EFFECTS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION ON STUDENTS’ READING MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT AFTER SUSTAINED SILENT READING

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B.A., Southern Adventist University, 2006

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

EDUCATION
(Language and Literacy)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

FALL
2010
EFFECTS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION ON STUDENTS’ READING MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT AFTER SUSTAINED SILENT READING

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Abstract

of

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION ON STUDENTS’ READING MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT AFTER SUSTAINED SILENT READING

by

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Statement of Problem

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) has been widely used in the classroom for almost 40 years. However, teacher implementation varies to a large degree and research has been mixed regarding its effectiveness. A number of researchers and practitioners have advocated using social interaction to enhance the reading experience. This study examined the effects of three different SSR post-reading activities on students’ reading attitudes and engagement. The activities included sharing about their book with a partner, sharing with the whole class, and sharing through interactive journal. The following research questions were analyzed.

1. What are the overall effects of social interaction on students’ reading motivation and engagement?

2. Do different forms of social interaction affect motivation and engagement in unique ways?

3. Does social sharing after SSR affect students’ book choice and genre selection?
Sources of Data

The population included 23 fifth and sixth graders in a self-contained classroom. The participants attended a small private school in rural Northern California and were mostly white middle class. The students participated in SSR four times a week followed by the three different social sharing activities described above, each lasting about five minutes. The students completed a survey prior to beginning the first activity and the same survey was completed again at the conclusion of the six weeks. These surveys looked at students’ attitudes toward SSR, time spent reading, purpose for reading, and difficulty level in choosing a book. Each condition lasted two weeks and was followed up with a sharing survey related to the particular sharing activity. Each sharing survey looked at students’ attitudes toward the activity, what types of books they read, and how they chose books to read. Engagement during each week was determined by time on-task. Anecdotal notes by the teacher were used to enhance survey data.

Conclusions Reached

The social interaction did have an overall positive effect on students’ reading motivation and engagement regardless of the form of social activity. This change in the percentage of students valuing SSR went up from 56% to 77%. A Chi-Squared test of independence showed a significant increase in students’ attitudes toward SSR between the pre-survey and the post survey, $\chi^2(3, N = 23) = 10.62, p < .05$. According to the post survey and the sharing surveys, students enjoyed telling about their books and hearing about classmates’ books. On both the post survey and the sharing surveys, students reported more positive attitudes toward sharing with a partner, than sharing with the
whole class and journaling. The reasons for this were they were nervous about talking in front of the whole class and they did not like writing. There was variation in their genre selection across weeks, however there was no overall increase in types of book chosen.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Dr. John Shefelbine

_______________________
Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my husband for supporting me through this large project. He helped me with data analysis, computer formatting, and daily encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. John Shefelbine for his flexible hours, meeting with me throughout the summer, and his positive feedback.
DEDICATION

To my students this year and in the years to come

who inspire me to never stop learning and growing as a teacher.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“Practice makes perfect” has been a mantra for parents and teachers for centuries. It is encouraged in music, sports, math facts and more. So why would it be any different in regard to reading? Yet, in the last 10 years this is exactly what has been questioned by administrators and policy makers across America. Independent reading time, or sustained silent reading (SSR), has been decreasing in classrooms across America. Research shows that teacher implementation of SSR varies widely (Nagy, Campenni, & Shaw, 2000) and the different structures of SSR have resulted in different effects on students’ reading attitudes and achievement (Manning & Manning, 1984). This leaves teachers wondering, does silent reading have a place in classroom instruction time? And if so, what should that time look like?

Statement of the Problem

According to the Report of the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHHD], 2000) “it would be unreasonable to conclude that research shows that encouraging reading has a beneficial effect on reading achievement” and went on to say that more research was needed on the subject (NICHHD, 2000, p. 3-28). This report has caused many principals and teachers to abandon the long-standing SSR strategy. However, many teachers and researchers have refuted the report in recent years (Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Krashen, 2006). The NRP report did not find that SSR was ineffective; it simply did not find enough studies meeting the panel’s methodological requirements to draw any firm conclusions (Garan &
DeVoodg, 2008). The NPR report itself declared the need for more research on the
effects of encouraging students to read, especially with programs such as SSR (NICHHD,
2000).

Research has shown the importance of motivation and engagement to reading
achievement. Unfortunately, student motivation declines with age (Miller & Meece,
1999; Morgan, Fuchs, Compton, Cordray, & Fuchs, 2008). SSR incorporates the
motivational factors of student choice (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Pachtman &
Wilson, 2006), enjoyment and interest (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Pressley, 2006), and
teacher modeling (Gambrell, 1996; Widdowson & Dixon, 1996). Each of these factors
fosters intrinsic motivation, leading to engagement. A number of researchers have also
recommended additions to SSR that may enhance the benefits of silent reading (Bryan,
Fawson, & Reutzel, 2003; Gambrell, 1996; Manning & Manning, 1984). This descriptive
study examined the effects of three different SSR post-reading activities on the reading
attitudes and engagement of upper elementary students. Based on this purpose, the
following research questions were posed:

1. What are the overall effects of social interaction on students’ reading
   motivation and engagement?

2. Do different forms of social interaction affect motivation and engagement in
   unique ways?

3. Does social sharing after SSR affect students’ book choice and genre
   selection?
Rationale

SSR by itself is simply silently reading self-selected books. Typically, the students are not held accountable for what they have read. Some students may just pretend to read during this time, which negates the instructional basis for this time. On the other hand, strong support for SSR comes from the belief that it helps motivate students to read more (Krashen, 1996; Turner & Paris, 1995). Motivation is a strong predictor of reading amount (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) describe motivation as what “activates behavior” which in turn leads to engagement in the activity. Motivation is multifaceted and includes intrinsic, extrinsic, and social factors (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Watkins & Coffey, 2004). The most engaging classrooms are ones where teachers use a variety of motivational techniques (Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003). The interventions conducted as part of this study were designed to encourage motivation and reader engagement through various forms of social interaction after SSR.

This study looked at three forms of social interaction to increase reading motivation and engagement with students: sharing with a partner, sharing with the class, and interactive journaling. Social interaction is the main type of post-reading response that is used to increase engagement and as an accountability measure. Allington (2002) found that exemplary teachers encouraged lots of student talk during the school day. Research also shows that children enjoy sharing about the stories they read and interest other students in books by sharing (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Gambrell, 1996). In light of past research, it seemed reasonable to believe that these interventions
would engage the students more in the reading process and build a reading community in the classroom.

A goal of this research was to determine if the interventions corresponded to an increase in reading engagement and motivation. A secondary goal was to determine if different forms of social intervention had unique effects.

**Methodology**

The research was conducted at a private K-12 school in rural Northern California. The population included 23 fifth and sixth graders in a self-contained classroom. This study examined the effects of three different student responses to SSR on reading motivation and engagement: sharing with a partner, sharing with the whole class, and interactive journaling with a partner. Each condition lasted two weeks. For six weeks students participated in SSR for 20 minutes Monday through Thursday. Prior to the start the first intervention session, the teacher did a minilesson on discussion guidelines and ideas for sharing about their reading. During the first two weeks, each day students were asked to talk about what they read with a partner. Each student had about five minutes to share about their book. At the end of week two, students completed a questionnaire including feedback on their feelings about the SSR time, partner sharing, and books they read. Next, students shared the book they read with the whole class. Each student shared once a week for one to two minutes. At the end of week four, students filled out a questionnaire related their feelings about sharing with the class. During the last two weeks, students were asked to write a journal entry about what they read. Students wrote for two minutes, and then exchanged journals with a partner and responded to the
partner’s journal for two minutes. At the close of these two weeks, students filled out a questionnaire about the interactive journaling. At the conclusion of the three conditions, students were given a comprehensive questionnaire to fill out regarding their attitudes toward reading and toward each of the interventions. The researcher also took anecdotal records on student behaviors during reading and the response activity for the duration of the study.

The data collection instruments included student questionnaires with open-ended and Likert scale response items and anecdotal records. Patterns and themes were noted as the anecdotal notes and survey data was analyzed. The data sets were compared to investigate student response across interventions.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this research, the following definitions will be used for key terms.

Sustained silent reading (SSR) – Students choosing their own reading materials and reading silently during the school day (Pilgreen, 2000).

Reading motivation – An individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs about the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Engagement – Students’ behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social involvement in reading and post-reading activities (Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006).

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Research**

The current study does have some limitations. First, students’ response may have been influenced by their desire to please the teacher. Second, the research was conducted
at the end of the school year which may suggest that students were already accustomed to their previous SSR habits and social groupings. Third, the treatment took place over six weeks, while many studies have found SSR to be more effective over the long-term (Krashen, 2001; Yoon, 2002).

There are also delimitations to consider when looking at the findings. This study was done with a special population of middle class students, English-only speakers at a private school. Therefore the findings may not be generalizable to all populations. The subjects were not a random sample, but instead came from an intact classroom.

**Organization of the Thesis**

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the study on the effects of social activities following SSR. Chapter Two offers a review of the research regarding effective SSR methods, reading motivation, reading achievement, and social engagement. Chapter Three addresses the sample and methodology and procedures used for the conditions. Chapter Four presents the results of the comparison of responses across the three post-reading activities. Chapter Five includes conclusions drawn regarding the effectiveness of the SSR interventions, a discussion on the finding and their relationship to existing research on SSR, suggestions for future research, and practical classroom implications.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to the current study. The first section is an overview of the components, variations, and effectiveness of SSR. The second is a synopsis of overall reading motivation and engagement as they relate to SSR. The last section considers the social factors of reading motivation and engagement.

**Sustained Silent Reading**

Sustained Silent Reading is a form of independent pleasure reading used in the classroom. Independent free reading has been known by many names in the classroom: Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Sustained Quiet Reading Time (SQUIRT), and Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) being just a few common examples (Pilgreen, 2000). The idea of SSR dates back to the 1970’s and the concept of the Individual Reading Program (Hunt, 1971). The educational objectives behind the Individual Reading Program fostered exploratory reading and learning, sustained silent reading and study, independence and self-direction in reading, and a love of books and learning. Hunt’s (1971) goal was the same as millions of other teachers, and that was to make “independent, self-sufficient and self-sustaining readers” (p.7).

**Components of SSR**

There is not universal agreement regarding the components of SSR, and teachers have implemented the program in a variety of ways. In a meta-analysis of SSR research on reading attitude, Yoon (2002) defined three common characteristics of SSR programs:
self-selection of reading materials, teacher modeling, and non-accountability. In other words, students choose books to read on their own during a SSR period while the teacher models by also reading silently. Traditionally, teachers did not hold students accountable for what they read. Pilgreen (2003) defined sustained silent reading as distinct from self-selected reading. She classified self-sustained reading as not using any measure of accountability and self-selected reading as applying some form of accountability. For the purposes of this study, SSR is defined as students selecting their own reading materials and having time set aside for silent reading as part of the school day. The social interaction would be considered follow-up activities.

**Variations of SSR**

The structure of SSR programs vary from classroom to classroom, and teacher to teacher. In a descriptive study of SSR programs across 69 classrooms, two out of three teachers reported using SSR, though their implementation was not always true to traditional program components (Nagy et al., 2000). SSR occurred anywhere from one to five days a week and lasted anywhere from four to fifty minutes. Nagy and his colleagues (2000) found that 65% of the teachers did not evaluate students’ reading during SSR in any way. The teachers who did evaluate used methods such as book reports, journals or reading logs, tests, discussion, conferences, and projects. Ten of the 14 SSR programs analyzed by the National Reading Panel had class time set aside for free reading with little or no accountability (Krashen, 2001). The wide variety in implementation is one reason for the inconclusive research regarding the effectiveness of SSR programs.
During “authentic” SSR, teachers do not monitor book selections or comprehension. SSR is done in the school setting, emphasizing the value of developing a reading habit and enjoyment. The above attributes are what distinguish SSR from other forms of reading. Other popular types of reading practice such as Accelerated Reading (Renaissance Learning Inc., 2010) and Reading Counts (Scholastic Inc., 2010) involve classroom-based, teacher-monitored reading. In these programs, students are required to read books on their independent level and held accountable for comprehension established through book quizzes. In addition to independent reading, there is classroom guided reading. Guided reading is teacher-directed and provides reading instruction and support for material that is too difficult to read independently.

Effectiveness of SSR

Although SSR has been utilized in classrooms for almost 40 years, in recent years there has been some disagreement regarding its effectiveness. In 2000, the National Reading Panel did a meta-analysis on classroom reading instruction practices related to phonics, fluency, comprehension, teacher education, and computer technology (NICHHD, 2000). The Panel’s purpose as a whole was to “provide a research synthesis of empirical studies that have tested the efficacy of encouraging reading in terms of its impact on improving reading achievement” (NICHHD, 2000, p. 3-21). SSR was analyzed and compared to Guided Repeated Oral Reading under the fluency subgroup only. The Panel had rigorous criteria for including studies into the report. The selection criteria used by the Panel to select studies for its report required that the studies (a) consider the effect of encouraging students to read more on reading achievement, (b) focus on English
reading education in K-12, (c) had to have appeared in a refereed journal, (d) had to have been carried out with English language reading (NICHHD, 2000). Using these selection criteria, the Panel was only able to find 14 relevant studies.

The studies that were included had mixed findings and sometimes flawed methodologies. In the end, the Panel stated that they “cannot conclude that schools should adopt programs to encourage more reading if the intended goal is to improve reading achievement” (NICHHD, 2000, p. 3-27). This is another reason that led many teachers to abandon the program and administrators to go so far as to bar free reading during instruction time.

Some teachers who have used SSR have felt it was not effective for reluctant readers that were not intrinsically motivated (Parr & Maguiness, 2005), though the reasons behind their reluctance were not specified. Other teachers not using SSR indicated they did not use it due to lack of time and issues related to students ability level and engagement in the program (Nagy, et al., 2000). Hasbrouck (2006) also suggests that silent reading is not appropriate for early readers or struggling readers who have not yet achieved fluent and automatic reading or who have limited word recognition strategies. Struggling readers do not have the skills necessary to improve their reading on their own without feedback from the teacher (Osborn & Lehr, 2003). It would seem that there are limitations to the effectiveness of SSR, and other factors must be carefully considered before a teacher decides to implement the program.
Support for SSR

Krashen (2001, 2006), Garan and DeVoogd (2008), and others have adamantly refuted the National Reading Panel’s report for a number of reasons. First, while the selection criteria emphasized the scientific and quantitative methodology, most teachers recognize that education is a mix of science and art. Garan and DeVoogd (2008) stated that “the scientific, medical model strives to establish firm causal relationships between teaching methods and results. There are just too many confounding factors that can and do contaminate the research process and make it nearly impossible to apply findings to all children in all schools and to effectively standardize instruction” (p. 336). Second, there were a number of studies not included that showed free reading results in literacy growth (Krashen, 2006). Third, the Panel did not include any studies lasting longer than a year (NICHHD, 2000). Other researchers have noted the longer the program duration (over a year), the greater the gains in students’ reading comprehension (Krashen, 2006; Marzano, 2004). Lastly, the report looked at SSR related to fluency only and compared it specifically to guided oral reading. Fluency is a combination of accuracy, reading rate, and prosody (Pressley, 2006). These factors are not targeted during a free reading program, which contributes to the NRP finding that the methodologies of the studies were flawed. The comprehension, motivation, and engagement aspects of SSR have often been disregarded.

It is important to note that the Panel did not find free reading ineffective, nor did they state that it was bad for children to read in school. Instead they gave the ambiguous conclusion that “SSR may or may not work” (NICHHD, 2000, p. 3-27). This supports the
need for more studies on the effects of SSR on overall reading achievement, motivation, engagement. As Krashen stated, “At worst, the impact of free reading appears to be the same as that of traditional instruction” (Krashen, 2001, p. 123).

**Effects on reading achievement.** Reading is one of the most important skills in life. Learning to read is a complex process with many influencing factors. Reading achievement is one area that is impacted by SSR.

In 1985, the National Academy of Education formed the Commission on Reading to prepare a report that synthesized the scientific research on reading and related instructional practices (Anderson et al., 1985). One recommendation that came out of this report was that students should spend more time in independent reading. It proposed that by the time students are in third or fourth grade, they should read independently a minimum of two hours per week. Many researchers and practitioners have found a strong link between time spent reading and overall reading achievement (Allington, 2002; Anderson et al., 1985; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2000).

Allington (1980) analyzed 24 first- and second-grade reading groups and found there were differences in the type of reading instruction that poor readers got versus good readers. The good reader groups read an average of 539 words while the poor reader groups only read an average of 237 words. The poor readers usually read orally while the good reader groups had more occasions to read silently. In short, it seemed unlikely that the poor readers would catch up to the good readers when they were reading fewer words per session. Allington recommended using silent reading to increase the amount of
material read by members of all the groups. However, this contradicts what other researchers have advised for young readers who are not yet fluent (Hasbrouck, 2006). In a more recent study of first- and fourth-grade teachers across six states, Allington (2002) observed that it is not unusual to find that children read and write for as little as 10% of the school day or 30 minutes out of a five hour school day. He urged teachers to give students opportunities for large amounts of successful reading in the classroom.

In a longitudinal study by Cunningham and Stanovich (1997), first grade reading acquisition was found to be positively correlated to reading experience and ability in eleventh grade. If a student got off to a fast start in reading in first grade, they were more likely to engage in more reading than those who got off to a slow start. It was also found that even children who were behind in first grade, but caught up in third or fifth grade, had a good chance of increasing their future reading engagement. The role of reading volume is paramount to gains in background knowledge, vocabulary, and general comprehension.

One goal of SSR is to give students a time to practice independent reading while developing background knowledge, vocabulary, and fluency. Research supports that reading volume contributes to growth in vocabulary and background knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Marzano 2004), and it is generally accepted by researchers that a large portion of a child’s vocabulary growth occurs indirectly through language exposure versus direct teaching (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Studies by the National Assessment of Educational Progress show that students perform better when they do independent reading (Humphrey & Preddy, 2008). Unfortunately, American
children have many things competing for their attention and drawing them away from the world of books and recreational reading. While reading was once a popular form or entertainment, now television, movies, video games, texting, and extracurricular activities are keeping kids busy during their time outside of school. Educators have found that students rely on the school day for their recreational reading (Fisher, 2001).

**Motivation and Engagement**

The most convincing evidence for SSR comes from the motivation and engagement framework. SSR is based upon principles of motivation. Allowing students choice in learning is valuable motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1981; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Guthrie et al., 2007; Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). When students find enjoyment and are interested in an activity, they are more likely to engage in the activity (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie et al., 2007; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Chua (2008) examined the effects of an SSR program on students’ reading habits and attitudes. The number of students who reported reading books for leisure in the program significantly increased, as well as the number of students who agreed that reading books was pleasurable.

Motivation and engagement are deeply intertwined and it is virtually impossible to talk about one without the other. In the following sections, the motivation and engagement frameworks will be considered in connection with literacy.

**Motivation**

Motivation is key to learning because it is what prompts action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). A motivated reader spends more time reading, exerts higher cognitive effort, and is dedicated to fully comprehending what is
read (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Baker and Wigfield state, “Because reading is an effortful activity that children often can choose to do or not to do, it also requires motivation” (1999).

Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) describe reading motivation as “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (p. 405). During the 1990’s the National Reading Research Center researchers focused on student motivation and engagement in literacy due to major concerns expressed by teachers (Pressley, 2006). Since then, much research in the field of literacy has involved motivation.

While most students enter school ready and willing to learn, many of these students eventually lose that excitement and enthusiasm as the years progress. Unfortunately, reading motivation also decreases as students get older (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995; Meece & Miller, 2001). The Literacy Motivation Project (Gambrell, 1996) found that third-grade students valued reading more highly than fifth-grade students. In a survey of over 18,000 students from across the United States, researchers found reading attitudes become increasingly negative from first grade through sixth grade (McKenna, Ellsworth, & Kear, 1995). The negative trend was most pronounced in less able readers and the gap widened with age. The trend was consistent regardless of gender, ethnicity, and ability. However, other researchers have observed the decline in motivation mostly in struggling readers (Morgan et al., 2008).

**Factors Affecting Motivation.** Motivation is multifaceted, and within an individual some aspects of motivation will be stronger than others (Baker & Wigfield,
1999; Guthrie et al., 2006; Watkins & Coffey, 2004). This makes it a complex topic for study, and researchers have highlighted numerous factors including intrinsic, extrinsic, and social aspects. However, there do tend to be common elements across the research.

One study looked at how literacy tasks influence children’s reading motivation (Turner & Paris, 1995) and found that the most reliable indicator of motivation was not the reading program, but the daily tasks that teachers provided students in their classrooms. For example, giving students some control over their learning, providing students with opportunities to collaborate with peers, and providing assigning challenging tasks foster student thought and effort. Dolezal and colleagues (2003) discovered that the most motivating teachers used over 40 different practices to keep students engaged in reading, including giving students choice, encouraging independence, and supporting prosocial behaviors. Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) emphasized self-concept as a reader and value placed on reading as basis for motivation. Other researchers have asserted that students’ motivation varies depending upon the type of text (i.e. narrative, expository), personal interests, and social influences (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

The most comprehensive list of factors has come out of the Literacy Motivation Project at the National Reading Research Center, which focused on indentifying classroom factors associated with literacy motivation (Gambrell, 1996). Eleven motivational factors related to reading were identified: efficacy, challenge, involvement, competition, curiosity, importance, compliance, recognition, grades, work avoidance, and social (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Baker and Wigfield (1999) conducted a larger follow-up study with fifth and sixth graders to further assess the 11 proposed dimensions of
reading motivation. The researchers concluded that students had a mixture of motivational characteristics to be considered and different groups of children in the classroom responded differently to the various motivation strategies used by teachers. Girls responded more positively than boys to almost all of the dimensions, and the fifth graders were more motivated for social reasons and to earn recognition than the sixth graders.

Turner and Paris (1995) observed the teachers who were most successful in motivating students did three main things. First, they provided opportunities for students to use reading and writing for authentic purposes, such as reading trade books. Second, they taught the value of literacy for communication and enjoyment. Third, they allowed students to be actively involved in constructing meaning from their reading. When designing activities for student engagement, Turner and Paris recommended letting students make choices on activities, giving students control over the process, allowing students to collaborate, using open-ended activities, and evaluating on process versus product. With respect to the current study, social sharing added to SSR meets these criteria.

There seems to be agreement that self-efficacy, intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, and social influences all play a part in reading motivation. Based on the idea that motivation is multidimensional and differs between individuals, Gambrell (1996) recommended creating “classroom cultures” that provide book-rich environments, give opportunities for choice, encourage social interactions about books, and use teachers as models.
Engagement

Closely associated with motivation is engagement. “Motivation is crucial to engagement because motivation is what activates behavior” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 406). Engagement, or active involvement, in the learning process is linked with achievement and persistence in school (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004). Reschly (2010) goes so far as to say student disengagement is an underlying cause of school dropout. In one study, students who were interested and highly cognitively engaged in reading demonstrated high recall and comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2007). On the other hand, if students fail to see the significance of literacy for their lives, they tend to resist instructional tasks (Powell, McIntyre, & Rightmeyer, 2006).

Engaging students begins with developing engaging tasks in the classroom. The most effective classrooms are motivational with teachers using a wide variety of motivational techniques (Dolezal et al., 2003). Effective teachers assign tasks that are open-ended, authentic, and cognitively challenging (Block & Mangieri, 2003; Dolezal et al., 2003; Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003). Easy tasks require little thought or connections to other learning activities, while challenging tasks require effort, peer collaboration, discussion, and teacher scaffolding (Dolezal et al, 2003). When observing third grade classrooms, Miller & Meece (1999) defined high-challenge tasks as those requiring a lot of reading and writing, lessons lasting for more than a day, and peer collaboration. They found that both high and low achievers preferred high-challenge tasks to low-challenge tasks, which were boring and meaningless.
Engaging students in literacy is a complex endeavor. It is well known that all children learn differently, and the same is true for learning to read. Armstrong (2003) used Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences as an organizing framework for synthesizing ideas, programs, methods, and brain research studies related to literacy acquisition. While most people think of literacy as a purely linguistic intelligence, Armstrong highlights how each of the eight multiple intelligences interact with literacy. In an action research project, Buschick, Shipton, Winner, and Wise (2007) used post-reading activities in conjunction with SSR that incorporated multiple intelligences. They found that when SSR was followed by projects using the multiple intelligences, students were more engaged in the reading process. During SSR time, students’ unengaged behaviors such as fidgeting, flipping pages, doing other work, and leaving desks decreased. The activities included social tasks such as cooperative learning, think-pair-share, and journaling. Overall, the teachers felt that the students were more engaged and enthusiastic about learning.

Student engagement can be difficult to measure as it includes both behavioral and emotional components (Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). For example, children who are engaged display participation and contribution in learning activities accompanied by positive attitude. Gambrell (1996) describes the engaged reader as motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive. Often, academic engagement measurement begins with observing on-task behavior. Dolezal and colleagues (2003) looked for 80% of students to be on-task 80% of the time and then noted emotional expressions of excitement or interest. Other researchers describe
nonengaged readers as those who avoid reading, are reluctant to engage in literary discussions with peers, are easily distracted, and participate in behaviors that can be distracting to their classmates (Bryan et al., 2003).

**Social Sharing**

Motivation and engagement both include social aspects. Learning theorists believe social interaction also plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development or learning (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Language and literacy acquisition is a social phenomenon as it is a means of communication (Armstrong, 2003). When examining the practices of literacy teachers, Allington et al. (2002) discovered that exemplary teachers encouraged, modeled, and supported lots of talk throughout the school day. In studies with first-, third-, and fifth-graders, children reported getting books suggestions from friends and were observed talking enthusiastically about books (Gambrell, 1996). Students across grade levels have reported that discussion and sharing about books were important parts of their reading motivation (Lee-Daniels & Murray, 2000; Parr & Maguiness, 2005; Triplett, 2005). In one study (Bryan et al., 2003), literature discussions with three nonengaged readers reduced students’ off-task behaviors and increased their engagement during SSR.

According to Manning and Mannings’ (1984) research, SSR alone led to no greater reading growth, however when SSR was combined with teacher conferences or peer discussion, a slight improvement was evident. In *The SSR Handbook*, Pilgreen (2000) advocates using follow-up activities after SSR to stimulate students’ interests in books and give readers a forum for talking about what they’ve read. Ideas she gives for
sharing about their books include: talking with a neighbor, sharing with the whole class, or writing a letter. Similar suggestions are also made by other researchers (Bryan et al., 2003; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Parr & Maguiness, 2005; Trudel, 2007). The research agrees that the goal of these follow-up activities is engagement, not accountability.

**Summary**

The literature review provided a context for the topic of this study. SSR has potential to foster reading achievement, motivation, and engagement. There is reason to believe social activities in general and social sharing opportunities in particular benefit reading and SSR specifically. The next chapter describes the methods of a study of three forms of social sharing after SSR on students’ motivation, engagement, and interest. Following chapters describe and discuss the results of this investigation.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Motivation and engagement are intertwined with reading volume and achievement. This study examined the effects of three post SSR activities on students’ reading motivation and engagement. Two research questions were raised. What are the effects of social interaction on students’ reading motivation and engagement, including interest in reading and choice of books? Do different forms of social interaction affect motivation and engagement in unique ways? This chapter describes the participants involved, procedures followed, and instruments used for data collection.

Participants and Setting

The participants attended a small WASC accredited private K-12 school in rural Northern California with 144 students. Participants included 12 fifth graders and 11 sixth graders in a combination classroom. Out of the 23 total, there were 7 boys and 16 girls. Students were predominately Caucasian, with one African American, and two Filipinos. The class did not include any students with documented special needs or English-language learners. Overall, the students come from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Four students in the class were on scholarship, while the rest paid full tuition. This class was representative of the school population as a whole.

Instruments

Five student surveys (Appendix A) were developed by the researcher to determine students’ thoughts and feelings regarding SSR and each of the post-reading activities.
The survey items included Likert scale questions, open-ended questions, and multiple choice questions.

**Pre-Survey**

The Pre-Survey, composed of 9 questions, was used to gather data regarding students’ initial thoughts on SSR by itself and information about how much text students were actually reading during the allotted time. Questions included: (a) How do you feel about silent reading time? (b) What do you like and dislike about silent reading? (c) How do you feel about the amount of time you have for silent reading? (d) How much time do you spend reading during SSR? (e) What makes you want to read all the words in a book? (f) How easy is it for you to choose a good book? This survey was given prior to beginning the treatment.

**Sharing Surveys**

The three sharing surveys were composed of both Likert, multiple choice and open-ended questions. These included three questions related to students’ feelings regarding the sharing activity: (a) How did you feel about this type of sharing? (b) What did you like and dislike about this method of sharing? Then there were four questions related to students’ book choice: (a) How do you feel about the books you read in the last two weeks? (b) What kind of books did you read in the last two weeks? (c) How did you choose what book to read? The students’ responses to the questions regarding feeling were used to measure attitude and motivation toward reading and the sharing activity.
Post-Survey

The Post-Survey began with the same questions from the Pre-Survey. Four additional questions were added to the Post Survey asking how well students liked each sharing intervention and why. This was used to compare students’ feelings on each of the three post-reading activities. The last question asked students to list the books they had enjoyed the most over the two month period.

Engagement

Previous researchers have used room sweeps to observe and record students’ on-task behavior (Newman, 2007; Dolezal et al., 2003; Widdowson & Dixon, 1996). In this study, a seating chart was used to record off-task behavior during SSR time. During the 20 minutes of SSR, the researcher made room sweeps at 5-minute intervals and recorded each time a student was observed not reading. Anecdotal notes were also taken describing the specific nature of off-task behaviors. This data was used to indicate the percentage of students who were engaged in reading during SSR. Observational notes were taken by the teacher during the sharing in order to assess reading and social engagement.

Procedures

The students in the classroom had been participating in SSR since the beginning of the year. The interventions took place during fourth quarter.

Minilesson

The week prior to the intervention, the teacher did a minilesson on rules and ideas for discussion using suggestions from Almasi and Gambrell (1994), Angelillo (2003), and Block and Mangieri (2003). First, students were given two minutes each to share
about what they read with a partner seated across from them. The teacher then asked what kinds of rules should be followed in a discussion. Student volunteers gave responses and the teacher wrote a list on chart paper. After each rule was listed the teacher verbally pointed out reasons for the rule, gave illustrations of following the rule, and gave illustrations of breaking the rule. The discussion rules included: (a) take turns talking, (b) don’t interrupt, (c) stick to the topic, (d) give comments and ask questions, (e) be nice and encouraging, and (f) check the story to back up your ideas.

Next, the teacher commented that she had seen students run out of things to say before the two minutes were up and proceeded to record students’ ideas of what to talk about while sharing. This was developed into a list on chart paper. The ideas included: (a) tell about what you liked or disliked, (b) ask a question you had about the story, (c) talk about what you didn’t understand, (d) compare to another book, (e) compare story to things in your life, (f) tell why you think the author wrote the story, (g) make predictions about what you think is going to happen, (h) tell something you learned and (i) comment on things others say or ask questions.

The charts were posted in the classroom and referred to as reminders each week. Students were told to look at them if they were having a hard time coming up with something to say.

**Treatment**

Each day during the intervention the teacher wrote a reminder on the board for students to make sure to have a book picked out for SSR. SSR time was directly after lunch recess and lasted 20 minutes Monday through Thursday. Four students were chosen
daily to have a turn sitting on beanbags rather than sitting at their desk. Once SSR began, students were not allowed to get up for another book or to use the restroom. While students were reading, the teacher was seated at her desk taking notes on observed behaviors.

**Partner Sharing.** For the first two weeks, after every SSR period students were given four minutes to share with a partner. Before sharing time, the teacher would remind students to keep the conversation going and to look at the discussion charts that had been posted if they ran out of things to talk about. The teacher paired students with someone different each week. One student was to begin sharing and the teacher set a timer for two minutes. When the timer went off, she then announced that it was time for the second person to share. A few times, a student shared with the teacher due to the absence of the other partner. If the teacher was not sharing with a student, she was monitoring the classroom, listening to conversations. Observations were later recorded anecdotally.

**Whole Class Sharing.** For weeks three and four, after SSR time five to six students shared in front of the whole class each day. Each student was given two minutes to share each week. Students were again reminded to use ideas from the discussion charts if they were not sure what to say. Meanwhile, the teacher was taking anecdotal notes, recording the types of questions asked, and keeping track of the time.

**Journal Sharing.** During weeks five and six, after SSR students wrote in interactive journals about their reading. Students were paired up once more by the teacher with a different partner each week. Students were given two minutes to write to their partner, and then they switched journals. They would then read and respond to what their
partner wrote for two minutes. The teacher collected the journals at the end of the each week and examined them for discussion complexity.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The week prior to beginning the interventions, students were given the initial survey. At the end of weeks two, four, and six, the sharing surveys designed for each condition were given and follow-up interviews were done. The Post-Survey was given the day after the last intervention and sharing survey was completed. Students were told to answer the questions based solely on the SSR time and not any other recreational reading.

In examining reader response to three social activities after SSR, this study used qualitative and quantitative measures. Qualitative analysis was performed using data from open-ended survey questions, classroom observations, and interviews. The rest of the data from the surveys was analyzed using quantitative analysis.

**Role of the Researcher**

The researcher was also the teacher of the participants. The class had been participating in SSR without the social activities throughout the year, and the additional activities for this study were implemented the beginning of the fourth quarter.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has described the population and instruments used and explained the specific procedures followed throughout the study. Chapter Four provides the detailed results of the data analysis, and Chapter Five explores the practical implications of the research.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The intent of the study was to answer three research questions: 1) What are the overall effects of social interaction on students’ reading motivation and engagement? 2) Do different forms of social interaction affect motivation and engagement in unique ways? 3) Does social sharing after SSR affect students’ book choice and genre selection? The following chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation from student surveys and teacher observations.

**Overall Motivation and Engagement**

Motivation was measured through survey questions related to students’ attitudes toward SSR and desired amount of time for reading. Engagement was measured by time on-task during SSR and student responses to open-ended questions on the surveys.

**Attitudes toward SSR**

Students’ attitudes about SSR improved between the pre- and post-surveys. The number of students at each level is shown in Table 1. A Chi-Squared test of independence showed a significant increase in students’ attitudes over the six weeks, $\chi^2(3, N = 23) = 10.62, p < .05$. When asked on opened ended questions what they liked about SSR time, two patterns emerged. On the post survey, seventeen students said they liked reading and 11 said they liked having a relaxed time with no “assignment”. When asked on the survey what they disliked about the time, the major patterns that emerged were “it’s too short” and “it is boring when you don’t have a good book”.
Table 1

*Student Attitude Scores Regarding SSR*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Score</th>
<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Post-Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like it a lot!</td>
<td>13 (56%)</td>
<td>18 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like it a little.</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>5 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t really like it.</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t like it at all!</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time for SSR**

On the pre-survey, 39% of students (n=9) wanted more time for SSR and this increased to 57% (n=9) on the post-survey, as seen in Figure 1. The percentage of students who wanted to have less time for SSR (17%) did not change. A Chi-Squared test of independence showed this not to be a significant increase, \( \chi^2(2, N = 23) = 1.72 \).

**Figure 1**

*Student Responses for Desired Amount of Time for SSR*
Engagement

Engagement was measured by how much time the students spent reading during SSR. The researcher checked every five minutes to see if students appeared to be reading. Behaviors such as looking around the room, talking to a classmate, or moving out of their seat were considered off-task. Engagement increased steadily throughout the interventions. Figure 2 shows engagement scores after week 1 and week 6. Over 90% of students were reading the entire period by the end of the intervention and no students were engaged less than 75% of the time. Anecdotal notes showed that two students were the least engaged throughout the intervention. However, both of them improved over the six weeks as well.

Figure 2

*Engagement Represented by Time-on Task for Week 1 and Week 6*
When asked what made them want to read all the words in a book without pictures, 13 students’ responses included “to better understand” and 9 were “because the book is interesting”. When asked what makes them just look at pictures or look at pictures and read only the captions, 11 students responded because “the pictures are cool”, 9 responded “the book is easier to understand”, and three said “they are bored or tired”.

**Social Sharing**

The researcher analyzed the different effects of the three types of social interaction on students’ attitudes and engagement. The three activities were compared to each other and evaluated individually.

**Attitude Scores**

There were some noticeable differences and qualitative data suggests that the forms of social interaction affected motivation and engagement in unique ways. Table 2 shows the attitude scores for the each of the activities from the sharing surveys. However, a Chi-Squared test of independence showed no statistical significance $\chi^2(3, N = 23) = 0$ between three types of sharing activities.

**Table 2**

*Attitude Scores for Sharing Activities Based on Post-Survey Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Score</th>
<th>Partner Sharing</th>
<th>Journal Sharing</th>
<th>Class Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like it a lot!</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like it a little.</td>
<td>12 (52%)</td>
<td>8 (36%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t really like it.</td>
<td>7 (30%)</td>
<td>6 (27%)</td>
<td>10 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't like it at all!</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Partner Sharing.** On the partner sharing survey administered right after the two week treatment, students overall had a positive response to sharing with a partner. Twenty-six percent liked it a lot, while 56% liked it a little, and 17% didn’t really like it. On the post survey evaluating all three sharing activities, 65% of students reported liking partner sharing at least a little. Figure 3 shows the student attitude scores for partner sharing on the sharing survey and the post survey. Reasons for liking it included being able to talk (n=8), seeing the books other people were reading (n=5), and getting to share a book their partner might like (n=7). The reasons given for disliking this activity included, not having enough to say (n=10) or when they didn’t like the book (n=4).

Figure 3

*Student Responses for Partner Sharing*
There were a few notable observations made by the teacher regarding sharing time. First, the teacher did notice students showing pages from their books or reading selections during the sharing time. Second, throughout the sharing time, the teacher would see students glance at the discussion ideas posted on the bulletin board. Last, although the students each had two minutes to share about the book they read, many individuals seemed to run out of things to say around a minute and a half. Then students would fidget, stare awkwardly at each other, or repeat and summarize things already said.

**Whole Class Sharing.** On the class sharing survey, the overall response to sharing in front of the class was positive. Thirty-two percent liked it a lot, 45% liked it a little, 18% didn’t really like it and 5% didn’t like it at all. On the post survey, this changed and the majority (60%) reported that they disliked it, while only 40% liked it a little or a lot. Figure 4 shows the student attitude scores for class sharing on the sharing survey and the post survey. Reasons the students gave for liking to share with the class included being able to tell about the book (n=12) and hearing about other books (n=5). The reasons listed for not liking the activity were they had to talk in front of the whole class (n=5) and it made them nervous (n=10).
Figure 4

*Student Responses for Whole Class Sharing*

The researcher was able to listen to each student share during this condition. By and large the students simply retold what they had read that day, often with more details than necessary for a summary. Again, while students were each given two minutes to share, most of them ran out of things to say at about a minute and a half. When they were finished, other students were allowed to ask questions to fill the remaining time. Most of the questions came from the discussion ideas chart and students often checked the chart before raising their hand to ask a question. The most common questions were “Did you like the book?” and “What was your favorite part?” Other questions that came up related to making predictions, making connections, sharing an emotion had while reading, and clarifying questions on what the speaker had originally said. On average there were 3-4 questions for each person.
In order to limit retelling and try to get the students to think more, midway through the intervention, the teacher told the students not to summarize their book but instead choose two things from the discussion ideas chart to talk about. No questions were allowed that day either. However, the students voiced their dislike for this change very vehemently, and the teacher went back to the initial routine the next day.

**Interactive Journal.** Overall reactions were positive toward interactive journaling. On the sharing survey, 63% said they liked journaling with a partner a little or a lot, but on the post-survey only 54% said they liked it. Figure 5 shows the student attitude scores for interactive journaling on the sharing survey and the post survey. Based on their open-ended comments, the students appeared to most enjoy sharing about their book (n=7) and writing back to their partner (n=4). The major explanation for disliking the activity was they had to write stuff down (n=9).

Figure 5

*Student Responses for Interactive Journaling*
While at first the students expressed displeasure at going from talking to writing, they didn’t complain after the first day. It was a short enough time (four minutes of writing and reading total) that it didn’t seem to be as difficult as they first believed it was going to be. Only a few students would put down their pencil before the two minutes were up. Many students began writing before the timer was started and were still finishing a sentence or thought after the timer signaled them to switch their journal with their partner.

**Genre Selection and Book Choice**

On the sharing surveys, the students reported what types of books they read during the past two weeks and how they chose books to read.

**Genre**

The most frequent genre read was realistic fiction. On the sharing surveys, students reported reading realistic fiction more than other genres, shown in Table 3. Historical fiction and mystery books consistently came up as the second most frequent choices. On the first sharing survey, poetry had a high count. On the second sharing survey, poetry and true stories about people were chosen often. On the third sharing survey, there was a high count of informational books read. When students listed the titles of their favorite books over the past two months on the post survey, realistic fiction books were again named more than books from any other genre. Historical fiction and nonfiction were the only other two types of books listed for this question. There was no overall change in how many types of books students read over the course of the treatment.
Table 3

*Genre Selection Reported on Sharing Surveys*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic fiction</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical fiction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysteries</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True stories about people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True facts on animals, places, or things</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture books</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Book Choice**

Between the pre-survey and the post-survey, there was no significant change in students’ reported difficulty in choosing books. On the pre- and post-surveys, 12 students found it “kind of easy” to choose a good book, and the next highest group (pre=5, post=6) found it “very easy”. Based on the data after each treatment, over the six weeks there was an increase in the number of methods students used to choose books as seen in Table 4. Most frequently the students reported using the front or back cover of the book to determine if they wanted to read it. The next most frequently used methods were choosing a book from a series they were familiar with or by an author they were familiar with. Only a few students reported on the sharing surveys, choosing books based on friends’ recommendations.
Table 4

*Methods Students Used to Choose Books*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Back cover</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front cover</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of a series I like</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By an author I like</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend suggestions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read first few pages</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it was hard enough</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it was easy enough</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher suggestion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, percentages were higher based on the question on each sharing survey, “How often were you interested in reading a classmate’s book?”. After partner sharing 60% of students reported becoming interested at least sometimes, after class sharing 81% of students reported at least sometimes becoming interested, and after journal sharing 73% of students said at least sometimes. Choosing the same books as friends may not necessarily be the same as developing an interest in the books others are telling about.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the survey data and researcher observations. Due to the increase of positive feelings toward SSR and overall student attitudes toward the activities, it would seem the activities did positively affect students’ reading motivation and engagement. Chapter 5 will discuss these results, explore factors that affected the data, and make recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine how social interaction affects students’ reading motivation and engagement and if various forms of interaction produced differing results. This chapter will discuss the results and the implications of the data in regards to the research questions.

**Overall Motivation and Engagement**

The results of this study indicated an increase in students overall positive attitudes toward SSR and their engaged time during SSR. Because students had been participating in SSR all year long, one would not expect that their attitudes or behaviors regarding the program would change the last six weeks of school. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the increase was due at least in part to the social sharing activities added to SSR. These findings are consistent with previous research on the benefits of social interaction with reading motivation and engagement (Bryan et al., 2003; Manning & Manning, 1984).

In the open-ended questions about each sharing activity, the students repeatedly stated that they liked telling others about their books and hearing about other books. They felt there was a purpose to sharing about their books because they knew someone else might want to read it. The main reasons students listed for reading all the words in a book were to increase their understanding and because they enjoyed the book. These purposes for reading reflect intrinsic motivation. Increased engagement may also be a result of students actually finding books they enjoy (Guthrie et al., 2007).
together and then share together, teachers can foster a culture of literacy (Allington, 2002; Gambrell, 1996).

**Differences in the Sharing Activities**

Interestingly, students rated liking all three of the sharing activities higher on the sharing surveys administered after each activity than on the post-survey at the conclusion of the study. The reason for this is unclear. On the post survey, students were rating all three activities. Possibly, they rated more critically after having had experience with all of them.

There were differences in students’ attitudes regarding the three types of sharing based on both the sharing surveys and the post survey. The students had higher attitudes toward the partner sharing over journal sharing and whole class sharing. On the sharing surveys and on the post survey, student comments stated they were nervous and uncomfortable talking in front of the whole class and they did not like having to write their thoughts. However, while writing and public speaking may be less desirable for students, these activities are both important skills that are essential and take time to develop. Marzano (2004) asserts that free response writing facilitates the storage of information in permanent memory, enhances language experience, and promotes self-expression. Because each treatment only lasted two weeks, students may not have had enough time to practice and feel confident in the activities. One must also keep in mind that SSR objectives will vary for teachers and may vary depending upon ability level (Wiesendanger, Braun, & Perry, 2009).
Partner sharing

According to the partner sharing survey and the post survey, students appeared to like partner sharing best. During this treatment, the teacher observed students interacting with the text by showing pages to their partner or reading an excerpt, which did not happen during the other treatments. While students were seen referring to the minilesson posters developed prior to the first activity, both teacher observations and open-ended student comments revealed that students did not always know what to talk about to keep the conversation going and it felt awkward. This may have been due partially to the fact that it was the first sharing activity and the students were not used to talking about their books. Students may have also gotten tired of sharing with the same partner for four days in a row. In order to prevent these things, the teacher could model the activity with students first and teach multiple minilessons. The students could also switch partners daily.

Journal sharing

According to the post survey, students liked journaling more than sharing with the whole class. However, in the initial sharing surveys, the opposite was true. One could assume the post-survey to be more accurate because students had actually participated in all activities at that time and therefore could compare them. On the post survey, 54% of students liked journaling at least a little, and on the sharing survey 63% did. Open-ended questions revealed that 25% of students did not like the writing aspect. They seemed to find it more difficult and less enjoyable. They responded to it more as an assignment, while one reason they gave for liking SSR was it did not feel like an assignment. This in
turn would detract from the intrinsic motivation for reading and sharing. Students may have benefited from this activity more if they were journaling with a teacher instead of a peer (Atwell, 1998; Newman, 2007) or if they were more used to writing as a frequent daily activity.

**Whole class sharing**

The post survey revealed only 39% of students liked sharing with the whole class at least a little. The journal sharing survey showed 63% of students liking it at least a little. While some students expressed discomfort sharing in front of a large group, everyone participated and showed appreciation for hearing about all the books. Students were exposed to a larger number of books in this way and were not limited to the same partner every day. Based on the teacher’s observations and notes, the students who were sharing were only retelling what they read. This became a bit tedious to listen to five or six students in a row summarize their books. Students looked bored and uninterested until question time. Then the same questions were repeated for each speaker, but students were interactive as they asked the questions and listened to the answers. Those who wanted to ask questions referred to the minilesson posters, but the presenters usually did not look at them for ideas on what to share. Modeling by the teacher and more minilessons on book talks could help students expand on their presentations. Since students appeared more engaged during the question time, perhaps the teacher should allow more time for this.
Future Recommendations

During all three activities, students tended to retell what they read instead of responding to what they read. In the future, minilessons on the differences between summarizing and critiquing books might prove helpful. The teacher could also try modeling both the sharing and questioning. In order to make students think critically and deeper engage them in the text, teachers should consider structuring the sharing activities more. The teacher could use specific questions or prompts for students to respond to (Marzano, 2004). Some examples might be, “Why I like this book”, “Why I think the character is interesting”, or “How I can relate to this book”. Lastly, future research may include longer interventions to make students more accustomed to writing and public speaking.

Genre and Book Choice

There was a change in genre choices from week to week. This suggests social influences on book choice. Although students were not necessarily choosing the same books their classmates were reading, the types of books their classmates were reading may have influenced them. For example, if they were hearing about more nonfiction books, they may try reading another nonfiction book. At the least, students were being exposed to more books than they can read.

The high frequency of realistic fiction picks is not surprising for two reasons. First, the classroom library has more realistic fiction books than any other genre. Second, other studies have shown children to have a stronger preference for fiction than non-fiction texts, especially girls (Harkrader & Moore, 1997).
The most common method reported for choosing books was looking at the front or back cover. Past research has also shown this to be the most frequently used method for book choice by middle schoolers (Jones, 2007). The high count of poetry books chosen during weeks three and four was likely due to the fact that the class was doing a poetry unit during this time and the teacher had these books on display.

**Conclusion**

The results of this study confirmed that different social activities do positively affect students’ attitudes and engagement during SSR. Teachers must make the most of their instruction time. By adding social interaction to SSR, teachers may help increase students enjoyment and engagement in reading. Incorporating writing and public speaking can also boost students’ confidence in these crucial academic skills.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Pre Survey

Directions: Place a check mark beside the response that best describes you.

1. How do you feel about silent reading time?
   - I like it a lot!
   - I like it a little.
   - I don’t really like it.
   - I don’t like it at all!

2a. What parts do you like about silent reading time? _____________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________

2b. What parts don’t you like about SSR? ______________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________

3. How do you feel about the amount of time you have for silent reading?
   - I would like to have more time for silent reading
   - I think we have just the right amount of time now
   - I would like to have less time for silent reading

4. When you have a book without pictures, how much time do you spend reading?
   - I read the entire time during silent reading.
   - I read most of the time during silent reading.
   - I read a little during silent reading.
   - I don’t read at all during silent reading.

5. When you have a book with pictures, how much time do you spend reading?
   - I mainly look at the pictures.
   - I look at the pictures and just read the captions.
   - I look at the pictures and read all the words.

6a. What makes you want to read all the words in a book? ________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________

6b. What makes you want to just look at pictures or look at the pictures and read the captions?
    _______________________________________________________________________

7. How easy is it for you to choose a good book?
   - Very easy!
   - Kind of easy.
   - Kind of hard.
   - Very hard!
APPENDIX B

Partner Sharing Survey

Directions: Place a check mark beside the response that best describes you.

1. How did you feel about sharing with a partner?
   □ I liked it a lot!
   □ I liked it a little.
   □ I didn’t like it that much.
   □ I didn’t like it at all!

2a. What did you like about sharing? ________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________

2b. What didn’t you like about sharing? ________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________

3. How often did you become interested in reading your partner’s book?
   □ Every time!
   □ Sometimes.
   □ Not very often.
   □ Never!

4. How do you feel about the books you read in the last two weeks?
   □ I liked them a lot!
   □ I liked them a little.
   □ I didn’t really like them.
   □ I didn’t like them at all!

5. What kind of books did you read in the last two weeks? (You may check more than one.)
   □ Historical fiction
   □ Realistic fiction
   □ Mysteries
   □ Fantasy
   □ Picture books
   □ True stories about people
   □ True facts about animals, places, or things
   □ Poetry
   □ Other _______________________

6. How did you choose what book to read?
   □ I looked at the front cover
   □ I read the back cover
   □ I read the first few pages
   □ It is part of a series I like
☐ It is by an author I like
☐ I looked to see if it was easy enough
☐ I looked to see if it was hard enough
☐ My teacher suggested it
☐ My friend suggested it
☐ Other____________________
APPENDIX C

Class Sharing Survey

Directions: Place a check mark beside the response that best describes you.

1. How did you feel about sharing with the class?
   - [ ] I liked it a lot!
   - [ ] I liked it a little.
   - [ ] I didn’t like it that much.
   - [ ] I didn’t like it at all!

2a. What did you like about sharing with the class?
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________

2b. What didn’t you like about sharing with the class?
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________

3. How often did you become interested in reading a classmate’s book?
   - [ ] Every time!
   - [ ] Sometimes.
   - [ ] Not very often.
   - [ ] Never!

4. How do you feel about the books you read in the last two weeks?
   - [ ] I loved them.
   - [ ] I liked them.
   - [ ] I didn’t really like them.
   - [ ] I hated them.

5. What kind of books did you read in the last two weeks? (You may check more than one.)
   - [ ] Historical fiction
   - [ ] Realistic fiction
   - [ ] Mysteries
   - [ ] Fantasy
   - [ ] Picture books
   - [ ] True stories about people
   - [ ] True facts about animals, places, or things
   - [ ] Poetry
   - [ ] Other____________________

6. How did you choose what book to read?
   - [ ] I looked at the front cover
   - [ ] I read the back cover
   - [ ] I read the first few pages
   - [ ] It is part of a series I like
☐ It is by an author I like
☐ I looked to see if it was easy enough
☐ I looked to see if it was hard enough
☐ My teacher suggested it
☐ My friend suggested it
☐ Other____________________
APPENDIX D

Journal Sharing Survey

Directions: Place a check mark beside the response that best describes you.

1. How did you feel about journaling with a partner?
   - I liked it a lot!
   - I liked it.
   - I didn’t like it that much.
   - I didn’t like it at all!

2a. What did you like about journaling? ___________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________

2b. What didn’t you like about journaling? ______________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________

3. How often did you become interested in reading your partner’s book?
   - Every time!
   - Sometimes.
   - Not very often.
   - Never!

4. How do you feel about the books you read in the last two weeks?
   - I loved them.
   - I liked them.
   - I didn’t really like them.
   - I hated them.

5. What kind of books did you read in the last two weeks? (You may check more than one.)
   - Historical fiction
   - Realistic fiction
   - Mysteries
   - Fantasy
   - Picture books
   - True stories about people
   - True facts about animals, places, or things
   - Poetry
   - Other __________________________

6. How did you choose what book to read?
   - I looked at the front cover
   - I read the back cover
   - I read the first few pages
   - It is part of a series I like
☐ It is by an author I like
☐ I looked to see if it was easy enough
☐ I looked to see if it was hard enough
☐ My teacher suggested it
☐ My friend suggested it
☐ Other____________________
APPENDIX E

Post Survey

Directions: Place a check mark beside the response that best describes you.

1. How do you feel about silent reading time?
   □ I like it a lot!
   □ I like it a little.
   □ I don’t really like it.
   □ I don’t like it at all!

2a. What parts do you like about silent reading time? _____________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________

2b. What parts don’t you like about SSR? _____________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________

3. How do you feel about the amount of time you have for silent reading?
   □ I would like to have more time for silent reading
   □ I think we have just the right amount of time now
   □ I would like to have less time for silent reading

4. When you have a book without pictures, how much time do you spend reading?
   □ I read the entire time during silent reading.
   □ I read most of the time during silent reading.
   □ I read a little during silent reading.
   □ I don’t read at all during silent reading.

5. When you have a book with pictures, how much time do you spend reading?
   □ I mainly look at the pictures.
   □ I look at the pictures and just read the captions.
   □ I look at the pictures and read all the words.

6a. What makes you want to read all the words in a book? _____________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________

6b. What makes you want to just look at pictures or look at the pictures and read the captions?
    __________________________________________________________________________

7. How easy is it for you to choose a good book?
   □ Very easy!
   □ Kind of easy.
   □ Kind of hard.
   □ Very hard!
8. Which books have you enjoyed reading the most over the last two months?
__________________________________________________________________________

9a. How well did you like sharing with a partner?
   □ I enjoyed it a lot!
   □ I liked it.
   □ I didn’t really like it.
   □ I hated it!

9b. Why? ___________________________________________________________________

10a. How well did you like sharing with the whole class?
   □ I enjoyed it a lot!
   □ I liked it.
   □ I didn’t really like it.
   □ I hated it!

10b.
Why? ___________________________________________________________________

11a. How well did you like journaling?
   □ I enjoyed it a lot!
   □ I liked it.
   □ I didn’t really like it.
   □ I hated it!

11b. Why? ___________________________________________________________________
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