.edu.

A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview. Along with the consent document, there is a demographic questionnaire. Please fill that out prior to the interview as well and return it to me when we meet for our interview.

Sincerely,

Laurel A. Sviatko
ELA Teacher
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Appendix F

Student Recruitment Letter

Month day, 2017

[Recipient]

Student

_____ Middle School

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how and why middle school English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers choose to use student reading practice (i.e., SSR, DEAR, DIRT) to promote students' literacy, and I am writing to invite your child to participate in my study.

Your child has been selected by his/her ELA teacher to participate, and if you are willing to allow your child to participate, he or she will be asked to (a) complete a reading survey and (b) participate in a focus group with 5 of his/her peers during lunch. It should take approximately 40 minutes for your child to complete the procedures listed above. Your child's name will be requested as part of his or her participation; however, a pseudonym will be assigned to ensure that the information will remain confidential.

For your child to participate, complete and return the attached consent document, student assent document, and *Reader's Survey* to your child's teacher within 2 weeks.

The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to consent to your child's participation in the study, I will facilitate scheduling the focus group with your child's Language Arts teacher.

If you choose to allow your child to participate, he/she will receive a pizza lunch during the focus group meeting.

Sincerely,

Laurel Sviatko

ELA Teacher in this school division

[phone number redacted]

lsviatko@liberty.edu

Appendix G

Parental Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
8/8/2017 to 8/7/2018
Protocol # 2939.080817

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Student Reading Practice: A Choice for Teachers, a Chance for Students, a Holistic Multiple
Case Study

Laurel A. Sviatko
Liberty University
School of Education

Your child is invited to be in a research study of Language Arts teachers' use of student reading practice to promote literacy. Your child was selected as a possible participant by his language arts teacher based upon his/her STAR Reading Test scores. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow him or her to be in the study.

Laurel A. Sviatko, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study. Mrs. Sviatko is a language arts teacher within this school division.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand how and why Language Arts teachers choose to use reading time during class to promote student literacy.

Procedures: If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, I would ask him or her to do the following things:

1. Complete a 10-15 minute Reading Survey (it accompanies these forms) to be returned to your child's language arts teacher with the consent and assent forms.
2. Participate in a 30-minute focus group with 5 other language arts students (on the same grade level) during which I would ask the students to verbally respond to 6 questions in a discussion-based format. This focus group will be audio recorded. Responses will not be shared with the teacher, only the researcher. Ideally, the focus group will occur during lunch time.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Should a student disclose items of a sensitive nature, I will report them to their school guidance counselor. As a mandated reporter, I am also responsible for reporting child abuse or neglect and will do so should that need arise.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

The Liberty University Institutional
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Protocol # 2939.080817

Benefits to society include potentially improved reading instruction for middle school Language Arts students that directly impacts their literacy.

Compensation: Your child will be compensated for participating in this study. Compensation will take the form of a free pizza lunch during the focus group session (or a suitable alternative for students with food intolerances or allergies) for the students.

Please make a note here if your son/daughter requires a food item other than pizza and if possible, provide a suggestion of what food item would serve as a suitable replacement:

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. A pseudonym will be used in place of your child's name for this research in the data collection, analyses, and final report. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Audio recordings of focus groups will be stored digitally, under password protection. After three years, all data will be disposed of and no other persons will have access to this data at any time. The focus group will be conducted in a classroom or conference room where students cannot be overheard. However, since students will be grouped together there are limitations to the confidentiality of this study—the researcher cannot prevent students from sharing what was discussed during the focus group with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect his or her current or future relations with Liberty University or your school division. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he or she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If your child chooses to withdraw from the study, you or your child should contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should your child choose to withdraw, data collected from him or her, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but his or her contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if he or she chooses to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Laurel Sviatko. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at

lsviatko@liberty.edu/[phone number redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Verlyn Evans, at [email redacted].

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
8/8/2017 to 8/7/2018
Protocol # 2939.080817

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio record my child/student as part of his or her participation in this study.

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix H

Student Assent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
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Protocol # 2939.080817

ASSENT OF CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?

Study name: Student Reading Practice: A Choice for Teachers, a Chance for Students, a Holistic Multiple Case Study

Researcher: Laurel A. Sviatko, teacher within this school division, doctoral candidate at Liberty University

Why are we doing this study?

I am interested in studying your language arts teacher's use of reading time during class to help you become a better reader.

Why are we asking you to be in this study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because your teacher has recommended you to give your thoughts about reading time in your language arts class.

If you agree, what will happen?

If you are in this study, you will first complete a 10-minute reading survey. Next, you will meet with me and 5 other students in your teacher's language arts class to talk about reading. You can be totally honest during this talk, and it won't affect your grades. We will meet during lunch, and I will bring you pizza (or something else if you can't eat pizza).

Do you have to be in this study?

You do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you don't want to, it's OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It's up to you.

Do you have any questions?

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
8/8/2017 to 8/7/2018
Protocol # 2939.080817

Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

Signature of Child

Date

Laurel A. Sviatko
Language Arts Teacher
lsviatko@liberty.edu
[phone number redacted]
Institution Advisor: Dr. Verlyn Evans
[email redacted]
[phone number redacted]

Liberty University Institutional Review Board,
1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515
or email at irb@liberty.edu

Appendix I

Reader's Survey (Pilgreen, 2000, p. 128-130)

Used and adapted with author's permission. Modifications are in **bold**.

Name: _____ **English Teacher's Name:** _____

Please complete the following survey thoughtfully, *using complete sentences*. *You will need more than one sentence to answer these questions*. As you answer the questions, think about ALL the reading have you done this year, not just the things you read in English. Think about reading for other subjects, reading for fun (yes, some of you do that), reading magazines, cards and letters, etc. Tell me what you really think. I know some of you have answered similar questions before, but you may find that your opinions have changed.

1. My earliest memory of reading, or being read to is (include as much information and description as you can remember) _____

2. One memory about reading in school that sticks out in my head is _____

3. I think the best thing anybody could do to help a young child learn to read is _____

4. The thing that surprised me about reading in **middle school**

is _____

5. I think I would read more if (give reasons

also) _____

6. If I were a teacher, I would encourage students to read more

by _____

7. The most valuable thing about reading

is _____

8. In my family people read

because _____

9. When I am a parent, I will tell my children the following about

reading: _____

10. If someone gave me a \$50 gift card to buy books I would buy (be very specific—

picture the clerk scanning your

purchases) _____

11. If I were to write a novel, it would be

about _____

12. The differences between watching a story on TV and reading in a book

are _____

13. The best books and stories

always _____

14. If I could change one thing about my own reading it would

be _____

15. Use the bottom of this sheet and write me a letter. Tell me anything else you have to add on the subject of reading—why you love it or hate it, what might help you be a better reader, what are the best things to read, how should reading be taught—the subject is endless. Please write a complete **paragraph** and don't forget to sign your name.

Signature: _____

From *The SSR Handbook: How to Organize and Manage a Sustained Silent Reading Program* (p. 128-130), by J. L. Pilgreen, 2000, Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook. Adapted with permission.

Appendix J

Permission to use *Reader's Survey*



LITERACY CENTER
1950 Third Street
La Verne, CA 91750
909.448.4660
Fax: 909.392.2848
<http://laverne.edu/education/literacy-center/>

June 12, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

As the author of *The SSR Handbook* (Heinemann, 2000), I give full permission for Laurel Sviatko to use the Student Reading Survey contained in it as part of her dissertation research.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Dr. Janice Pilgreen.

Dr. Janice Pilgreen
University of La Verne, Emerita
Professor of Literacy Education
jpilgreen@laverne.edu

Appendix K

Preliminary Propositions

RQ 1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they are mindful of the need for encouraging practices like recreational reading and want to devote class time to promoting lifelong literacy (Merga & Moon, 2016).
2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they want to make reading a priority and to give students autonomy as readers (Daniels & Steres, 2011).
3. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy in order to enrich other reading practices and make reading more personal and enjoyable for students (Sanden, 2014; Velluto & Barbosas, 2013).
4. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they recognize the need for socialization as part of mastering the skill of reading and that students should be reading texts within their ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978).
5. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they want to use an instructional method that meets their basic needs of their students: (a) belonging, (b) power, (c) freedom, and (d) fun (Glasser, 1998).

RQ 2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that seeks to motivate students to become lifelong readers, in order to promote their overall literacy (Harmon et al., 2011, Siah & Kwok, 2010).
2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages reading growth and independence (Sanden, 2014).
3. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that improves students' attitudes toward the practice of reading (Merga & Moon, 2016).
4. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages socialization as part of internalizing the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).
5. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that “nurture[s] a love for lifelong learning in all students, not kill[s] it” (Glasser, 1998, p. 242).

RQ 3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to incorporate socialization as part of the implementation of SRP in order to help students better internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).
2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to consider a student's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) when making textual selections and recommendations.

Appendix L

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

1. Why and how did you decide to become an ELA teacher?
2. Why and how did you decide to teach at the middle school level?
3. What are your philosophies about teaching reading and literacy to your students?
4. Please describe a typical day in your classroom.
5. What conditions exist within your classroom that make student reading practice an effective practice for your students?
6. What, if any, training have you had that has helped you design your instruction using?
7. What, if any, parameters accompany students' selections of books read during?
8. What, if any, accountability measures do you use for student reading practice?
9. How do you assist students in choosing texts for student reading practice?
10. How would your students describe the use of SRP in your classroom?
11. What consideration do you give to a students' ZPD when designing SRP in your classroom?

Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

12. What are the biggest instructional priorities in your classroom?
13. How would you describe today's educational climate regarding reading instruction?
14. How would you describe the value of literacy to today's students?
15. How would you characterize students' attitudes toward reading in this school?
16. How would you characterize students' attitudes toward reading in your classroom?

17. How has your use of reading practices changed since you first began teaching?
18. What, if anything, were you taught about s during your teacher preparation program?
19. What caused you to choose to implement student reading practice in your classroom?
20. Please share your thoughts regarding this statement: Reading is learned through reading.
21. Please share your thoughts regarding this statement: SRP is an *intervention*.

What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

22. In what ways, if any, does your use of SRP help you to meet the social and developmental needs of your students?
23. How do you make SRP a satisfying experience for your students?
24. How does your use of SRP allow you to nurture students' love for lifelong learning and literacy?
25. How does your use of SRP all your students to meet their needs for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in your classroom.

Appendix M

Enumeration of Data Table

Codes	Enumeration of code appearances across data sets	Themes
Providing reading practice time	18	Promoting the enjoyment of reading
Making reading fun	30	
Encourage more reading	4	
Foster literacy	10	
Creating daily reading time for 10-15 min. during class	48	Providing time for students to practice reading
Making use of the school and class libraries	3	
Amplify their engagement with reading	15	
Creating a reading-friendly classroom environment	7	
Implementing SRP as a routine practice	26	Prioritizing SRP
Making ZPDs(Vygotsky, 1978) an intentional component of SRP	17	Addressing students' ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978)
Modeling reading during SRP	14	Creating a literate citizenry (Vygotsky, 1978)
Creating successful lifelong readers	45	
Allowing students to meet needs for freedom, fun, power, and belonging during SRP	26	Embracing choice theory (Glasser, 1998)
Using SRP to create interactions with literature	13	Employing aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978)
Incorporating socialization as part of SRP	31	
Knowing the students and making connections through reading	16	

Appendix N

Example Observation Form

Observation 1

Name of Participant: Jessica

Date: 9/26 Time: 9:20

Duration of observation: 15 min

Duration of observed phenomenon: 10 min.

Descriptive Notes

- Amazing classroom library with literally 1000 books. Smaller shelves above with featured recommendations by genre, using signs to draw attention.
- The classroom library is alphabetized and labeled.
- They do a vocab sort on the board as they enter.
- Then, they sit to read.
- SSR is on the agenda.
- She starts a timer for SSR once they are all seated.
- 20 students: 8 girls, 12 boys
- She has a bulletin board with “Real World Reading”. It has applications on it. She mentioned this during the interview.
- All our actively reading
- She’s calling back students by highest priority to chat with them about what they are reading now and next.
- She’s developed a tracking sheet that allows her to keep track of who she talked to, when, and what books they talked about.
- The students are fine with her chatting while they read.
- One student started the SSR time by taking an AR quiz and then moved to reading.
- She has one computer set-up in the back where students can take AR during this time.
- When the timer goes off, she prompts them to find a good stopping point.
- She then demos some reading “trackers”/overlays that students can use to help with reading during SSR. Similar overlays to what Samantha described.
- She then book talks a novel in verse about baseball that would help them embrace a new genre of literature and have this for their Bingo Board.
- She also book talks a book that was donated to her classroom library that she took the time to read before talking about it. It would fit the multicultural space their Bingo Boards.
- Bingo Boards are optional. She says, “Go ahead and try it since you already have to read for class.”

Reflective Notes

- Her focus on conferencing about books is akin to the Independent Reading model.
- Even though she's not modeling reading, she's dialoging about it and motivating the students in that way.
- She's also choosing who she talks to based upon ZPD scores and reading levels. She's triaging their need to her assistance to become successful readers.
- I wonder if she one-stop shopping for books and AR is motivated by a lack of support in the library or just merely as a means to better hold students accountable for what they are reading and their progress?
- Amazingly quiet for an inclusion class, comprised of mostly struggling readers and some reluctant.
- Very little movement to the actual library this way. Ensures they are on-task and engaged. She can better monitor their progress.
- Her book talks are encouraging and relevant. Shows that she prioritizes reading.

Appendix O

Focus Group Questions

1. What can you tell me about reading in your classroom?
2. What does your teacher do to encourage you to read independently/on your own?
3. Why do you think your teacher gives you class time to practice reading?
4. Which parts of student reading practice do you enjoy?
5. Which parts of student reading practice do you wish you could change?
6. What does it mean to be literate? What is literacy?

Appendix P

Audit Trail

Date	Entry
November 17, 2016	Initial permission received from Pilgreen to use and adapt <i>Reader's Survey</i> in dissertation
May 10, 2017	District permission for study from Northern County Schools obtained
May 21, 2017	Expert review of interview and focus group questions
June 12, 2017	Written and signed permission from Pilgreen received to use and adapt <i>Reader's Survey</i> in dissertation
June 12, 2017	Written and signed permission from Stake received to use and publish Multiple Case Study Analysis Worksheets in dissertation
June 15, 2017	Expert review of observation form
July 19, 2017	Defense of Proposal Manuscript conducted and approved
July 21, 2017	IRB Application submitted
August 8, 2017	IRB Application approved
August 13- September 9, 2017	Conducted Pilot Study
August 13- September 9	Obtained names from building administrators for participants
August 13- September 11	Sent recruitment documents to teacher participants at their respective schools
August 13- September 15	Scheduled interviews with participants
August 29	Interview 1-Carol; Observations scheduled; student recruitment documents given to teacher
September 11	Interview 2-Emma; Observations scheduled; student recruitment documents given to teacher
September 12	Transcript sent to Carol via email for member check
September 12	Observation 1 of Carol
September 12	Status check of return of student recruitment documents with teacher participant via email
September 13	Interview 3-Samantha; Observations scheduled; student recruitment documents given to teacher
September 13	Interview 4- Lucy; Observations scheduled; student recruitment documents given to teacher
September 13	Transcript sent to Emma via email for member check
September 14	Observation 1 of Emma
September 14	Interview 5-Christy; Observations scheduled; student recruitment documents given to teacher
September 15	Observation 2 of Carol

September 15	Observation 2 of Emma
September 15	Transcript sent to Samantha via email for member check
September 17	Transcript sent to Lucy via email for member check
September 18	Observation 3 of Carol
September 19	Status check of return of student recruitment documents with teacher participant via email
September 19	Observation 3 of Emma
September 19	Observation 1 of Samantha
September 19	Observation 1 of Lucy
September 20	Interview 6-Jessica; Observations scheduled; student recruitment documents given to teacher
September 20	Transcript sent to Christy via email for member check
September 21	Transcript sent to Jay via email for member check
September 21	Observation 2 of Samantha
September 21	Observation 2 of Lucy
September 26	Status check of return of student recruitment documents with teacher participant via email
September 27	Transcript sent to Jessica via email for member check
September 22	Observation 3 of Samantha
September 22	Observation 3 of Samantha
September 26	Observation 1 of Jessica
September 27	Observation 2 of Jessica
September 27	Focus Group with Carol's students
September 28	Observation 3 of Jessica
September 28	Focus Group with Emma's students
September 29	Observation 2 of Christy
September 29	Focus Group with Samantha's students
October 3	Status check of return of student recruitment documents with teacher participant via email
October 3	Focus Group with Lucy's students
October 4	Focus Group with Jessica's students
October 3	Sent request via email to a Liberty professor to serve as a peer reviewer of my multi-case analyses.
October 4	Sent another request via email to another Liberty professor to serve as a peer reviewer of my multi-case analyses, as the first professor declined.
October 4	Received email confirmation from a Liberty professor in the School of Education that he will be willing to serve as a peer reviewer of my analyses.
October 6	Observation 3 of Christy
October 6	Focus Group with Christy's students
October 7	Coded interviews by case
October 13	Coded Carol's Case
October 14	Coded Emma's Case
October 15	Coded Samantha's Case
October 15	Coded Lucy's Case

October 16	Coded Christy's Case
October 21	Coded Jessica's Case
October 21	Individual Case Analyses emailed to Carol for Member Check
October 23	Individual Case Analyses emailed to Emma for Member Check
October 23	Individual Case Analyses emailed to Samantha for Member Check
October 23	Individual Case Analyses emailed to Lucy for Member Check
October 23	Individual Case Analyses emailed to Christy for Member Check
October 23	Individual Case Analyses emailed to Jessica for Member Check
October 28	Completed Multicase analysis worksheet 4
November 4	Completed Multicase analysis worksheet 5
November 4	Completed Multicase analysis worksheet 6
November 4	Conducted explanation building by revisiting and revising preliminary propositions.
November 4	Created a set of refined ideas by applying the revisions of the preliminary propositions to the research questions.
November 5	Developed naturalistic generalizations that answer this study's research questions.
November 5	Sent analyses via email for peer review to case study expert at Liberty
November 15	Feedback received from peer review
November 16	Conferred with chair regarding peer review feedback, as well as peer reviewer
November 16	Peer review feedback addressed via revisions of Enumeration of Data matrices and emailed to chair and reviewer for check.
November 17	Revisions to Enumeration of Data matrices approved by chair and peer reviewer.
November 26, 2017	Emailed multicase analysis to participants for member check.

Appendix Q

Reflective Journal

Date	Entries/Reflections
July 19, 2017	The proposal defense was a success. I will submit my IRB application within the next 48 hours and tend to the necessary revisions in a timely fashion so that I can secure approval as soon as possible.
August 1, 2017	Revisions to my IRB application minor. I made the requested changes and hope to hear back soon so that I can begin my pilot study when school starts on August 16.
August 8, 2017	My IRB application was approved. I will meet with my building principal as soon as possible to obtain a participant recommendation for the pilot study.
August 18, 2017	I conducted the pilot interview today and learned so many things. However, I will not include my memo of this pilot interview within this journal since none of the pilot data is to be included in this final report.
August 29, 2017	<p>Today was the first real interview of the study with Carol. She said so many things that resonated with the literature and Vygotsky's theories. She uses the ZPD to make decisions about SRP and wants her students to read authentically in order to build their literacy.</p> <p>On a technology related note, the Google application: Speech to Text Add-On is not functioning ideally. I will have to transcribe the recording in the traditional manner. I will complete the transcription asap and send it to her via email for member check.</p>
September 11, 2017	Today was the 2 nd official interview. This was with Emma who teaches 6-8 th grade honors Language Arts. She focused many of her comments on how she uses SRP to engage in the study of literary terms and "higher literacy"—meaning in-depth analysis and synthesis of texts. She is choosing to espouse the ideal of SRP in an attempt to foster her students' comprehension of literature, as well as their abilities to analyze it. Although, her comments are congruent with that of an honors and gifted/talented teacher.

September 13, 2017	Samantha is very much into the “practice” of reading. She feels that reading build stamina and power, as well as literacy. She prioritizes the reading practice time and communicates the value of reading to her students through example and dialogue.
September 13, 2017	Lucy has a broad perspective of teaching reading as a former elementary school teacher. Although, she’s not sure that the “practice” of reading can close large gaps in literacy for students. She feels that if they are missing those foundational reading skills that it makes it hard for students to move past frustration with reading. However, she still values reading time and enjoys the standards that it sets.
September 14, 2017	Christy uses independent reading on Fridays only—every Friday after a weekly quiz. She feel that’s the only time she can fit in reading. However, this does give her students about 50 minutes of reading per week (the same amount as other participants’ students [10 min: 5 days/week]. Her use of student reading practice is routine, but not as a frequent and she does use it over the course of the school year. She also encourages silent reading after finishing other assignments in her class. I’m wondering if her weekly use of SRP is routine enough to foster lifelong reading. Do students view it as a priority for the teacher since it’s only on Fridays?
September 20, 2017	Jessica is committed to providing reading time for her students because she has been educated and inspired by the professional development books of several author-educators (i.e., Kelly Gallagher, Donalyn Miller, Penny Kittle). She feels guilty only allowing 10 minutes of reading per day, but also feels pressured by other instructional demands, as well as other teachers and administrators in her building to limit the time and focus on other instruction. She feels is “all alone” fighting this battle for literacy, but continues to endorse reading practice with her students.
September 27, 2017	The focus group with Carol’s students was so enlightening. I was so surprised by how articulate they were despite only being in sixth grade. They had great comments about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read [although they did use these terms, it’s what they were describing]. They find Carol to be foundational in their reading development, more so than some of their teachers in elementary school.
September 28, 2017	The focus group with Emma’s eighth graders was impressive to say that least. They gave specific feedback regarding the structure and routine of their reading time citing that they would prefer it happen as the class’s first activity and that moving it to the beginning would actually make the class more efficient. They felt that the other activities in class would actually get more time if they could read for the first 10 minutes of every class.
September 29, 2017	In the focus group with Samantha’s students they stressed that the free reading time provided Samantha with opportunities to help them comprehend the books they are choosing to read. For example, if they

	talked with her about a book during this time, she would walk them through understanding it better. They also liked that she lets them have time to talk with their peers about their books. They explained that this also helps their comprehension.
October 3, 2017	Lucy's students were much more reserved than the previous groups, but they focused much of their attention on how much they enjoyed SRP and how they wish they had even more time for it. They also explained that they would enjoy having time in class to talk about what they are reading and share their books with their peers.
October 4, 2017	The general consensus about SRP or SSR (as they call it) in Jessica's focus group was that the students enjoy and appreciate the time to read. They feel that Jessica used it strategically in order to (a) help them accountable for reading, (b) help them choose books, and (c) help them meet their reading goals since many of them feel they don't have enough time to read at home.
October 6, 2017	Students in Christy's focus group were very passionate about her use of SRP. They truly enjoy the time they have to read on Fridays, but wish they could read for 10 minutes or so every day instead of 45 minutes once per week.
October 11, 2017	As I wrap up the analyses of Carol's case, I'm thinking that I would like to have my chair review what I have done so far. I will plan to send her a copy of my initial Enumeration of Data Table detailing my coding of Carol's interview, observations, and focus group to make sure that I am on the right track before repeating the process five more times.
October 12, 2017	My chair reviewed the first enumeration of data matrix that I created and was satisfied with my coding and analysis of Carol's case. I will continue to analyze the subsequent cases in the same manner over the course of the next 10 days or so.
November 4, 2017	Having just finished revising my preliminary propositions, I noticed a lot redundancy across the three research questions. As I begin to create a refined set of ideas using these propositions, I will attempt to eliminate this redundancy so that these ideas are as concise as possible.

Appendix R

Worksheet 4: Estimates of Ordinariness of the Situation of Each Case and Estimates of Manifestation of Multicase Themes in Each Case (Stake, 2017)

M=high manifestation m=some manifestation

Original multicase themes	Case A: Carol	Case B: Emma	Case C: Samantha	Case D: Lucy	Case E: Christy	Case F: Jessica
Theme 1: Promote enjoyment (RQ 1)	M	M	M	M	m	m
Theme 2: Time to practice reading (RQ 2)	M	m	M	M	M	M
Creating a literate citizenry (RQ 3)	m		m		M	M
Embracing choice theory (RQ 3)		m	M	M	M	m
Prioritizing SRP (RQ 2)			m	M		M
Added multicase themes						
Employing aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), including making connections with students regarding reading (RQ 3)	m	M	M	M	m	M

From *The Art of Case Study Research*. Supplementary Material for Multiple Case Study Analysis (Retrieved from www.guilford.com), R. E. Stake, 2017, New York, NY: Guilford Press. 2006.

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Appendix S

Worksheet 5: A Map on Which to Make Assertions for the Final Report (Stake, 2017)

H= High importance M= Middling importance L=Low importance

Findings by Case	Themes						
Case A-Carol	Promoting enjoyment	Time to practice	Creating a literate citizenry	Giving attention to ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978)	Embracing choice theory (Glasser, 1998)	Prioritizing SRP	Employing aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978)
SRP=Practice, practice=enjoyment (RQ 1)	H	H	M	M	M	L	H
Modeling reading during SRP (RQ 2)	M	H	M	L	L	M	L
Creating a community of readers (RQ 3)	H	H	H	M	L	M	H
Knowing students; making connections	M	L	M	H	L	L	H
Case B-Emma							
SRP=Practice, practice=enjoyment (RQ 1)	H	H	H	L	L	M	L
Interact/engage with reading (RQ 2)	M	H	H	L	L	M	H
Internalize reading through engagement (RQ 3)	M	H	H	L	L	H	M
Case C-Samantha							
Create lifelong readers through practice (RQ 1)	H	H	H	M	H	H	H
Routine, habitual usage of SRP (RQ2)	H	H	M	L	M	H	M
Socialize/dialogue about books (RQ 3)	H	M	L	L	M	M	H
Opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging (RQ 3)	H	M	L	M	H	L	L

Case D-Lucy							
SRP=Practice, practice= enjoyment (RQ 1)	H	H	L	L	M	H	M
Values and prioritizes SRP time (RQ 2)	H	H	L	L	M	H	L
Socialize/dialogue about books (RQ 3)	H	L	L	L	L	L	L
Opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging (RQ 3)	H	H	L	L	H	H	L
Case E- Christy							
Promote engagement in reading (RQ 1)	H	H	H	H	M	L	L
Practice in order to develop skills (RQ 2)	H	H	H	L	L	L	L
Much attention to ZPD (RQ 3)	L	H	H	H	M	L	M
Case F-Jessica							
Values time to read (RQ 1)	H	H	H	L	M	H	H
Tracking/progress monitoring (RQ 2)	M	H	L	H	L	H	H
Time to read during class (RQ 3)	L	H	H	H	M	H	H
Much attention to ZPD (RQ 3)	L	M	M	H	L	M	H
Opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging (RQ 3)	H	H	H	L	H	M	M

From *The Art of Case Study Research*. Supplementary Material for Multiple Case Study Analysis

(Retrieved from www.guilford.com), R. E. Stake, 2017, New York, NY: Guilford Press. 2006.

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Appendix T

Worksheet 6: Multicase Assertions for the Final Report

Research Question	Assertion #	Assertion	Evidence in which cases
RQ 1	1	Engaging in SRP is practice and practice promotes the enjoyment of reading	Carol, Emma, Samantha, Lucy, Jessica
RQ 2	2	Valuing and prioritizing time to reading during class through routine implementation	Carol, Samantha, Lucy, Jessica
RQ 3	3	Intentional consideration of ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978)	Christy, Jessica
RQ 3	4	Integrating aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) into SRP	Carol, Emma, Samantha, Lucy, Jessica
RQ 3	5	Integrating aspects of choice theory (Glasser, 1998) into SRP	Samantha, Lucy, Jessica

From *The Art of Case Study Research*. Supplementary Material for Multiple Case Study Analysis (Retrieved from www.guilford.com), R. E. Stake, 2017, New York, NY: Guilford Press. 2006.

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Appendix U

Permission to Use and Publish Stake's (2006) Multiple Case Study Analysis Worksheets

Laurel,

I am happy that you intend to use my collective case study approach in studying teachers' use of reading materials.

I give you my permission to use, reproduce and publish the worksheets described in my book, *Multiple Case Study Analysis*. Scanned copy to follow.

Worksheets are included in the attachment. If not, let me know.

Bob

Robert E. Stake

✓
6-12-17

Appendix V

Explanation Building via Revision of Preliminary Propositions

RQ 1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they recognize the need for encouraging practices like recreational reading and want to devote class time to promoting lifelong literacy.

This explanation is consistent with the preliminary proposition and needed little revision because engaging students in SRP is a form of reading practice and reading practice promotes the enjoyment of reading (Assertion 1). As students practice reading more, they will improve as readers and begin to enjoy it more. As they improve and enjoy reading, they will become more literate.

2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they want to make reading a priority for students.

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they value and prioritize the time to read during class through routine and habitual implementation (Assertion 2). As SRP becomes habitual for students, the consistent practice enhances their skills as readers and promotes their literacy.

3. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy in order to enrich other reading practices and make reading more personal and enjoyable for students.

This explanation is consistent with the preliminary proposition and needed no revision because engaging students in SRP is a form of reading practice and reading practice promotes the enjoyment of reading (Assertion 1). As students practice reading more, they will improve as

readers and begin to enjoy it more. As they improve and enjoy reading, they will become more literate.

4. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they recognize the need for socialization as part of mastering the skill of reading and that students should be reading texts within their ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978).

This explanation is consistent with the preliminary proposition because middle school ELA teachers give intentional consideration to students' ZPDs (Assertion 3). By helping students to choose and successfully read books within this ideal range, these teachers are most efficiently promoting the development of reading skills, and in turn, literacy for their students.

5. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they want to use an instructional method that meets their basic needs of their students: (a) belonging, (b) power, (c) freedom, and (d) fun (Glasser, 1998).

This explanation is also consistent with the preliminary proposition because middle school ELA teachers integrate aspects of choice theory (Glasser, 1998) within SRP to ensure students have opportunities for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in the classroom (Assertion 5). This better ensures that students' basic needs are met, allowing them to enjoy SRP as an instructional method and in turn, encourage their development as lifelong readers.

RQ 2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that seeks to motivate students to become lifelong readers, in order to promote their overall

literacy.

This explanation is consistent with the preliminary proposition. In these cases, middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that promotes the enjoyment of reading, values and prioritizes reading, allows students to read books within an ideal developmental range (Vygotsky, 1978), affords them opportunities to socialize about what they are reading (Vygotsky, 1978), as well as have freedom, fun, power, and belonging in the classroom (Glasser, 1998) (Assertions 1-5).

2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages reading growth.

This explanation is based upon the observation that middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that gives intentional consideration to a student's ZPD (Assertion 3). Doing so, encourages reading growth (Vygotsky, 1978). None of the cases revealed a teacher's desire to foster independence through the use of SRP.

3. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages socialization as part of internalizing the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that integrates aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) (Assertion 4). The majority of cases featured the teacher's intentional use of socialization to help students internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).

4. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that "nurture[s] a love for lifelong learning in all students, not kill[s] it" (Glasser, 1998, p. 242).

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that integrates aspects of choice theory (Glasser, 1998) (Assertion 5). Giving students the opportunity for freedom, fun,

power, and belonging as a part of SRP nurtures a love for learning and reading for students.

RQ 3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to incorporate socialization as part of the implementation of SRP in order to help students better internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that integrates aspects of socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) (Assertion 4). The majority of cases featured the teacher's intentional use of socialization to help students internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).

2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to consider a student's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) when making textual selections and recommendations.

Middle school ELA teachers give intentional consideration to students' ZPDs (Assertion 3). By helping students to choose and successfully read books within this ideal range, these teachers are most efficiently promoting the development of reading skills, and in turn, literacy for their students.

Appendix W

Refined Set of Ideas (Based upon the revision of Preliminary Propositions)

RQ 1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they are mindful of the need for encouraging practices like recreational reading and want to devote class time to promoting lifelong literacy (Merga & Moon, 2016).
2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote literacy because they want to make reading a priority for students.

RQ 2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that seeks to motivate students to become lifelong readers, in order to promote their overall literacy (Harmon et al., 2011, Siah & Kwok, 2010).
2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages reading growth (Sanden, 2014)

RQ 3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

1. Middle school ELA teachers choose to incorporate socialization as part of the implementation of SRP in order to help students better internalize the skill of reading (Vygotsky, 1978).
2. Middle school ELA teachers choose to consider a student's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) when making textual selections and recommendations.

3. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy because they want to use an instructional method that meets their basic needs of their students: (a) belonging, (b) power, (c) freedom, and (d) fun (Glasser, 1998).
4. Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that “nurture[s] a love for lifelong learning in all students, not kill[s] it” (Glasser, 1998, p. 242).

Appendix X

Naturalistic Generalizations

RQ 1: Why do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote students' literacy because they not only want to students to enjoy reading, they want them to make it a priority. Practices like SRP such as Recreational Book Reading (Sanden, 2014), Free Voluntary Reading (Krashen, 2004), and Sustained Silent Reading (Pilgreen, 2000) have been documented as instructional methods to help promote the enjoyment of reading for students. As students engage in the practice of reading through SRP, participants in this study assert, they will find reading enjoyable, as well as make it a priority and part of their lives. Data from these cases suggest that the coupling of these two phenomena will promote literacy for students.

RQ 2: How do middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP to promote student literacy?

Middle school ELA teachers choose to use SRP in a manner that encourages students to become lifelong readers (Harmon et al., 2011, Siah & Kwok, 2010), while also encouraging their reading growth (Sanden, 2014). Data across these cases demonstrates that these teachers are able to promote students' literacy using SRP by giving this time value and priority within their classrooms. As SRP becomes habitual for students, the consistent reading practice will enhance their skills as readers and in turn, promote their literacy.

RQ 3: What impact do the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have on middle school ELA teachers' choice to use SRP to promote students' literacy?

Data from these cases indicates that the philosophies associated with socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and choice theory (Glasser, 1998) have a significant impact on the teachers' choice to use SRP to promote literacy. In certain cases, teachers gave intentional consideration of students' ZPDs, allowing these teachers to promote literacy by embracing Vygotsky's (1978) ideal zone for reading and learning. By encouraging students to select and read books within this zone, these teachers aimed to promote students' literacy skills. By integrating other key aspects of SLT (Vygotsky, 1978), teachers in certain cases were promoting literacy by allowing and requiring students to socialize with peers about the books they were reading, in addition to dialoguing with the teacher about them. By integrating aspects of choice theory (Glasser, 1998) into their implementation of SRP, teachers afforded students the opportunity for freedom, fun, power, and belonging in the classroom, which Glasser (1998) would assert promotes lifelong learning, reading, and literacy.