Promoting Children's Reading Motivation With Culturally Relevant Reading Education

Cheyeon Ha
Shawna Durtschi
Alysia Roehrig
Jeannine Turner
Makana Craig
Michael P. Mesa
Chelsea Funari
Florida State University

Abstract

This study explored how a culturally relevant summer reading program may empower young Black students through social action and opportunities for reading engagement, thus supporting their reading motivation. The North Florida Freedom Schools (NFFS) was designed to realize social justice by providing free educational opportunities, especially for underserved children. Within this context, we explored the students' autonomous reading motivation and relevant variables to explain how the summer programming may support their motivation to read. In this mixed-methods study, we found that students' autonomous motivation to read was positively related to their self-efficacy, autonomy, relatedness, and controlled motivation to read. Building positive social relationships and supporting autonomy were important factors in explaining students' high autonomous motivation in NFFS. Moreover, students reported that participation in NFFS inspired them to effectively engage in reading activities and believe in the value of social action (i.e., how people could contribute to making a better community).

Keywords: reading motivation, self-efficacy, self-determination, autonomous motivation, culturally relevant education (CRE)

Introduction

According to the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau data, Florida is ranked in the top five locations in the United States for cultural diversity. The population of Florida is 53.2% White, 26.4% Hispanic or Latinx, 16.9% Black or African American, and 3.5% Asian or others (The U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). However, despite this multicultural population, cultural imbalances still exist throughout schools in the U.S. (Gunn et al., 2020), including Florida. One avenue to address this imbalance is through curricula that emphasize students' multicultural backgrounds and the benefits of diversity. Culturally relevant education (CRE) is a movement to transform curriculum and the ways in which we teach based on an understanding that educational systems are cross-cultural or multicultural settings (Curwin & Lynda, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). For young students from minoritized races and ethnicities, culturally relevant education works toward educational equity (Banks, 2016; Darling, 2005).

_____

Educational equality issues stem from cultural dissonance in schools and may also be confounded by the gap in learning opportunities available to students whose families face economic hardship. According to a national report, Black and Hispanic groups showed higher rates of first generation college attendance compared to White and Asian groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Related to educational attainment, previous studies have highlighted the inequality problem in education caused by socioeconomic status (Heckman, 2011; Sarsour et al., 2011; Stull, 2013). In particular, young students faced with economic hardship often have summer reading loss caused by a gap in learning opportunities (Kim & Quinn, 2013; McDaniel et al., 2017). Kim and Quinn highlighted that providing a variety of reading materials and prompting intrinsic reading motivation was important to support children who experienced summer reading loss.

Recognizing the value of summer enrichment programming and needs in the local community, North Florida Freedom Schools (NFFS) summer reading camp (described below) was organized to help prevent K–8 children's reading loss while empowering students to take a stand for social justice. In 2018, more than 80% of NFFS participants were African American and eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Students at Freedom Schools are identified as 'scholars'; this reference encourages participants to have confidence that they can take ownership of their learning and can be leaders in their community. A major goal of NFFS is fostering young scholars' reading motivation to help them maintain good reading habits after leaving summer camp.

Previous studies support that K–12 students with higher reading motivation tend to show higher reading achievement (De Naeghel et al., 2012; Schaffner & Schiefele, 2016; Taboada et al., 2009). However, students' motivation to read was explained using different theoretical concepts, such as self-determination, self-efficacy, and reading avoidance. There is still a lack of explanation for how these various motivational elements may be interconnected. Also, few studies have focused on the students' motivation for summer reading, or in the context of a reading program that tackles social justice issues. Thus, the purpose of our study was to explore the factors that may be involved in scholars' summer reading motivation.

Theoretical Background

Culturally Relevant Education (CRE)

Ladson-Billings' 2006 AERA presidential address offers an important consideration as we rethink education for students of color. She recommends "gaps"—laced with deficit connotations—be reframed as a byproduct of education debt. The debt analogy suggests deficiencies in student performance can be traced back to the capitalization of historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral injustices to which these students, and their ancestors, were subjected (Ladson-Billings, 2006). While seemingly little can be done to retroactively address these debts, CRE might be a means to level the playing field. In addition to its potential to improve learning for students of color, CRE also exhibits motivational capacity. In their review of CRE research, Kumar et al. (2018) found CRE exhibits four motivational principles: meaningfulness, competence, autonomy, and relatedness. As we describe later, these principles converge to reflect several motivational theories including self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

CRE-based Reading in Freedom Schools

The Freedom Schools program strives to reach scholars in communities without access to high-quality, summer experiences, during free six-week summer camps intended to empower scholars to make a difference in their world through social action, while encouraging a love of reading and preventing summer reading loss. In 1995, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF, 2020) re-established Freedom Schools, inspired by the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, which was organized

under the auspices of the Black Student Leadership Network. CDF subsequently developed the culturally relevant Integrated Reading Curriculum, which is now implemented at almost 200 Freedom Schools summer camps across the U.S. annually.

By making connections between scholars' cultures and their learning, Freedom Schools offer experiences that are different from underserved scholars' traditional school experiences. Freedom Schools provides books (allowing scholars to build personal libraries) about social action written by non-White authors. Instructional activities include making connections between scholars' lived experiences and the experiences of the characters in the stories. The emphasis is not on testing, but on experiencing success and providing opportunities to make literacy meaningful by putting ideas into action relevant to their lives. This approach follows Ladson-Billings' (1995a) work on effective teaching for African American students. With culturally relevant education: "(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 160). Freedom Schools is also aligned with Gay's (2013) call for educators to teach "to" and "through" cultural lenses by bridging school with students' lived experiences, creating community among individuals, and developing student agency (p. 49).

Autonomous Reading Motivation: Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) posits basic needs that must be met for students to become intrinsically motivated (i.e., when doing the activity is motivating), and how these needs can be satisfied within learning contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Some previous studies based on SDT have used definitions of autonomous versus controlled motivations to explain students' motivational reasons for engaging in academic tasks (De Naeghel et al., 2012; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Sheldon & Elliot, 1998). In particular, autonomous motivation includes doing an activity for the enjoyment it brings or because doing the activity has value. Controlled motivation involves pressure from external sources, such as parents or teachers. In our study, we focused on scholars' autonomous motivation for reading because, in previous research, children's autonomous reading motivation was an important factor in explaining their high reading abilities (De Naeghel et al., 2012; Orkin et al., 2018; Schaffner & Schiefele, 2016; Taboada et al., 2009). For example, De Naeghel and colleagues found that autonomous reading motivation within recreational contexts was positively related to elementary children's reading engagement and reading comprehension levels.

Ryan and Deci (2000) posited that three factors are necessary to promote students' autonomous reading motivation: a sense of competence, feelings of autonomy, and positive interpersonal relatedness. An empirical study by Orkin and colleagues (2018) found that elementary students who received reading instruction supporting autonomy, belonging (i.e., relatedness), and competence showed higher autonomous reading motivation and reading skills compared to the control groups using rewards (i.e., small toys or stickers).

Promoting Autonomous Reading Motivation in Freedom Schools

Freedom Schools strives to foster scholars' sociopolitical consciousness and reading skills using the lens of culturally relevant education. CRE also aids scholars' autonomous reading motivation. Perceived competence relates to the level of confidence one has in their own skills and abilities (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and is an important component of autonomous motivation. Within CRE, scholars' perceived competence is promoted when instructors recognize the importance of scholars experiencing academic success. This includes a sensitivity toward scholars' sociocultural experiences as they give praise and feedback, communicate, and even design learning tasks that are challenging and interesting. The second factor needed for autonomous motivation, sense of autonomy, refers to the level of agency one has to make decisions, act, or think on one's own accord. Within CRE, this sense of autonomy is promoted when scholars are given the agency to be critically conscious and

challenge the status quo. This sense of autonomy pervades all aspects of the NFFS CRE curriculum, empowering scholars through a multicultural program that reminds them they can make a difference in their lives, in their community, and in the larger world. The third factor needed for autonomous motivation, sense of relatedness, refers to the interpersonal relationships that promote a sense of trust, care, and security among scholars and instructors. In NFFS CRE, instructors consciously promote the underlying message that "we're in this together" with an understanding that this foundation can also promote scholars' competence and autonomy.

NFFS is designed to promote educational equity and to help promote scholars' reading motivation with a CRE-based reading program. This is why it is important to collect data on scholars' reading motivation at the beginning of the summer when scholars' experiences and beliefs are based on traditional school environments; their reading motivation influenced by traditional school can then be compared to their reading motivation at the end of the summer, after six weeks in the CRE-based reading program. Information related to differences in scholars' reading motivation between these two environments can help explain the potential for CRE-based summer reading programs to promote educational equity. Although previous research has examined CRE and SDT, SDT has not been used as a lens to examine the effectiveness of a CRE-based summer reading program.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

This study aimed to explore aspects of scholars' reading motivation in a CRE-based reading context. In this study, we focused on scholars' autonomous reading motivation because we assumed that this variable would be key to helping scholars maintain reading habits even after the summer reading camp. We collected both quantitative and qualitative data from the 2018 NFFS summer reading camp and used a triangulation design model to explore how the implementation of a CRE-based reading curriculum may effectively support scholars' autonomous reading motivation. The following quantitative question guided this study: Is scholars' autonomous motivation positively related to competence, relatedness, autonomy, and self-efficacy, and negatively related to their controlled motivation and avoidance? We were also guided by the following qualitative question: How do CRE experiences offered by NFFS support scholars' autonomous reading motivation, and in what ways do scholars with high autonomous motivation perceive that NFFS supports their competence, relatedness, and autonomy?

Method

Design

We conducted a mixed-methods study combining quantitative results (i.e., correlations and paired t tests) and qualitative findings (i.e., interview analysis) to explore how CRE-based reading can support scholars' autonomous reading motivation in Freedom Schools. This study followed a convergence model of triangulation, which is beneficial in combining findings from two different lenses and is able to reinforce the common findings from various sources (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In this study, the convergence model followed the sequential procedures outlined in Figure 1. We first used quantitative analyses to investigate the relationships among the motivational variables (e.g., autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, autonomy, relatedness, competence, avoidance, and self-efficacy). Next, we explored how the NFFS summer reading camp may support scholars' autonomous reading motivation. In the qualitative analyses we analyzed five interviews of scholars who had high autonomous reading motivation at post-test. Those successful scholar models provided evidence about the reasons for their high autonomous reading motivation.

Figure 1. *Convergence Model in Triangulation Design (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 63)*
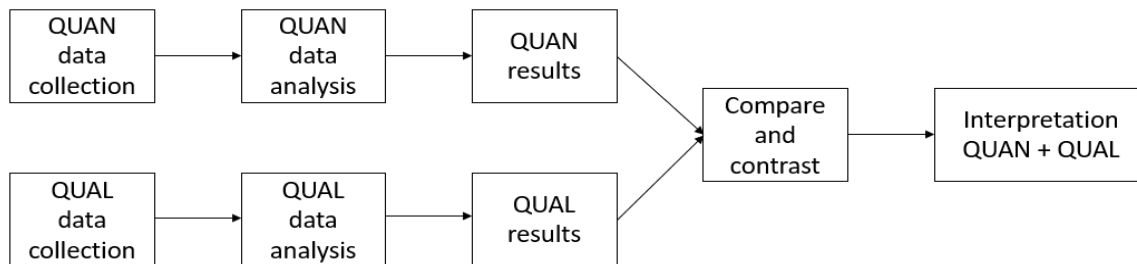
Participants & Procedures

We collected data from two 2018 NFFS sites (Site A at a university lab school and Site B at a church), both located in a lower-income part of a mid-size city in North Florida. The participants (i.e., scholars) attended a six-week summer reading camp based on the culturally relevant Freedom Schools curriculum. We collected reading motivation survey data in the first and last weeks of the camp. Additionally, we conducted scholar interviews with parental consent during the last week of the camp. A total of 94 scholars had parental consent to participate in research; of those, 39 completed both pre- and post-test reading motivation surveys.

Among the 39 participants in the quantitive phase, there were similar numbers of females ($n = 20$, 51.3%) and males ($n = 19$, 48.7%). Participants identified predominantly as African American ($n = 37$, 94.9%). At least 85% were eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. Of the participants, 64.1% ($n = 25$) came from Site A and 35.9% ($n = 14$) came from Site B. The NFFS classrooms were comprised of 33.3% ($n = 13$) at Level 1 (grades 1–2), 20.5% ($n = 8$) at Level 2 (grades 3–5), and 46.2% ($n = 18$) at Level 3 (grades 6–8).

For the qualitative phase, we used purposefully selected scholars from the quantitative sample who had high autonomous motivation for reading during the last week of the summer camp (see Table 1). We selected all scholars who (a) scored 3 or higher in autonomous motivation on a 4-point Likert scale survey (described in the next section) and (b) had parental consent to participate in an interview. They also demonstrated a range of improvement in their autonomous reading motivation over the course of the camp, with increases ranging from 0.1 to 2.0. Audio-recorded transcribed interviews focused on scholars' perceptions of the camp's reading instruction, the CRE context, and supports for their reading motivation.

Table 1. *Post-Test Scores of Purposefully Sampled Interviewees*

Cases	Completed grade (gender)	Autonomous motivation (change)	Controlled motivation	Autonomy	Relatedness	Competence	Avoidance	Self-efficacy
Aniyah	4th (F)	3.80 (+2.0)	3.29	4.00	4.00	3.00	2.75	3.33
Destiny	5th (F)	3.30 (+.1)	1.86	2.67	3.00	4.00	1.25	3.67
Kayla	7th (F)	3.10 (+.6)	3.57	4.00	3.00	2.00	3.25	3.00
Anthony	8th (M)	3.70 (+.6)	3.57	3.67	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
Jayden	8th (M)	3.20 (+1.2)	3.00	3.67	3.00	2.00	2.50	3.00

Note. n = 5. The students were selected because they had high scores in autonomous motivation at post-test. They also made a range of gains in autonomous motivation from the pre-test, but this was not a focus of this study.

Measures

Reading Motivation Inventory (RMI)

We developed a reading motivation survey, the Reading Motivation Inventory (RMI), based on prior studies in the field of children's reading motivation. The RMI measures multiple components of motivation (i.e., intrinsic regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, external regulation, avoidance, competence, autonomy, relatedness, and self-efficacy). To develop the RMI questions, we reviewed three relevant surveys predominantly used in previous K–12 student motivation studies. First, the Reading Motivation Scale (RMS; Guthrie et al., 2009a) measures elementary students' reading self-efficacy, avoidance, and intrinsic motivation, with Cronbach's alphas of .71 or higher. Second, the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQA; Deci et al., 1992) investigates students' autonomous (i.e., intrinsic and identified regulation) versus controlled (i.e., introjected and external regulation) learning motivation based on the SDT; the reported reliability of the SRQA ranged from .66 to .82. Third, the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI; Center for Self-Determination Theory, n.d.) is a multidimensional measurement for learning motivation including subscales of interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice/autonomy, effort/importance, relatedness, and pressure/tension. In this study, we used two variables from the IMI: perceived choice/autonomy and relatedness. Monteiro and colleagues (2015) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .86 for perceived choice/autonomy. However, we could not identify an alpha from a previous study for relatedness.

We combined selected items from the three different measures to create a single survey. We chose 14 original items from the RMS and adapted the wording of items from the SRQA (13) and IMI (6) to focus on the reading contexts. For coherence and clarity, all items were placed on a 4-point Likert scale represented by pictures of pizza (i.e., *Never* = an empty pizza box, *Always* = a full pizza). Researchers helped Level 1 scholars complete surveys one-on-one, and surveys were group-administered to scholars in Levels 2–3. We checked the Cronbach's alphas of each variable and deleted one item each from the relatedness and competence scales to achieve acceptable levels of internal consistency reliability. In this study, we explored seven variables (i.e., autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, autonomy, relatedness, competence, avoidance, and self-efficacy) relevant to children's reading motivation. Table 2 provides information about each variable, including number of items and original questionnaires. All Cronbach's alpha levels were higher than .73 in the post-test dataset. In general, alphas of .6–.7 are considered acceptable, while .8 is considered a very good level of reliability (Ursachi et al., 2015).

Table 2. *Reliability of Reading Motivation Variables in This Study*

	Variables	# of items	Cronbach's α at pre-test	Cronbach's α at post-test	Original questionnaires
1	Autonomous motivation	7	.798	.930	SRQA+RMS
2	Controlled motivation	10	.674	.761	SRQA
3	Autonomy	3	.588	.756	IMI
4	Relatedness	2	.753	.826	IMI
5	Competence	2	.680	.788	RMS
6	Avoidance	4	.641	.765	RMS
7	Self-efficacy	3	.669	.737	RMS

Note. N = 39. SRQA = Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Deci et al., 1992); RMS = Reading Motivation Scale (Guthrie et al., 2009a); IMI = Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (Center for Self-Determination Theory, n.d.).

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

For the quantitative analyses, we conducted paired *t* tests and Pearson correlations. We conducted *t* tests to examine the scholars' reading motivation changes during the six-week summer camp. Next, we calculated the correlations among the reading motivation variables (i.e., autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, autonomy, relatedness, competence, avoidance, and self-efficacy). For the correlations, we used the post-test data, which had acceptable reliability levels for all variables, to examine how relevant variables were linked to children's autonomous motivation in the CRE-based reading context.

Qualitative Analysis

Interviews from five purposefully selected scholars were analyzed to explore how aspects of the summer camp might have supported their high autonomous motivation for reading. Open and axial coding were used to develop themes focused on scholars' perceptions about the learning experience in NFFS and the benefits of CRE-based reading (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Two researchers were involved in the coding process using NVivo 12 software (QSR International, n.d.) for qualitative data analysis. After the independent open coding process, all codes were combined and adjusted to clarify the axial themes. In the coding process, two major themes emerged: (a) Freedom Schools' empowering school and social structure and (b) the reasons for scholars' autonomous reading motivation.

Results

Descriptive Results

Table 3 shows the mean scores of all reading motivation variables at pre- and post-test. Considering the range of the points (i.e., [1,4]; the center value for this range is 2.5), scholars' average avoidance scores were lower than 2.5 (tending toward *sometimes* avoiding reading), and average scores on all other variables (i.e., autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, autonomy, relatedness, competence, and self-efficacy) tended to be higher than 2.5 (tending toward *most of the time*) at both pre- and post-test. Over the 6-week camp, the majority of scholars (56–69%) maintained or increased in their autonomous motivation and controlled motivation to read, satisfaction of their needs for autonomy, relatedness, competence in reading, and their self-efficacy for reading. Additionally, almost half had decreases in reading avoidance (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Descriptive Results*

	Variables	*M* pre	*M* post	Gain post-pre		Maintain post-pre		Loss post-pre	
				n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
1	Autonomous motivation	2.631	2.708	19	48.7	3	7.7	17	43.6
2	Controlled motivation	2.586	2.546	19	48.7	7	17.9	13	33.3
3	Autonomy	2.436	2.628	19	48.7	7	17.9	13	33.3
4	Relatedness	2.705	2.744	14	35.9	13	33.3	12	30.8
5	Competence	2.718	2.680	10	25.6	14	35.9	15	38.5
6	Avoidance	2.436	2.295	13	33.3	7	17.9	19	48.7
7	Self-efficacy	2.641	2.650	12	31.8	11	28.2	16	41.0

Note. $N = 39$.

Paired t *tests Between Pre-test and Post-test*

After determining that our data met the assumptions for normal distribution, we analyzed scholars' gains in reading motivation by comparing results from the pre- and post-test (see Table 4). We hypothesized that controlled motivation and avoidance would decrease and that the scores on the other variables would increase at the post-test compared to pre-test. None of the changes over six weeks were statistically significant. Although the differences only approached significance, the changes in autonomy satisfaction and reading avoidance were in the predicted directions and represent small, potentially meaningful effects. The small increase in autonomous reading motivation, while not significant, had a Cohen's *d* indicating a small, potentially meaningful effect. Scores on all other variables essentially did not change.

Table 4. *Paired* t *test Results Among the Variables*

Variables	Paired Differences					*t*	*d*	*p*
	*M**	*SD*	*SEM*	95% CI				
				LL	*UL*			
1 Autonomous Motivation	.077	.719	.115	−.156	.310	.668	.214†	.508
2 Controlled Motivation	−.040	.672	.108	−.258	.177	−.375	−.120	.710
3 Autonomy	.192	1.025	.164	−.140	.525	1.172	.375†	.249
4 Relatedness	.039	.822	.132	−.228	.305	.292	.094	.772
5 Competence	−.038	.692	.111	−.263	.186	.347	.111	.730
6 Avoidance	−.141	.709	.114	−.371	.089	−1.242	−.398†	.222
7 Self-efficacy	.009	.719	.115	−.225	.242	.074	.024	.941

Note. N = 39. *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.
*a negative mean value indicates students' mean score at pre-test was higher than the post-test score.
†denotes a small effect size.

Correlations Among the Variables

In the next step, we focused on the correlations among the reading motivation variables at the same time point. Table 5 shows the correlations among the reading motivation variables at the end of the NFFS camp. Both autonomous motivation and self-efficacy had meaningful correlations with other motivation variables. Scholars' autonomous motivation was positively related to controlled motivation, autonomy, relatedness, and self-efficacy. Scholars with higher avoidance tended to show higher controlled motivation and higher competence. Also, scholars with higher competence tended to have lower controlled reading motivation.

Interview Analysis Results

A major goal of our research was to explain how scholars' experiences in NFFS supported their autonomous reading motivation. Two main themes emerged in our qualitative data analysis: (a) the program's empowering school and social structure, and (b) the reasons for autonomous reading motivation. First, Banks (2016) presented the idea of an empowering school and social structure in his multicultural education model. This idea suggests that educational equity requires the support and commitment of teachers, staff, curriculum, policies, and an overall school culture committed to empowering students of all cultures to thrive. NFFS was dedicated to creating an empowering school and social structure as evidenced by the "Freedom School Way," the sociopolitical undertone of the curriculum, and the program's commitment to inspiring social action.

Table 5. *Correlations Among the Variables at Post-Test*

	Post-test variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Autonomous Motivation	1						
2	Controlled Motivation	.575**	1					
3	Autonomy	.820***	.666***	1				
4	Relatedness	.660***	.337*	.536***	1			
5	Competence	−.010	−.481**	−.185	.203	1		
6	Avoidance	.031	.444**	.116	.063	.608***	1	
7	Self-efficacy	.682***	.325*	.558***	.703***	−.229	.021	1

Note. N = 39.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Second, through the lens of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000), we acknowledge that the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are potential supports for autonomous reading motivation. Scholars' interview comments regarding their enjoyment, favorite activities, valuing, and inherent satisfaction in reading helped us to identify two major supports for scholars' autonomous motivation in NFFS: positive social relationships and autonomy supports.

Empowering School and Social Structure in NFFS

The Freedom School Way. NFFS's six-week reading camp provided an empowering school and social environment where scholars could develop interpersonal relationships with other young learners. We found the "Freedom School Way"—a prosocial standard upheld by teachers and scholars—played a part in supporting healthy relationships. Many interviewees described the Freedom School Way is to treat one another with respect and to stand up to bullying. Seventh-grade scholar Kayla explained, "the Freedom School Way is basically what's expected of you to do, to be nice, responsible, and not doing anything you wouldn't do in front of your parents or your guardian." Another middle school scholar, Anthony, described the Freedom School Way as being "nice to others and you just do what you're required to do." The value of these new friendships is evidenced in the interview with Jayden, an eighth-grade scholar, who explained that once he returned home after the summer camp, he would likely "be bored and miss the friends." The Freedom School Way may have deeper implications; for instance, by holding scholars to high social standards, the classroom becomes a safe place wherein learning can occur (Hammond, 2015).

Shaping Sociopolitical Consciousness in the Curriculum. When asked what he learned at NFFS, Anthony responded "Basically, like why school started, how it started, and what we've got to do in the world." This comment is significant because the scholar emphasized later that African American history was something he learned in the summer program that he had not already learned in regular school. Further, he added that learning about African American history would be hard for him to continue doing once the program ended because he perceived that content as missing from his regular school curriculum. To this point, a major goal of the CRE-based reading program is to develop scholars' sociopolitical consciousness by diversifying class content and pedagogy, and engaging scholars in the process of analyzing where knowledge originates (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Inspiring Social Action. The program's focus on culturally relevant education encouraged scholars to be agents of change. Each week, books and lessons centered on social action at different levels:

making change for oneself, one's family, the community, and the world. When asked whether she believed she could make a difference in the world, fifth-grade scholar Destiny answered optimistically:

> The world is really, really big. But I have high hopes. And I should be able to make a difference not just because I say I want to make a difference. But like I really wanna make a difference … I'm still researching that, on how you make a difference in the world. Some of the stories here at Freedom Schools show people making a difference in the world.

Similarly, another elementary grade scholar, Aniyah, stated "I'm going to continue to make sure people don't push other kids around … the world could be a better place if people can stop fighting and arguing." In reviewing the interviews, it was clear that the program's approach to the CRE-based reading curriculum empowered these scholars to take positive social action on both micro- (e.g., standing up against bullying) and macro-levels (e.g., protesting at the state capitol).

Autonomous Reading Motivation Support in NFFS

Building Social Relationships. Scholars' sense of relatedness, or the interpersonal relationships scholars established throughout the summer program, was important in supporting their autonomous reading motivation. Aniyah commented on her connection with teachers in NFFS, mentioning that the one thing she would like to take with her to regular school were her teachers. She explained her reasoning for this simply, saying "all the teachers here are nice." Destiny echoed the sentiment, sharing "I have a lot of caring SLIs (teachers). They listen to my problems when I have any." Kayla added that "In FS, the teacher tells you what you need to do and then something might change around and we do something different depending on how everyone else feels." Scholars perceived their teachers as caring for them by their awareness of scholars' backgrounds and interests, their willingness to listen, and their flexibility in the classroom.

Likewise, positive relationships with peers were linked to higher autonomous reading motivation. Kayla remarked,

> Some of my friends, we got in a group and read the story. The more that you listen to someone else read, the more you kinda understand the book… Something that I learned [about] how to be a good friend is how to be nice to everyone because everyone is different.

Similarly, Jayden mentioned that "[my friends and I] had fun. We got to know each other in only six weeks." Scholars' comments highlighted peer relatedness as connected to the sense of community they felt at Freedom Schools. These social relationships appeared to be integral to the learning process, as is suggested by sociocultural theory (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Further, scholars' perceptions of NFFS as a "fun" learning environment seemed linked to the positive relationships they established.

Autonomy Supporting. Scholars appeared to be more interested in reading when they perceived teachers and peers respected their opinions. For example, Destiny remarked,

> The books were really fun… rather than just sitting there listening to a teacher read the book I got to read it myself. And then we have fun activities to go along with it...and I really had a lot of questions to ask.

The scholar appreciated this about her teachers, indicating that they didn't seem to mind that she asked many questions in class. Her reflection helped to illustrate the ways in which NFFS supports scholars' autonomous reading motivation: by encouraging the class to read books that are of interest to them, and assuring scholars that no question will go unanswered.

In addition to supporting scholars' perceptions of autonomy as described above, autonomous reading motivation can also be fostered by making class content relevant and meaningful. For example, Kayla pointed out the power of stories related to scholars' lived experiences:

> I liked that the books that we read talk more about the culture of Black, African American and like it kinda hits some of the points that we go through in reality… I used to like to read but I kinda got out of the habit and now, it's putting me back into the habit of reading.

This point of view was also shared by Anthony, who was interested in NFFS's focus on African American history. The interviews with scholars led us to believe that providing scholars the option to choose books that they found personally relevant and meaningful supported their sense of autonomy and, in the case of Kayla and Anthony, simultaneously stimulated their sociopolitical consciousness and their motivation to read.

Discussion

We used multiple research methods to explore the reading motivation of traditionally underserved students in the context of a CRE-focused summer reading camp. NFFS was intended to be different from underserved students' traditional school experiences, offering books written by African American, Latinx, and Caribbean authors on subjects addressing social action. The NFFS camp provided scholars with copies of the books to build their home libraries and invited them to participate in many personally relevant reading activities. The program's CRE-based reading curriculum served as the basis upon which teachers provided opportunities for scholars to relate to the books and take relevant social action.

In this study, approximately 60% of participants maintained or increased in autonomous reading motivation. Moreover, survey results suggested that scholars with higher autonomous reading motivation tended to also have a greater sense of relatedness within the context of NFFS's reading program. Thus, we focused our attention on participants, whose post-test autonomous reading motivation was high and increased over the six-week camp, in order to better understand the reasons why and how the NFFS camp supported motivation growth. Through the interviews, we found that those scholars also had a positive view of their social relationships in the classrooms.

Similar to previous findings, we found that supporting relatedness and autonomy was key to the scholars' autonomous reading motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kumar et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Our findings from the interviews with scholars who finished the camp with high autonomous motivation suggest that, for some students, the culturally relevant reading program at NFFS supported their autonomous reading motivation by satisfying their needs for relatedness and autonomy. The teaching approach in NFFS was primarily student-centered and respected learners' choices. During the reading camp, teachers encouraged students to ask questions about the stories and to work together to make sense of the readings. Additionally, positive social relations helped to explain scholars' high autonomous motivation. Since most classes were structured to include discussions and collaborative activities after readings, scholars had more opportunities to communicate and work together with their peers. One of the interviewees commented that when scholars listened to peers reading and talking about the stories, they could understand how people's thoughts could vary, and in turn these conversations contributed to their deeper understanding about the stories. This is supported by previous findings that suggest collaborative activities contribute to effective student learning (Guthrie et al., 2009b; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Though unexpected in the Freedom Schools context, we found that scholars' autonomous motivation also correlated positively with controlled reading motivation, as in several previous studies (De Naeghel et al., 2012; Schaffner & Schiefele, 2016). One potential explanation is that scholars are required to read at the summer camp, so they get more practice. In turn, their reading efficacy may improve and make them more likely to read on their own.

Moreover, previous studies highlighted that when learning contexts are linked to students' cultural backgrounds, students perceived them as meaningful and were able to effectively engage in learning (Gay, 2010, 2013; Kumar et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). In particular, scholars commented that the culturally relevant reading focused on African American history prompted them to be active readers. Further, scholars with high autonomous motivation commented on how the reading experiences shaped their sociopolitical consciousness and inspired social action.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was designed with a single experimental group and no control group, thus, the results of the paired *t* tests need to be interpreted with caution. To overcome the limitations of a single group design, future research should focus on case studies of scholars with attention paid to individual differences in order to explore how and why the program may be less supportive of reading motivation in some scholars versus others. In this study, we noticed that students with high autonomous motivation commented about their positive social relationships with their teachers and peers. Future studies should focus on the factors that contribute to some students' low motivation and suggest appropriate learning supports for them. In the future, additional data sources such as observations and teachers' interviews should also be considered, as these sources may provide insight regarding how teachers can effectively support children with lower motivation to read.

Conclusions

Our results illustrate multiple theories on how NFFS may provide meaningful literacy experiences for young African American scholars. The scholars with high autonomous motivation, also had self-efficacy for reading and commonly pointed out that CRE-based reading experiences were unique because they rarely learned about African American history in regular school curricula. The diverse contexts of African American students' cultural and historical backgrounds have been inadequately reflected in the literacy curriculum of traditional schools (Gunn et al., 2020). The realization of social justice in literacy education should include respect not only for having equality in educational opportunities but also for diversity in terms of the content. The majority of young African American scholars may be effectively motivated by CRE-based reading activities because they want to know more about those topics. In future K–12 literacy classes, reflecting learners' diverse cultural backgrounds in literacy curricula is one promising way to increase students' autonomous motivation. The present study's findings explore one opportunity to work toward repaying the educational debt through culturally responsive teaching to support students' reading motivation.

References

Corresponding Author: Cheyeon Ha
Author Contact Information: cha@fsu.edu

Banks, J. A. (2016). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching*. Routledge.

Center for Self-determination Theory. (n.d.). *Intrinsic Motivation Inventory* (IMI). https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/intrinsic-motivation-inventory/

Children's Defense Fund. (2020). CDF Freedom Schools Program. http://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/freedomschools/

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Choosing a mixed methods design* (Vol. 2). SAGE Publications.

Curwin, D., & Lynda, A. (2003). A missing link: Between traditional aboriginal education and the western system of education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education. 27*(2), 144–160.

Darling, D. (2005). Improving minority student achievement by making cultural connections. *Middle School Journal, 36*(5), 46–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2005.11461505

De Naeghel, J., Van Keer, H., Vansteenkiste, M., & Rosseel, Y. (2012). The relation between elementary students' recreational and academic reading motivation, reading frequency, engagement, and comprehension: A self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(4), 1006–1021. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027800

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Deci, E., Hodges, R., Pierson, L., & Tomassone, J. (1992). Motivationally relevant predictors of achievement and adjustment in learning disabled and emotionally handicapped students. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 25*(1), 457–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/002221949202500706

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry, 43*, 48–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12002

Gunn, A. A., Bennett, S. V., Alley, K. M., Barrera, E. S., IV, Cantrell, S. C., Moore, L., & Welsh, J. L. (2020). Revisiting culturally responsive teaching practices for early childhood preservice teachers. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2020.1735586

Guthrie, J. T., Coddington, C. S., & Wigfield, A. (2009a). Profiles of reading motivation among African American and Caucasian students. *Journal of Literacy Research, 41*(3), 317–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/10862960903129196

Guthrie, J. T., Hoa, A. L. W., Wigfield, A., Tonks, S. M., Humenick, N. M., & Littles, E. (2007). Reading motivation and reading comprehension growth in the later elementary years. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 32*(3), 282–313. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2006.05.004

Guthrie, J. T., McRae, A., Coddington, C. S., Lutz Klauda, S., Wigfield, A., & Barbosa, P. (2009b). Impacts of comprehensive reading instruction on diverse outcomes of low- and high-

achieving readers. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 42*(3), 195–214. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219408331039

Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain.* Corwin.

Heckman, J. J. (2011). The economics of inequality: The value of early childhood education. *American Educator, 35*(1), 31–35.

John-Steiner, V., & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational Psychologist, 31*(3-4), 191–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1996.9653266

Kim, J. S., & Quinn, D. M. (2013). The effects of summer reading on low-income children's literacy achievement from kindergarten to grade 8: A meta-analysis of classroom and home interventions. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(3), 386–431. http://doi.org/10.3102/0034654313483906

Kumar, R., Zusho, A., & Bondie, R. (2018). Weaving cultural relevance and achievement motivation into inclusive classroom cultures. *Educational Psychologist, 53*, 78–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2018.1432361

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995a). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice, 34*(3), 159–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849509543675

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995b). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher, 35*(7), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035007003

McDaniel, S. C., McLeod, R., Carter, C. L., & Robinson, C. (2017). Supplemental summer literacy instruction: Implications for preventing summer reading loss. *Reading Psychology, 38*(7), 673–686. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2017.1333070

Monteiro, V., Mata, L., & Peixoto, F. (2015). Intrinsic Motivation Inventory: Psychometric properties in the context of first language and mathematics learning. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 28(3), 434–443. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1678-7153.201528302

Orkin, M., Pott, M., Wolf, M., May, S., & Brand, E. (2018). Beyond gold stars: Improving the skills and engagement of struggling readers through intrinsic motivation. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 34*(3), 203–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2017.1387834

QSR International. (n.d.). NVivo qualitative data analysis software. https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/home

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68–78. http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Ryan, R. M., & Connell, J. P. (1989). Perceived locus of causality and internalization: Examining reasons for acting in two domains. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*(5), 749–761. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.5.749

Sarsour, K., Sheridan, M., Jutte, D., Nuru-Jeter, A., Hinshaw, S., & Boyce, W. T. (2011). Family socioeconomic status and child executive functions: The roles of language, home environment, and single parenthood. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society, 17*(1), 120–132. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355617710001335

Schaffner, E., & Schiefele, U. (2016). The contributions of intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation to the development of reading competence over summer vacation. *Reading Psychology, 37*(6), 917–941. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2015.1133465

Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1998). Not all personal goals are personal: Comparing autonomous and controlled reasons as predictors of effort and attainment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24,* 546–557. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167298245010

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications.

Stull, J. C. (2013). Family socioeconomic status, parent expectations, and a child's achievement. *Research in Education, 90*(1), 53–67. https://doi.org/10.7227/RIE.90.1.4

Taboada, A., Tonks, S. M., Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T. (2009). Effects of motivational and cognitive variables on reading comprehension. *Reading and Writing, 22*(1), 85–106. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-008-9133-y

U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *Digest of education statistics 2017.* https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_104.70.asp?current=yes

U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *United States populations and people.* https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/FL#

Ursachi, G., Horodnic, I. A., & Zait, A. (2015). How reliable are measurement scales? External factors with indirect influence on reliability estimators. *Procedia Economics and Finance, 20*(15), 679–686. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00123-9