

TALES OF A FOURTH-GRADE SOMETHING: BOOK CLUB DISCLOSURES AND
MEANING MAKING

by

HELENE P. HALSTEAD WHITLEY

(Under the Direction of Donna Alvermann)

ABSTRACT

This study investigated what occurred when a group of nine to eleven fourth graders were given the space to engage in student-driven discussion during an in-school book club. Data were collected during a seven-month case study and included recorded observations, interviews, field notes, and student artifacts. Data were analyzed and the study was designed using a social constructionist framework. Thematic analysis was used to examine the students' meaning-making processes and products as well as what students shared about themselves as readers. Implications derived from findings suggest that students move beyond the book and into their own lives when allowed to control the book discussions. Additionally, students used academic norms as well as personal relationships when describing whom they felt was a reader in their class. Books chosen for ownership were made based on factors including pop-culture, previous knowledge of authors or topics, and the choices of other classmates.

INDEX WORDS: social constructionism, case study, book clubs, meaning making,
Discourse, choice, and thematic analysis

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PREFACE

This study includes the stories of a group of fourth-grade students who, most of the time graciously and occasionally less so, let me come into their community once a week with my own agenda. These 4th grade students are the center of this study; everything I write and everything you read is focused on these eleven children. Therefore, it is important that they are introduced to you first, before we delve further into this journey; a journey that begins way before graduate school was even a consideration and culminates, at least for the moment, to this point.

Each student in Mr. Leopoldo's (pseudonym) Extended Learning Time (ELT) was a participant in this study. ELT is the class held first thing in the morning; at the beginning of the school year, Mr. Leopoldo's ELT consisted of ten students who were not identified as needing specific reading support through an English as a Second Language (ESOL) class or a computerized program by Scholastic called Read 180. The school made decisions about reading support classes based on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), through English as a Second Language (ESOL) requirements, and through Lexile scores that stemmed from the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) the students took several times throughout the school year. The students in Mr. Leopoldo's ELT class had Lexile scores that ranged from 400 to just over 1000. To provide a point of reference, students in the second grade are expected to have a Lexile between 450-720, fourth graders are expected to have a Lexile between 640-850, and a student with a Lexile score of 1000 would be in the later years of middle school to early high school.

I asked each participant to choose their own pseudonym, and all but one student struggled with this task. This surprised me; when I was younger I wanted my name to be Hannah and I assumed that most children had a name they felt fit them better. When choosing pseudonyms, we had to have conversations that explained why a pseudonym was important for my study and why, for example, Joey was not an adequate pseudonym for Joseph. While the teacher was not a research subject, he was a participant. He had no trouble giving me a pseudonym

I introduce these students, the members of the book club, alphabetically using their chosen pseudonyms. I also introduce their teacher and myself, the observer-participant, last. Prior to these introductions, however, I provide a sequential overview of how the book events occurred.

The book club met from October through March of the 2015-2016 school year each week that school was in session, primarily on Fridays. I typically arrived at the school prior to 8:00 am, signed in, and went upstairs to the classroom where we were going to hold our meetings. Initially I used audio recorders to capture discussions; after the first two weeks, I added video cameras as well. As the other students left the room to go to their ELT classroom, the book club students would come to the front of the class. During the first few book club meetings, I found it difficult to gather all the students together around the large table in the front of the room; the participants who hesitated to join us sat in desks slightly removed from the rest of the group.

While the original study design had the participants read chapters from the novel in class during the week, this rarely occurred. For this reason, I began each meeting by asking the students where we left off, although I knew, and reading aloud a chapter. Each

participant had a bookmark, and later some sticky notes, and while I read I occasionally reminded them to write any questions on their bookmarks for future discussions. After the chapter was finished, the facilitator called on fellow participants to ask questions and then to answer them.

The facilitators privileged some students over others, therefore there were the occasional verbal scuffles when one participant would remark that they were being ignored and the facilitator or other members would argue with them. These instances provided me with peeks into the class hierarchy and friendship groupings. There were also participants who rarely spoke. Allie and Victoria were the two female participants who preferred to listen rather than ask or answer questions. In the earlier weeks of the study, Terrell hesitated to participate; his lack of participation was made more obvious by his sitting at a desk instead of our table and his putting his head down during our conversations. Aaron spoke, but was often a step behind the rest of the discussion. If Mr. Leopoldo was in the room, he sat on the desks behind the book club participants, observing, or at his desk, working.

As we approached our half-way point in the study, we were required to change classrooms. This new setting altered the way the students interacted. The participants became more divided in part because the room was designed to separate students into two groups, and in part because behavior issues resulted in me and Mr. Leopoldo separating several students into different groups for several weeks. After the separation was no longer in place, the participants continued to break into groups on the grounds that several of them wanted to read by themselves. By this time we were reading *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012) and the group of students who appeared to be higher in social status

grouped together and played rather than read. These participants hid under their jackets so that the camera could not see them, turned their back to the camera, or sat in a circle and held the books in front of their faces so I would think they were reading (I didn't).

It was also at this time that one student decided to “go rogue” and commandeer the video camera, narrating an earlier event when I had chastised a participant for being rude to a peer. Because I was also chairing a conference at that time, I did not transcribe these meetings immediately so I did not discuss this behavior in a timely fashion with Mr. Leopoldo, and this seemed to embolden the off-task participants. After noticing their lack of participation in reading and discussing the book in their small group, Mr. Leopoldo and I disbanded the small groups and required all the students to come together as one group instead. Interestingly, it was primarily only when the students were in a whole group that discussions led to meaning making and exploration of ideas.

Participants

Aaron was pointed out to me before the study began because his mother was a middle school teacher at the school at which I previously taught, although I did not work with her. A co-worker said, *keep an eye on him because he likes to play violent video games and draw pictures of people shooting each other*. Aaron was a short White male who generally stood during book club meetings, hands always moving. He folded paper, taught the other students in his class how to draw the Superman “S”, and his comments were often one beat behind the rest of the students’. He was a creative student and once commented, “Hey, I’m creative, you can’t take that away from me,” and his letter to author Jack Gantos was Mr. Gantos’s favorite because Aaron said he felt like he was

inside the book when he read it. The other students tolerated Aaron, occasionally seeming exasperated by his individualism.

Alexa was of Peruvian descent and had chin-length black hair that she shook, chin extended, when she wanted to make a point. She was one of two Latinx females who often dominated book club involvement. Alexa shared that her mother had eaten guinea pigs, that she read with her dad at night, and that she missed her sister who was away at college. She was quick to criticize other students' behavior or comments, especially those outside her social group, and when I told her to stop, it caused a minor coup. She liked filling up her bookmarks with the most questions and ideas, and she drew a conceptual map on the whiteboard that depicted *Coraline's* journey throughout the book. She and Rosa made the non-romantic power couple of the book club; like with most couples, there was often dissension and the need for other students to claim allegiance to one girl or the other.

Ally and Terrell were involved in a fourth-grade version of a relationship. Once, when Ally was sitting next to me reading and Alexa, Rosa, Denny, Terrell and Victoria were sitting in a circle whispering about other students, Rosa mentioned that Ally had "steps." Terrell seemed confused and was informed that it was a private thing for girls and that girls only told their best friends who weren't friends with the boy what those steps were. Alexa claimed she knew the first one, holding hands, and Terrell agreed that they had "done the first step." Rosa, despite claiming that a girl wouldn't tell another girl who was friends with the guy what the steps were, claimed she knew all four, utterly contradicting herself. When pressed, she reminded them that they were private. Ally was a White female with straight brown hair that reminded me of my hair at that age,

perpetually needing a little extra combing. She got along with the other members of the book club, no one ever corrected her or became irritated with her. She, her mother, and her sister were staying at the women's homeless shelter during the school year, a detail that her classmates knew. Despite her teacher's attempt to help her socialize, Ally remained a fairly solitary student and was quiet in the larger group meetings. During the small group meetings, she spoke to me or to one other student, but did not generalize comments to the group.

Denny was a Latinx female, had hair that fell beneath her shoulders, and was the quickest of the girls to smile a genuine smile. She occasionally mentioned taking care of her younger siblings and at the end of the study, she asked me to get her younger brother a Paw Patrol book. When book club split into groups, she seemed torn between wanting to socialize with the break-off group and wanting to read the book with the group I sat with. Sometimes socializing won, sometimes reading won. Denny participated actively in book club meetings when she was near me or when we were in whole group. She was conscious of book club rules and followed them carefully when she was the facilitator. When we read *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012), she enjoyed searching the images on the computer of the movie or graphic novel and sharing them as we read a particular scene.

When I called *Fred's* mother to check on his permission slip, she informed me that he loved science and that if the books we were reading had science in them, he would be a great participant. When Fred and I met during our pre-book club interview, Fred gave me his pseudonym the second after I asked him for it, which made me laugh. He also informed me that he loved science. "I also have a book that will tell me how to make little robots. I've made one and, like I put a treadmill on the bottom and he has a big body

and his arms are right out like this.” Fred was a White male with several brothers and sisters who I met when I ran into his family at the bookstore after the school year ended. I was introduced as his book club teacher and his father said I was responsible for the League of Seven (Gratz, 2014) poster that hung on his wall. Knowing that he enjoyed science, I hoped he enjoyed fiction related to science and found him a steam-punk novel, *The League of Seven* (Gratz, 2014), at the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English (ALAN) conference. At The University of Georgia’s Children’s Literature Conference, I met the author and got him to autograph the second book for Fred; the author also gave me some posters and promotional materials to give him. Fred was the only student who read the book club books at home and would sit attentively while I read, adding sound effects or clues as to what was about to occur. Two-thirds of the way through book club, he decided he was a disembodied head and spent the next four book club meetings kneeling at a desk so that only his head was visible.

James was the only student who had the choice whether or not to participate in book club activities. James was a bi-racial male who lived with his father because his mother dealt with addiction. He had a special reading instructor who did not pick him up until ELT was almost over, thus he was in the room working on a computerized math program during our meetings. When book club began meeting in a smaller room, his proximity to the group was simply feet away and he often listened to the story instead of doing his math. He was given a permission slip and joined book club; his Lexile level was one of the two lowest in the book group. James also worked with a Speech Language Pathologist for stuttering. James seemed to enjoy contributing to discussions; he also

enjoyed playing with two of the other students who tended to wander away from our reading group. He was quick to get angry and just as quick to drop the issue. He often sat next to me, or wandered over to me when he couldn't sit still, and he occasionally combed my hair with his fingers. He loved to help center the camera and he would imitate Fred's disembodied head or sound effects.

Little D was a White male who left book club after the first semester; he then moved out of the district. He was the only special education student in book club; when his Lexile level had dropped during mid-year testing, he was removed from our book club and placed on Read 180. Little D's comments and connections to the book often involved a reference to his family. We learned that his father had just been released from jail for drugs, that his grandfather had a farm and made cream from milk, that his mother lived near him but she didn't have custody, that his grandparents took care of him when his father was incarcerated, and that his grandfather had cancer. He also mentioned that his dad tried to break out of jail, but the teacher and I decided that this was not likely since he was released. Little D was well liked by the other students. He seemed to genuinely enjoy book club, but he also seemed to enjoy his daily activities in general. He had a difficult time staying upset; one day he announced he wasn't going to participate in book club and I told him that was fine, but asked if he would just sit there so I could supervise him while his teacher was busy. He agreed and within five minutes was adding to our conversation. He was a humorous facilitator who would raise his hand and call on himself when he wanted to answer a question or talk about an idea.

Red Walker, along with Aaron, was the shortest student in the class. He was a Black male who transferred to Benton Elementary from another school in the district

approximately one-third of the way into the school year. His Lexile Level was, like James's, in the 400s and Mr. Leopoldo expected him to be placed in Read 180, although that never happened. Red Walker was the only participant to give me a last name as part of his pseudonym; he explained that it was his avatar in an academic computer game. Google searches did not provide an explanation as to who Red Walker was and I was unable to determine why that name was chosen. Red Walker constantly moved around the room; he seemed to have difficulty standing still. He was quick to start a fight, discuss a fight, threaten a fight, or play fight. He told Mr. Leopoldo that at his old school they did not have anything like the book club, and he liked to talk about books. To keep him from wandering, I often shared a book with him and if I stopped reading, he would continue the sentence for me. He enjoyed writing on the white board and being praised for his participation. When he came up with questions or ideas in book club, they typically echoed another student's or had to do with drugs or alcohol. The day after I stopped by his house to get his permission slip signed by his step-father, I came to school and Red Walker was being told that his mother was in jail for breaking her probation. Periodically I would ask Red Walker if his mother was home yet; it was over two months before he said yes.

Rosa was a taller Latinx female student with shoulder length brown hair that, like Alexa, she liked to shake when she was making an emphatic statement. Rosa seemed to enjoy participating in book club discussions, but she seemed the most engaged when she was the facilitator. It was Rosa's divisive facilitating that led the me and the teacher to initially try separate reading groups as a classroom management strategy; one problem was that she called on some participants frequently while ignoring the raised hands of

others. It was also Rosa's leadership in the small groups, after I let students choose their groups several book club meetings later, that sparked a small coup and was the catalyst for whole group meetings again. Though it may seem as if I am fitting Rosa into a stereotype, she embodied the role of the mean girl in the book club and in the classroom. She tried to ensure another girl's friendship at the exclusion of others; at times she aligned herself with Alexa and at other times she tried to force other girls to choose between them. When the discussion group she was in went rogue, she initiated the game: What I don't like about {insert classmate's name here} and insisted on the order in which the group criticized their classmates. When it was her turn to be criticized, she debunked the criticism and moved on to another game.

Terrell was a Black male who told me he had read all of the Percy Jackson books. He was the only boy in book club who was in a relationship, and he often affected a slight baby-talk accent when he spoke. Terrell was one of two students in the class with Lexile levels over 1000; the other was his girlfriend, Ally. Terrell was the one student who seemed to remain disengaged with book club discussions, although that is not to suggest he did not occasionally participate. He typically sat on the outside of our circle, he found reasons to leave the room for extended periods of time, and he mentioned he did not like to talk while he read. He was also the student who focused the most on the rules of book club, helping develop them after our first meeting and being quick to point out if someone wasn't following them. When he facilitated and people did not follow the rules or have much to say, he took it as a personal affront, although he also did not attempt to foster conversations. Although Terrell looked up to Mr. Leopoldo as a mentor, they often had stand-offs that resulted in Terrell writing paragraphs or getting his personal reading

materials picked up and placed on the teacher's desk. He socialized most often with the four female Latinx participants, whom he had known throughout grade school, and did not sit next to or interact with his girlfriend in my presence.

Victoria was the second quietest member of book club with *Ally* being the first. She was a female Latinx student with long hair and eyes that seemed to observe everything that was going on around her. During the day of the coup, she was the student who reminded the others that they were being recorded; and she rarely participated in their conversations although she remained part of the group. Of the four Latinx participants, *Victoria* was furthest down on the social ladder and she seemed to struggle with whether she should participate in their social activities or read the book with the other students. I gave her a copy of the second novel we read in the form of a graphic novel and the other students, when talking about the book, enjoyed looking at the pictures with her. When she spoke, it was carefully thought out, and I tried to compliment her to get her to participate more often. *Victoria* also mentioned taking care of younger siblings and, like *Denny*, asked me to purchase a book for her younger brother.

Mr. Leopoldo could not decide if he wanted to be *Leonardo* or *Leopold* so combined the two to get his pseudonym. He was a second year teacher who had also completed his student teaching and had been a paraprofessional in the same school. He was well liked by his administration and by the students. The students enjoyed his silliness, he often gave the students nicknames and mispronounced words on purpose; those mispronunciations would be taken up by the class, and I would occasionally be corrected on how to say a word they had changed. He was Black, in his mid-twenties, tall and heavy-set. The pre-schoolers called him *The Giant*. He had a bookshelf full of Harry

Potter and Percy Jackson books along with a few others paper back series books. The bookshelf was often jumbled with books and if I arrived early, I would organize the shelves for him. I had known Mr. Leopoldo for several years, and he was excited to have me organize a book club in his classroom. He was supportive of me and did his best to make sure that I could accomplish what I needed while I was there. To thank him for letting me organize a weekly book club, I offered to work with any of his students that needed extra help, to read to the class during reading time, or to do other tasks that would free him up to work individually with students. After the school year was underway, however, Mr. Leopoldo often used book club time to administer fluency tests, supervise his co-teacher's class, or catch up on work. While this changed how I envisioned book club, which involved having two teachers in the room, I felt that maintaining a relationship with the teacher that showed him I was thankful for his support was important.

During this study, I was not only an observer and researcher but also a participant. I found it difficult to put my teacher hat away and found myself scaffolding for students who needed extra help. I modeled questioning techniques and would say, while I was reading, "hmmm, I wonder if I would have written down anything to talk about yet on my bookmark if I was reading along." However, because I was not an employee of the school, I hesitated to discipline students and would let Mr. Leopoldo know if someone had been disrespectful or not followed directions if I asked them, say, to close their computer. When the group met as a whole, I was able to be more of an observer than a participant, although in the beginning I did demonstrate how a discussion could be more than one back and forth exchange. When the groups separated, there were several

students who wanted to read with me and involve me in the discussions. I enjoyed participating but focused on asking questions that did not have a correct answer and saying things that emphasized that I was only giving my opinion. When students spoke and I was more of an active participant, I refrained from affirming answers as correct, instead affirming them as interesting, creative or insightful. There were several words, crazy and creepy, that the students used frequently and I found myself adding them to my discussion as well. I was more of a participant than I planned to be and struggled with this throughout the entire study, reminding the students—and myself—that I needed to speak less often. I rationalized my participation by reminding myself that if I was a teacher in the classroom, and often I was the only adult in the classroom, I would be interacting with the students while still ensuring that they developed their own questions and were in charge of their discussions.

My participants gave me something to look forward to each Friday when we came together to talk about books. I owe each of them a debt of gratitude for their willingness to participate and make the study enjoyable and informative. I am proud to share their voices and how I interpreted them as readers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Researcher: Who do you think is a real reader in your class?

Ally: Terrell. Because he likes to read a lot. And he got a very high score on his SRI test which was a reading test.

Reading has historically been considered a solitary activity (Yandell, 2012). Despite the overall acceptance of the transactional theory of reading (Barone, 2011; Brevig, 2006; Rosenblatt, 1994; Squire, 1994), the dominant classroom activities and discourse in reading instruction rely on correct and measurable answers designed to assess one's reading skills. Perhaps due to the consideration of reading as a skills-based activity, research on reading instruction and students' reading has traditionally been viewed through the theoretical lenses of critical theory and social constructivism. Researchers focus on examining problems inherent in the educational system and in the individual learning styles of students.

Pressure stemming from the overt entrance of the federal government into our educational system has contributed significantly to the idea of reading as a set of skills to be mastered. The creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 and the establishment of the Department of Education in 1980 significantly influenced how all classroom instruction was implemented ("The Federal Role in Education," 2016). The establishment of government departments to oversee educational practices changed how and what Americans considered as the purpose of education. The

rhetoric shifted and education became a key component of the United States' competitive campaign for global power. And, as with any competition, this brought the need to measure, frequently and comprehensively, how students were progressing as they matriculated. This also brought about the necessity for educational standards to be put in place so that there were guidelines by which to measure students' progress and teachers' abilities at educating them.

The concept of positivist measurements of student progress and to what level students improved annual scores and mastered the standards has had a strong impact on today's educational practices. Annual testing has become a significant feature of educational culture. As this practice became normalized, local and federal governments used standardized test results to determine whether educators and students were "measuring up." The increasing pressure for every student to demonstrate mastery of standards combined with the consistently changing standards and standardized tests, affected not only *what* teachers taught but also *how* they taught.

This pressure to demonstrate measurable success should not be underestimated. Whether a student meets, doesn't meet, or exceeds state expectations affects teacher pay, school ranking, and potential involvement of state officials in the school building. In order to prepare students to meet expectations and demonstrate they have mastered standards, teachers' mode of instruction has become one of continuous assessment to show a student knows the correct answer. Much of K-12 classroom practice still uses a teacher-initiated question, a student response, and then a teacher's evaluation of or feedback to that response (IRE/F) (Almasi & Gambrell, 1994; Barone, 2011; Cazden, 2001; Pappas, Varelas, Barry & Rife, 2003; Yandell, 2012). Not only is this the one of

the most prevalent sequence of classroom discourse interactions, it is also the oldest (Cazden, 2001). This suggests that teachers' expectations are that students will engage in a pedagogical practice that favors a teacher's interpretation of text as correct.

Additionally, students practice taking multiple choice tests and engage in lessons dedicated to help students with test-taking skills. These methods of instruction and assessment do not indicate students are increasing in ability to demonstrate ongoing improvement in reading comprehension.

Pressure for successful test outcomes can make teachers reluctant to let go of any control of content and its delivery. Most K-12 educators continue using instructional methods that support the concept that meaning-making during reading occurs in isolation in part because this is how they are tested. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses students' individual abilities and annual overall progress in reading abilities, in addition to other subjects, using an assessment with 500 points as the highest score. A score of 208 points is considered basic; a score of 238 is the minimum score to be considered proficient in the fourth grade. Interestingly, despite the trend of assessment-focused instruction that teaches to the test, an examination of the trends in reading scores from 1992 to 2015 shows only a 1% gain in the national average for fourth graders. In 1992, the average fourth-grade score was 217 points; in 2015, the average score was 222 points (NCES, n.d.)

Academic scholars who are aware of this educational trend continue to call for student-centered education and collaborative student activities (Almasi & Gambrell, 1994; Barone, 2011; Fecho, 2013; Galda & Beach, 2001; Raphael & McMahon, 1994; Wilson & Smetana, 2011). Research in the field of reading and reading education, however, is

primarily focused elsewhere. Examination of current research in reading education demonstrates a focus on multimodality, technology, and newer text formats such as graphic novels (see Botzakis, 2016; Jewitt, 2013; Kress, 2005). What is new and unexplored has come to the forefront; research on collaborative meaning making (note: a list of terms and definitions are included in Chapter One) that can occur in book clubs and similar settings has settled in the background.

Problem Statement

Changes in the curriculum, increased accountability, and a multitude of instructional “solutions” make it difficult for teachers to provide adaptable instruction that meets the changing needs of students (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2004). Teachers may feel pressured to reduce the amount of time for pleasure reading in the classroom as well as time allotted for helping students learn how to choose books that interest them (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). These complexities make it difficult for teachers to find time to build rapport with students, to understand their motivation for reading, and to understand how they comprehend what they read.

In addition, increasing government involvement with measuring student, teacher, and school success has made it difficult for teachers to feel confident that student-run discussions will help students meet or achieve proficiency on standardized assessments. Because learning occurs through language, exploration, and the sharing of ideas from different individuals (Childress & Friedkin, 2012; Fecho, 2013; Fisher, Frey & Rothenberg, 2008; Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012), a lack of time for such collaborative conversations may be detrimental to learning. At the very least, it overlooks an important learning experience.

Research on such conversational learning appears in the literature. Studies on understanding text through conversation has been included in literacy studies for the past 40 years. While many of these studies use a constructionist epistemology, their theoretical frameworks are either social constructivist or socio-cultural without further explanation. Hrubry (2001) noted that studies claiming to use a social constructionist framework blur the lines between social constructionism and social constructivism. The difficulty of making such distinctions is often due to a lack of understanding the difference between the two theories.

There is a gap in the research examining how younger students collaboratively make meaning about the books they read. Examining the research gap requires a theoretical framework of social constructionism. Current research on book clubs, literature circles, and book discussion groups primarily examine middle and high school students, at students' motivation and engagement in online literacies, at individual student contributions to conversation, or a student's individual progress. While beneficial, these studies do not help us understand how young students together construct meaning when they read nor how they use novels to further understand the world around them. Research on the collaborative aspect of reading examined through a social constructionist lens would add important information to current scholarship.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was twofold. First and foremost, it provided this researcher with information on the possible benefits and limitations of creating a student in-school book club. As a participant observer in this study, I was able to experience first-hand what occurred during conversations about texts during book club meetings and how

such an experience might work within a classroom setting. I was also able to gain insight into my participants' thoughts about reading, being a real reader (Knapp, 1998), and about their book-choosing process. This was valuable because understanding how students think about their classmates and themselves as readers can provide insight into how to best work with students when engaged in literacy activities.

The second purpose of this study was to contribute, for both classroom educators and academic researchers, to the research on the collaborative meaning-making process of upper elementary grade students. It also demonstrated whether students' participation in lessons not designed for an IRE format allowed them to work toward the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). Finally, it added to constructionist research focused on elementary-aged students.

In order to meet the purposes of this study, I developed three research questions. These questions shaped the study's design as well as the method of analysis. Placing the research questions at the center of the study's design ensured that all the components of the study, such as its goals, conceptual framework, methods, and validity, both intersected with each another and with the questions (Maxwell, 2013). Additionally, these questions were constructed to align with qualitative research's goal of understanding the complex interactions among participants in order to deepen our understanding of certain phenomenon (Stake, 1995). These three questions align with a case study design because they lend themselves to examining the particular rather than the general (Stake, 1995). The study's primary question (1) was answered through the findings on the two secondary questions (2 and 3) and are as follows:

1. What happens as a group of fourth graders in a mid-sized Georgia county engage in student-driven discussion around books?
2. What meanings do students construct about what they have read?
3. What do students share about themselves as readers?

Methodology Overview

This instrumental case study (Simons, 2009; Stake 1995) examines the interactions of 11 fourth-grade student-participants over the course of 20 in-school book club meetings. A social constructionist framework (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1985; Hrubry, 2001) influenced the design of this study and data analysis. I used thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) to engage in coding and develop themes that aligned with the theoretical framework. I implemented Maxwell's (2013) interactive research design, in which the goals, conceptual framework, methods, and validity of the study are shaped by the research questions.

While the methodology of this study is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, it is important that readers move forward with an understanding of the setting, sample, data collection process, and method of analysis.

Methods. This case study (Merriam, 1988; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995) took place on the second floor of Benton Elementary School in a mid-sized county in Georgia. Introductory interviews were held in the open area often used for group work, and final interviews were held in the small special education classroom next to the students' general education room. Book club meetings were held in two different locations. The

first six and final two meetings were held in the general education classroom. Meetings seven through 18 were held in the special education classroom next door.

Book club participants were comprised of Mr. Leopoldo's Extra Learning Time (ELT) class. Each of the ten students present in the beginning of the school year was invited to participate, and each returned a permission slip. Over the course of our 20 meetings, two additional students joined the book club and one student left. While the majority of these 11 students were considered by the school to be above grade-level in their reading abilities, three students' Lexile scores placed them one-to-two grade levels below their fourth-grade enrollment. Little D, for example, was a special education student who was enrolled in a general reading ELT on a trial basis. Red Walker enrolled in Benton Elementary after the school year began, and the new elementary school did not receive his records until later in the year; he was never placed into Read 180 despite the general education teacher noting that it would be beneficial for him. The third student, James, was placed in a support reading class; however his teacher did not pick him up from the classroom until ELT was almost over. Because he was in the room with us, he was eventually allowed to officially participate in book club because he added comments during our discussions. These participants were described in the preface of this dissertation and further demographics will be described in Chapter Three of this paper.

Data collection spanned seven months; book club meetings lasted six months. While an overview of data sources follows, a comprehensive data collection list can be found in Appendix A. The primary data sources include audio and video recordings of the book groups; I transcribed these recordings into more than 13,000 lines of written text. Pre-book club and post-book club interviews (hereby known as pre- interviews and

post- interviews) were recorded with audio only and were also transcribed. I collected student artifacts such as letters to an author, pictures of drawings or journal entries, and bookmarks. I took screen shots of the students' use of Padlet, a free online program for collaborative "sticky notes," and exported their Padlet comments into two Excel spreadsheets. Unexpectedly, a list of books requested by the students also became an important source of data for consideration of the third research question.

I analyzed data using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006), and a coding system with four cycles of coding during an iterative process of analysis in which I generated, refined, removed, and expanded codes. I used thematic analysis to deconstruct and reconstruct participants' conversations and actions about book club activities and social relationships as well as interview transcripts and artifacts.

I occupied multiple roles during the course of this research process. As an academic graduate student conducting research, I was a participant-observer. This role was not set, but should be considered on a spectrum in which I responded to my classroom habits, the needs of the teacher, and interactions with and between the participants. Because I was often the only adult in the classroom, I also assumed the role of classroom manager. As an educator, I took on the role of teacher in order to ensure every student had access to the texts and could participate in discussions.

I had few assumptions as the study began. I assumed I would be able to garner permission from at least four parents and students; that the students would listen as the book was read aloud; and that the students would participate in discussions throughout the study. I also assumed the teacher would be present and supportive of the study and that the study's setting would remain consistent through our time together.

Rationale and Significance

In this qualitative study, I addressed the need for understanding how fourth graders collaboratively make meaning while in an authentic setting of a classroom book club, as well as for understanding how fourth graders may show how they think of themselves as readers. This study was significant for a number of reasons. Fourth grade has been identified as an especially difficult year for students with a low socioeconomic status (SES). It is the year when many of these students often begin to struggle with school instruction and tasks (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009; Vacca et al., 2006). Buehl (2011) noted that as students progress from lower to upper grades in elementary school, they “encounter increasingly more sophisticated texts” (p. 11). As these texts become more complex, students encounter denser vocabulary, a variety of text structures, more detailed descriptions, and more complex sentence structures (Buehl, 2011).

Chall and Jacobs (2003) referred to fourth grade as the time when students shift from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. Prior to fourth grade, teachers work with students to help them acquire the alphabetic principle (Sousa, 2014). Short, simple texts allow students to build proficiency (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Sousa, 2014). In fourth grade, however, teachers introduce students to more complex and varied texts that have new vocabulary. These texts also contain new ideas that students are expected to become familiar with through the act of reading (Buehl, 2011; Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Sousa, 2014; Vacca et al., 2006).

In response to these changes in instructional methods and materials, as well as the increasing difficulty of tasks, many fourth graders begin to disengage and fall behind

grade-level expectations (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009; Vacca et al., 2006). Chall and Jacobs (2003) refer to this phenomenon as “the fourth-grade slump,” and it is, as mentioned, especially prevalent among students in families with low SES (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009; Vacca et al., 2006). Because this slump is congruent with the achievement gap noticed between low-and-middle-income children (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009), fourth grade is a pivotal time for students to feel successful as students and learners.

In order to contribute to the scholarship and assemblage of research-based practices related to our understanding of students’ reading subjectivities as well as of what occurs when students hold conversations about what they are reading, this case study sought to create a space for students to collaboratively construct meanings while discussing the texts they read and listened to. The goal was to contribute to the scholarship related to our understanding of students’ reading subjectivities and to learn what occurs when students hold conversations about what they are reading. Through this space, I hoped to better understand how these fourth graders, located in a public school classroom, thought about themselves as readers and how they came to understand what they were reading. I collaborated with a fourth-grade teacher to institute weekly book club meetings that formed the context for this research. The book club, facilitated primarily by the students, generated the discourse used “as a window into their thinking” (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996, p. 184).

The teacher and I co-designed a space to foster students’ collaborative meaning making about text and themselves. This format was significant for multiple reasons. Rather than subject students to top-down instruction, Gavelek and Raphael (1996) called

for student-centered instruction that allow students to make their own meanings of the texts they read. Barone (2011) agreed that students have few occasions for important small group reading and response engagement. Through this study, I hoped to provide opportunities for students to participate in general conversations about texts without educators' guiding questions. The book club provided an authentic environment and open space for the process of co-constructing to occur.

In addition, my study brings the focus back to the reader, privileging students' understandings of texts over that of teachers and/or authors (Galda & Beach, 2001). Some studies attempt to understand texts from a child's perspective without ever consulting children (Hoffman, 2010). Instead of speaking for young readers, this study allows students' self-awareness and ideas to guide discussion (Hoffman, 2010). Following the students' lead as the book club developed allowed for a space for discourse to occur that permitted the students' thoughts to be discussed and paid attention to (Pappas et al., 2003).

Terminology

Commonsense Knowledge: Information a community takes for granted and allows us to have common ground for daily practices and conversations. Outside of academia, this would commonly be referred to as truth or reality.

Data Excerpt: Smallest portion of individually coded data from larger data set.

Data Set- All of the data used for analysis from the larger Data Corpus.

Intertextuality: Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) and Lemke (1992) provided useful definitions of intertextuality: a theoretical description of how texts gain meaning by referencing or recalling other texts. The term juxtaposition is frequently used.

Intertextuality relies on the understanding that texts are not closed systems but are shaped by other texts. In this study, intertextuality was used to describe how students built their understandings of the books and their discussions through referencing experiences, books, pop-culture, and other linguistic and non-linguistic sign systems.

Intertextual Link: The connection between two texts; it is often also called an intertextual tie or an intertextual connection.

Learning: Attaining information, skills, and attitudes that are important or valued by others and one's self. It is an acquisition of knowledge as a result of engaging in meaning making.

Meaning Making: The use of our own experiences and ways of seeing the world in order to understand new information or situations.

Real Reader: This term stems from Knapp's (1998) *The Child's Conception of Reading*

Interview: A concretized, qualitative instrument for investigating children's concepts of reading and was used in participants' pre- and post- interviews. This expression is used to describe individuals who self-identify as belonging to a Discourse of Readers as well as who is seen belonging to this Discourse.

Text: In this study, the term text includes written artifacts as well as textualized experiences, spoken words, emotions, and products. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) explained a text as "something done by people to experience" (p. 311) and they noted that it can only be determined after it occurs. Experiences and other non-physical texts are read as having meaning and are used as a means to understand other texts.

Organization

In the chapters that follow, I provide a conceptual framework in order to demonstrate current academic research on the topics of social constructionism in educational research and students' ability to engage in discussions around texts. This framework also provides the contextual information necessary to guide the reader through the following chapters. I then detail my methodology for designing and conducting this study. I provide a detailed description of my analysis procedures and findings. Finally, I suggest the implications of this study and the challenges I incurred throughout.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Alexa: What if she had scissors in her pocket and cut off her nose and just threw it?

Rosa: It didn't say that.

Alexa: Well, she could have.

Conceptual frameworks (Maxwell, 2006, 2013) provide a stronger model for disseminating a study's "theoretical concepts and empirical findings" in dissertations than do broader and more traditional literature reviews (p. 30). This chapter, therefore, provides relevant information on the researcher's concept of self, on how group discussions provide academic opportunities for meaning making through the use of intertextual links, as well as on the ways that meaning making and intertextuality are understood in educational scholarship. It additionally examines how book clubs and similar settings for group discussions about books have been used with K-12 students. Finally, it elaborates on the theoretical lens that guided this study's design and execution. Consequently, this chapter explains and validates the decisions made for this study and provides information necessary to contextualize the findings.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Self as Researcher and Author

Maxwell (2013) said that a conceptual framework is built not only from relevant research and existing theories, but also from the experiential knowledge of the researcher. Merging one's experiences with one's study, or explicitly recognizing that one is doing

so, “has gained widespread theoretical and philosophical support” (p. 45). To try to extract oneself from qualitative research can block insights and “validity checks” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 45).

I could not extract myself from my study if I tried. This scholarship allowed for four of my passions to come together: books, reading, teaching, and learning. These actions and objects that I hold dear led me to conceive of the study, to set the study in a public school, and to work with primary school students. It also gave me my audience: teachers and teacher educators. My need for practicality pushed me to ensure that one purpose for this study was to support educators by sharing my experience as additional support for a research-based practice that I felt was important to student learning.

bell hooks (2000) held that writing is her passion. This passion, she argued, should not be removed from writing in order push against the hierarchical structure between writer and critic. Öhman (2010) noted that, if asked if one could enjoy the act of writing for academic consumption, hooks would without question, say yes.

Reading is one of *my* passions. It is what I turn to when I need to feel connected, to feel joy, to simply feel. To read a book is almost a guilty pleasure. I know there is something “productive” I could be doing, yet to claim the time as mine by opening a book to read a story is irresistible. There are books I reread to remind myself of what I loved about them at different stages of my life. There are books I must read quickly to find out what happens, often skipping to the last few pages to ensure a character’s safety. There are books I read and savor, marveling at the skilled way the author uses prose to communicate with an audience.

Graff (2009) stated that relationships with books are analogous to social relationships. She added that “feelings of connectedness initiate both types of relationship, and the connections are sustained and deepened through continual interactions and conversations” (p. 13). Books, the physical objects of pages between a cover, ground me and delight me. I both hold on greedily to the books that spill from my bookshelves and also give them away to share the ownership of text and ideas. I see my past when I look at my bookshelf, reminders of people who shared the book with me or of times I searched for a book by a favorite author so that I could add it to my shelves.

In 2005 I returned to higher education after a 17-year break. I began teaching in 2006 and over the past 12 years, I have spent eight teaching middle grades students, three teaching students in higher education, and nine enrolled in courses at The University of Georgia. While I have always made it a practice to participate in new experiences, including jobs, the past 12 years have been dedicated to my teaching and learning in an academic setting.

I position myself as both a reader and a writer in this dissertation, drawing from my history and my present. I am both a learner and a teacher as well. I learned from my participants, from scholarly research, from writing, from conversations and from the courses I have taken. I wore a teacher hat when I worked with my participants and read aloud so everyone could participate. I share what I have learned through writing this dissertation. In doing so, I have kept my audience in mind.

As mentioned, the audience for this study, beyond my committee, are teachers. Richardson noted that it was “foolish” to spend a significant time engaged in research only to have a study that isn’t read (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960). Studies

should make a difference, stated Richardson, beyond advancing the author's career.

Alvermann noted that writers of qualitative research tell stories as a means of interpreting data. In the same article, Dillon ruminated on the difficulty of balancing integrity and engagement. To reach this balance, writers "need flexibility in crafting a compelling story" that is both intellectual and emotional (Alvermann, O'Brien & Dillon, 1996, p. 117).

In the pleasure of writing about my participants' talk about books, I use conversational tone, one of sharing what I have learned with colleagues, current and future. While my story is not written as a traditional narrative, it is nonetheless the story of my study and dissertation, start to finish. I have worked to have my writing be both accessible so that it is enjoyable to read and scholarly to demonstrate that my work is trustworthy.

Concept of Study

Inside the walls of primary and secondary classrooms sit students who are expected to learn. Daily, quarterly, annually, they are assessed in order to determine if they learned what the teacher, school, or state indicated was important that year and if they learned enough to move on, be that to the next topic or the next grade.

As a teacher, I rarely thought about what learning actually was. At most, I considered how to support my students' learning, but I did not think beyond that point. My job was to help them reach a goal and that was what I thought I did each weekday. As a middle school language arts teacher and as someone who has a strong affinity for books and for reading, I worried when I was unable to get my students to read our class text,

much less how to discern the main idea, how to summarize, or how to infer why a character chose a particular action.

Much of my academic career has been spent trying to learn how to motivate students to read. Once they were reading, I wondered how to share the comprehension strategies they could use to make sense of the text. It was not until this study that I considered *what* learning was and *how* students engaged in this process.

Once my study began, I observed my participants discussing the books we read, and I noted that they often branched off from the story written by the author into a *what if* scenario. In doing so, they were able to consider new narratives and explore their own life experiences.

When I worked with middle school students, often with reluctant learners or those who needed additional support to reach the required state standards each year, I frequently played the *what if* game myself. Typically, I would wonder *what if I could help these students read more often*. I could, in this internal narrative, picture my students eagerly sitting around the classroom describing something they read at home or discussing the book we were reading in class.

After beginning my doctoral program at The University of Georgia, my *what if* changed. In my presumptuous fantasy, I would still be thrilled if the students I taught enjoyed what they were reading. However, I realized that it was more important to give students the opportunity to control more of their learning process. *What if* students had the space to talk about what was occurring in their class? Or, more specifically to my own goals, *what if* students had the chance to talk about the books we were reading in class? What would we both learn?

I knew from my own book club and collegiate experiences that it was during discussions that I came up with new discoveries. An idea that I glossed over in a text we read was valued and talked about in detail by a fellow student. As I listened to my peers, I often became interested in something that, previously, I either thought was too difficult or not pertinent to my own education.

With these ideas and questions in mind, I began the process of reading scholarship about book clubs, learning, and collaboration. Examining these topics through the lens of social constructionism, I began to think less about the individual student and more about the collective understandings that discussion fostered.

Classroom Talk

Educators plan a variety of opportunities for learning to occur including lectures, learning stations, videos, worksheets, and projects. Classroom discussion, however, is often performed or guided by the teacher and used to conduct comprehension checks (Fisher et al., 2008). In the classroom, teachers' talk occurs between 70 and 80 percent of learning time, and as students get older, teachers' talk increases (Hattie, 2012). This pattern is strengthened in classrooms where there are a large number of students who live in poverty and students who are second language learners (Fisher et al., 2008). Much of the student talk is in response to teacher-guided topics or teacher assessment of students' engagement or understanding. Interestingly, student engagement rises when students are permitted and encouraged to participate in discussions (Hattie, 2012).

A common pattern of teachers' discussion with students involves an IRE format. Teachers may plan out questions prior to instruction or they may develop questions as they engage in instruction. This controlled dialogue stifles meaning making because it

does not allow for students' exploration of a concept through the context of their own experiences and cultures. Additionally, Cazden (2001) pointed out, "children's intellectual functioning is intimately related to the social relationships in which it becomes embedded" (p. 17). When teachers provide opportunities for students to discuss what they are learning, they are not only providing themselves the opportunity to learn about their students' lives outside of school, but are also supporting future social negotiations. Classroom discourse can support the "communicative competence" of students, and it is the responsibility of educators to prepare students to have strong communication skills and the capacity to work with a diverse population of people (Cazden, 2001, p. 40).

Primary and secondary school educators who create room for student talk and student dialogue push against normalized teaching methods. In this space, students engage in practices that support their social and cognitive growth (Wilson & Smetana, 2011). For example, when students form their own questions in response to literature, they are engaging in the process of Questioning as Thinking (QAT). QAT involves students in their learning, allowing them to take ownership of their growing literacies. It is as important for students to be able to construct their own lines of inquiry as it is to allow them to explore potential responses to questions (Wilson & Smetana, 2011). Teachers who change their role from questioning students to guiding them in developing their own questions and exploring ideas are assisting students in their development as thinkers and doers. The role of the teacher, in other words, would focus less on asking questions and more on creating prompts that facilitate questions and explore ideas (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Moll, 1994).

In addition to teacher modeling and guided instruction, collaborative opportunities for students' talk facilitate the meaning-making process. These group discussions allow students to "negotiate meaning, clarify their own understanding, and make their ideas comprehensible to their partners" (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 17). Additionally, it allows different life experiences to be represented through language; as the meaning making process occurs, it is both referring to and constructing the social understandings of a topic.

When students engage in public discourse, they are building "a foundation for their later inner speech" (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996, p. 185). It is, therefore, important for students to engage in social interactions to develop "lifelong habits of literate thinking" (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996, p. 189). Group discussion provides opportunities for members of the group to transform what they have already learned by accessing these funds of knowledge and engaging in meaning making with others that then help them create new ways to use what they know (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996). These discussions also support problem-solving skills as well as deeper understandings about books (Maloch, 2002). Additionally, as students develop dialogic relationships, they engage in "negotiated understandings(s)" of their world (Gergen, 1985, p. 268). This, again, is essential in a school setting because negotiating how to understand the world is integrally involved with the multitude of actions we engage in (Gergen, 1985).

Group discussions in the classroom context are a reflection of life outside educational settings. Engaging dialogically forms both the joint activity and the activity of the individual. These activities have normativity because they consist of patterns that are enacted and re-enacted through the group. Group discussion and social interactions

allow the socially constructed understandings that lead to creating world knowledge. Schools also provide the opportunities to learn how the processes work. “Human group life has the character of a system” (Blumer, 1969, p. 17), and students should have exposure to this system. Our human group life, as named by Blumer, is a process that involves both defining what should be done and interpreting these definitions. Thus, as we give students opportunities to discuss literature, we give them a chance to embody future group interactions as well as to engage in a collective interpretation of their world.

Graff (2009) noted the importance of “opportunities for authentic discussion in the classroom” (p. 21). On a broader level, such discussions support a community’s movement toward a more socially just society. On an individual level, such engagement can support students’ constructions of their subjectivities and connectivity to the world. However, Graff (2009) observed, teachers often refrain from incorporating times for these discussions due to potential risks in topics and a “high-stakes assessment driven culture which privileges scores over sentiments” (p. 21).

Student learning and personal development do not occur linearly but iteratively. When given the opportunity to engage in settings set aside for discussion about books, students can support each other as they develop new ways of understanding the books they have read internally and verbally (Beach & Phinney, 1998; Wells, 1990). They are able to test new ideas and, as others add to them or redirect them, the meaning making becomes collective. While responsibility for learning is individual, the group context allows students to learn from their peers. These discussions allow students to use books as tools for communicative exploration and help them become active learners through a meaning-making process.

Book Clubs

There have been ongoing appeals for classroom activities that support student inquiry and student-driven learning (Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstedt, 2005; Fecho, 2013; Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Maloch, 2002; Moll, 1994; O'Donnell-Allen, 2006; Wilson & Smetana, 2011). Individuals first construct meaning in public and social domains before personal internalization (Davies & Harré, 1990; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995). This construction of meaning necessitates a social process that helps students understand not only text, but also readers' positions and identities (Galda & Beach, 2001). Because meaning making first occurs socially and can move beyond a text to support students' inner reflections, book clubs provide an opportunity to support student inquiry and to participate in learning experiences that place the student in the center of the experience.

Before entering into a discussion about book clubs, however, I would like to mention that similar concepts such as literature circles and literature discussion groups play a comparable role in fostering conversations among peer groups. Each format has varying degrees of student autonomy that may be appropriate for different groups of students. Within literature circles, for example, students are often assigned roles such as scribe or timekeeper and the teacher may provide discussion topics (O'Donnell-Allen, 2006). Book clubs are equally diverse in administration, though the use of the word *club* indicates a purposeful inclusiveness of the members (Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). This inclusiveness could lend itself to the formation of a classroom Reader Discourse (Gee, 1999, 2001) in which students construct identity kits that allow them to recognize themselves and other classmates as members of this group.

In the late 1980s book clubs received a broader focus in academic research, and the educational community began to see a rise in publications about student book clubs. Based on the idea that “language use is fundamental to thinking” and that “what is learned by any individual begins in the social interactions in which he or she engages,” Taffy Raphael and her doctoral student, Susan McMahon, began the Book Club project (Raphael et al., 2004, p. 198). Additional scholars joined the project to create Book Club Plus to ensure all learners were being met at their instructional level. Their goal was simple but profound: to help foster students’ meaningful discussions about books (Cullinan, 2007; T. Raphael, personal communication, June 23, 2015).

Book Club and Book Club Plus outline a specific process for teachers to use in their classrooms. As the programs were used over the course of several years, members of the Teachers’ Learning Collaborative ensured the program met the needs of a diverse student population as well as the teachers’ needs (Cullinan, 2007). They built in a community share component in which the teacher leads the whole class in activities that give students a chance to practice skills and strategies that would be useful to read, write, and talk about books. At the end of community share, students convene in their groups and discuss the issues that arose during previous book club meetings. The second and third steps give students time to read texts and participate in writing activities such as book reports and journaling. The final component is ‘book club,’ in which small heterogeneous groups of students get together to discuss the topics from their writing and reading. Raphael et al. (1994) noted that during the book club component, students talked about questions, problems, and personal experiences. The authors also noted that this type of discussion has to be supported; students do not automatically know how to

engage successfully in collaborative discussions. Kong and Fitch (2003) reminded us that conversations do not occur automatically but must be guided. In their study, the students were were “taught norms for appropriate behavior such as listening with respect, building on each other’s ideas, debating and critiquing ideas, assuming leadership, and following another’s lead” (p. 206).

I would like to note that research on book clubs existed prior to the 1980s, however the research was sparse. Searches in Galileo show an 1888 publication in the *Journal of Education* entitled *The Young Folks Reading Circle* (n.a.) and a 1937 *Journal of Education* publication titled *Winning Boys to Better Books* (Moore, 1937). As the landscape of education entered into challenging times as school became compulsory, researchers renewed their interest in investigating motivational strategies. In that vein, Galileo showed two to three articles per decade on book clubs from the 1900s until the 1960s. This era saw a rise in discussion about children and book clubs, particularly in schools. However, the majority of these articles were still limited to investigating ways to motivate students to engage in reading practices. It was not until the 1980s that we see a spike in interest for using book clubs in school.

And, although Book Club and Book Club Plus are perhaps the most well-known book club programs for school settings, and have been used in classroom research over the past twenty years (i.e., Brock, Boyd & Caldwell, 2015), researchers have examined other book club experiences. Some of these studies used Book Club as a starting point in order to examine students’ participation for reasons that moved beyond the original purpose of Book Club.

The idea of thinking out loud through conversation about texts led Zambo and Hansen (2013) to create their own book club study. The authors used a book club as a safe space for the growing population of inner-city Mexican-American male students who, in their terms, were becoming disaffected with school. Zambo and Hansen wanted to understand why these students were, as they described, suffering negative emotional and motivational disengagement. They provided nine-to-eleven-year old boys with stories about characters they hoped the boys could relate to and gave them the space to talk. Through the discussion, writings, and drawings that emerged, the authors drew conclusions about why boys were withdrawing, and then provided suggestions for supporting these students. Giving the boys access to literacy that met their needs and listening to what they had to say were key components of necessary instructional support.

Other studies focused on the changing role of teachers in classrooms that incorporated book clubs. Recognizing that educators need support if they are going to engage in student-centered learning, Maloch (2002) wrote *Scaffolding Student Talk: One Teacher's Role in Literature Discussion Groups* to explain how teachers can make the shift from teacher-led discussions to allowing students to talk about texts in small groups. Hill (2009) supported educators through her descriptions of how teachers can incorporate valuable book clubs during lunchtime in order supplement mandated instruction time.

Additional research concentrated on the *students'* participation in book clubs. For example, Brevig (2006) explained how audiotaping book club discussions and then incorporating a reflection time as a component of her classroom book club allowed for deeper learning. The conversations that developed from listening to the audio recordings not only allowed students to return to previous concepts, but also to metacognitively

think about their literacy practices. Evans (2002) used book clubs as a way to become informed about how students perceive their literacies. Using before and after surveys in conjunction with book club implementation, Whittingham and Huffman (2003) studied the way this approach to literacy affected students' attitudes towards reading.

A recent study used a book club format to investigate reader response in a second- and third-grade classroom in which the teacher was also teaching from a core reading program (Barone, 2011). By focusing on the reader, this study used the classroom book club to investigate both individual and collective connections to texts. Barone noted that "although book clubs may not currently exist as the focus point of reading instruction in many classrooms, their value is still relevant to today's classrooms," adding that the "shared endeavors to accomplish goals and construct identities in relation to those communities were reflected in the social practices of the club (Barone, 2011, p. 7).

Finally, book clubs have also been used in research to explore students' concepts of self and their identification with or to a certain Discourse (Gee, 1999, 2001). Broughton (2002) introduced a book club, which she called a literature discussion group and that was based on the model suggested by Raphael, Goatley, McMahon, and Woodman (1991) to a class she had been interacting with throughout the course of a year. The literature discussion group was used as a means to explore how adolescent girls "performed their subjectivities" during group discussion about books (Broughton, 2002, p. 1). One of Broughton's conclusions was that these girls used the text and subsequent discussions as a way to have experiences and to live possibilities.

It was my reading of *Book Club Plus* (Raphael & Florio-Ruane, 2004) that led me to consider using a book club for my own research. *Book Club* (Raphael, 1997) and *Book*

Club Plus (Raphael et al., 2004) were developed from four considerations of educational theory, practice, and research. These four considerations included the ideas that “language is fundamental to thinking,” “literacy is the foundation for reading instruction,” “literacy education includes learning substantive content,” and “narrative thinking is central to literacy teaching and learning” (Raphael et al., 2004, pp. 200-201). This aligned with my own experiences as a learner in the classroom. Learning commences “in the social interactions in which he or she engages,” (p. 201) and these social interactions are often understood through sharing narrated ideas and experiences. A book club would provide the opportunity for participants to have this dialogic learning occur.

When students engage in reading as an activity, they are learning one type of literacy development. They are not only learning reading as a skills-based activity, or reading as a way to understand the world, but they are also engaging in dialogism. They are in conversation with the author and text. While reading in isolation still allows this dialogic development, the funds of knowledge drawn from to form understandings may not serve to help the reader internalize the meaning making so that they will learn new concepts or information. When students are collectively engaged in literacy-based activities, they are also learning to share in complicated concepts dialogically (Beach & Phinney, 1997; Raphael, Gavelek & Daniels, 1998; Wells, 1990).

As students have the opportunities to engage in writing, reading, and talking about books they have read, they are able to practice and improve their literacy skills. They also have better opportunities to understand themselves and the communities to which they belong (Kong & Fitch, 2003). An additional benefit in our diverse communities of

learners is that this is not limited to students who are considered ‘average’ or above average readers. If students are supported as they develop their conversational skills, they are also able to participate in “meaningful conversations about texts where they construct the meaning of what they are reading, make connections between the text and their own experiences, and evaluate the text and their understanding of it” (Kong & Fitch, 2003, p. 353). Thus, when educators create time and space for students to engage in group discussions about books, the “interpersonal influence(s) in which individuals may display and debate their own viewpoints” provides opportunities for these students to either modify or reinforce the meanings they made individually and collectively (Childress & Friedkin, 2012, p. 46).

Exploratory talk within book clubs should be driven by students’ thoughts, ideas, and reflections, which they not only value but also are willing to share with the group (Brevig, 2006). These conversations become the building blocks upon which students can collaboratively interpret text. Moreover, these conversations help build peer cultures, the “routines, artifacts, values, and concerns [that] are produced through peer interaction” (Alvermann, Young & Green, 1997, pp. 2-3). Book club discourse, then, can not only reflect students’ ideas and values, but also help shape them.

There are few aspects of our lives that occur in isolation. We exist in our membership to different groups, some of which are more formal than others. These groups and how they define themselves are fluid; the concept of belonging to a group relates to Gee’s (1999, 2001) understanding of a Discourse. The Discourse of being a married woman, for example, who works to manage and maintain a household has changed significantly over the past 40 years. The participants, or members, of this group

act differently and communicate those actions as they work through them. As Blumer (1969) stated, “Human group life consists of, and exists in, the fitting of lines of action to each other by members of the group” (pp. 16-17). As we discuss the actors in relation to each other, we create joint action, or “a societal organization of conduct of different acts of diverse participants” (Blumer, 1969, p. 16-17). Group discussion, as a form of action, therefore contributes to creation of Discourse groups as well as to the construction of knowledge arising through meaning making.

Intertextuality

Reading is about making connections; intertextuality involves the process of making connections between texts. While the concept of texts is broad, intertextuality provides a useful conceptual base for examining students’ discussion about texts. Based in social constructionism (Hartman, 1992; Lemke, 2004; Pappas et al., 2003; Short, 1992), intertextuality is a metaphor for “the central process of meaning making, a process that allows researchers to examine learning as making connections by looking for connecting patterns that help us make sense of our life worlds” (Short, 1992, p. 315).

In its most literal and simplest sense, intertextuality refers to the concept that individuals reference one text to make sense of another (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Hartman, 1992; Lemke, 2004; Pappas et al., 2003; Short, 1992; Shuart-Faris & Bloome, 2004). The term was coined in 1967 by Julia Kristeva by blending ideas from Saussure’s and Bakhtin’s theories of language as having a social context and systematic features (Martin, 2011). Its historical context shows the term was created during the progression from structuralism to post-structuralism and that “the notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of inter-subjectivity” (Martin, 2011, p. 148).

In its earlier years, intertextual research focused primarily on language; over the past 30 years, however, the “idea of intertextuality has been appropriated in research related to reading” (Hartman, 1992, p. 295). In this research, language remains the integral aspect, but the points of convergence are located in the text, the reader, the author, and the context (Hartman, 1992).

Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) noted that it is difficult to define *text*, not only because of the varying definitions of the word, but also because many synonyms—such as writing, books, and discourse—are used when researchers discuss this topic. The Latin derivation of text (n. Textus) means woven (Hartman, 1992). This provides a useful metaphor for thinking of how texts come together to make meaning (Short, 1992).

Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) referred to texts as verbalized experiences of the world; textualizing experiences can result in signs, words, art, or other communicative representations. Hartman (1992) noted that texts can be “an utterance, gesture, thought, structure, or function” and connect to other texts in space (p. 296). Short (1992) defined texts as arrangements of signs designed to communicate. Texts, therefore, are “any chunk of meaning that [have] unity and can be shared by others” (Short, 1992, p. 315).

Intertextuality can be considered a deliberate device for investigating the “meanings and views of the text, the reader, the author, and the context that we are not usually disposed to see” (Hartman, 1992, p. 295). It is located in the dialogue between individuals, which is one reason that it is important to use authentic environments in related research (Pappas et al., 2003; Short, 1992). Within dialogue, the relationship between the texts adds to or constructs the “cultural ideology” of that event (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 312).

While intertextuality is itself a social construction, it also adds to the social construction of our life-world understandings. The intertextual process references *how* intertextuality is socially constructed, whereas intertextual substance is defined as *what* was socially constructed (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). And, as with any interpersonal interaction, some individuals have more power over which substance is incorporated into the social construction of knowledge within the event.

In classroom research, the use of intertextuality as a process to investigate student learning is valuable. It supports educators' understanding of how students' comprehension of texts, books or otherwise, builds on previous experiences. It also can expand what educators may consider a text. Classrooms provide an authentic context that, in turn, broadens the process in which students make connections (Short, 1992). Reciprocally, classroom research using this process helps to build "educational theory on intertextuality and broad[e]n understandings about the nature of intertextuality" (Short, 1992, p. 313; see also Hartman, 1992).

The use of a written text as the starting point for group discussions allows for investigations into students' meaning making processes. When readers construct meanings, they create intertextual links which add to students' growing inner text. Their growing "mental web" (Hartman, 1992, p. 295) is spun from referencing previous textual events and resources and connecting them to current texts in context. Investigating the social processes that students use to make these connections can also support understanding of what students consider to be a "relevant text" (Shuart-Faris & Bloome, 2004, p. xiii).

When students are afforded a space in the classroom for content-related discussion, they “search for unity both with an evolving text and between the evolving texts and the texts” they previously constructed in order to make sense of their world (Short, 1992, p. 315). Each participant can use the current textual constructions to make sense of new and future experiences; this, in turn, gives them a link back to previous experiences. It is “a process of endless intertextuality” (Short, 1992, p. 316).

Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) outline a series of steps for “describing the social construction of intertextuality” (p. 314), which the methodology section of this paper will address. What should be noted here, however, is that the process requires a series of actions and reactions, primarily linguistic ones. In this process, meaning is made through the interplay of the texts that have come before and will come later (Bloome and Egan-Robertson, 1993).

Research into a community’s discourse practices (Lemke, 2004), into deconstructing the reading process (Hartman, 1992), into contextual authenticity (Short, 1992), into joint constructions of understandings created by teachers and students (Pappas et al.), into text worlds (Beach and Phinney, 1998), and into how references infiltrate students’ writing (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) have all contributed to the importance of this intertextual process in educational research, especially those that involve the literacies of reading and writing. Yet, since 2002, Galileo shows only 14 studies with the reference terms intertextual and education. While there are significantly more studies if the term education is replaced with read*, many of these references look into the intertextual references made within one written text. This does not mean, of course, that additional studies using the intertextual process have not been conducted. It

suggests, however, that the process was in the background of the studies, as with my own, rather than the foreground.

The purpose of my study was not to determine students' use of intertextual links in a group discussion. One goal was to understand what meanings students constructed about what they read. Understanding what the meanings were required investigation into how the meanings were developed by looking into the meaning making process of intertextuality.

Meaning Making

The field and practice of education centers around learning. When we, as educators, speak of either our own learning or that of our students, we employ a commonsense definition of understanding a concept and then incorporate that understanding into our evolving perceptions of our environment. This concept of learning, however, falls short of the impact learning has on the individual and their community, regardless of the size of said community. It also fails to take into account the process in which it occurs. Like myself, I think many educators accept this word at face value rather than understanding what it means to learn and how this process occurs.

Zittoun and Brinkmann (2012) stated that when individuals learn something, they acquire "knowledge, skills or dispositions that enable to learner to act, think and feel in ways that are recognized as important by oneself and others" (p. 1809). When students learn in school, they are also learning components of what Gee (1999) terms an identity kit in order to become part of a specific Discourse so that they can see themselves as connected to others. This is a reciprocal relationship; members of the Discourse must also recognize the individual as belonging. They are also learning how to interpret the world

in a way that can be communicated to and understood by others. The act of learning occurs through the process of meaning making during which learners “interpret situations, events, objects or discourses” based on their prior experiences and current knowledge (Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012, p. 1809). For students to learn, they must participate in a meaning making process during which they interpret information using their prior knowledge and cultural resources. For some, meaning making stays on a simplistic level of definitions, while for others it transitions to insights that are more theoretical. Either scenario, however, relies on activities that build on the cultural norms within specific contexts (Gergen & Gergen, 1991).

Mead (1934) stressed the importance of gestures, including vocal gestures, within social contexts when considering meaning. When one individual gestures to another, the gesture is understood in context and responded to; a social act is constructed in which meaning is a part. This social process creates an object “in the field of experience for the individual organisms” (p. 77) involved. Language makes possible these objects because it is “part of the mechanism” (p. 79) in which the object was created. The common sense objects are symbolized by language; when the language or gestures are understood by each party, they become “significant symbols” (p. 78).

While Mead (1934) referred to the interpretive interactions as significant symbols; Blumer (1969) renamed them symbolic interactions. In the latter case, meaning making is an interpretation of an activity that provides direction to all individuals in the communicative act. As meaning is made, it constructs context for future situations; this context becomes a text or textual experience one can refer to in future social interactions.

Additionally, meaning making involves emotions and senses of self. These “emotional expressions are relational performances” that signify what transpires as meaning making occurs. (Gergen, 2011, p. 114). In other words, as individuals make meaning about an object or a discussion, they are also making meaning of the process itself. This is an important consideration when thinking about how meaning making can occur in a classroom or within a system of education.

Zittoun and Brinkmann (2012) noted that multiple perspectives, including social constructionism, take on the concept that learning is best understood as meaning making and that when one learns something, they create a significant connection to the subject in order to make personal sense of that same topic. In this framework, both “intentionality and normativity” (p. 1809) are involved in meaning making. When a learner understands that objects and ideas are not isolated but refer to something greater, it signifies intentionality. When the meaning construed between the individual and the object follows rules understood by all parties, this involves normativity. If normativity is not achieved, communication becomes ineffective and collaborative meaning making is impeded (Blumer, 1969). For example, if a student claims they are reading by sleeping with a book under their pillow, this concept of reading will most likely not be *learned* by another student because it is not a normative way of reading.

While meaning making is considered a social experience, it does not preclude one making meaning in isolation. Blumer (1969) noted that meaning making occurs in a two-step interactive process first involving an individual “indicating himself toward the things that have meaning” (p. 5). Then the individual considers the object within a particular context and “transforms the meaning in the light of the situation and direction of [the]

action” (Blumer, 1969, p. 5). Thus, meaning making can also involve a practice of self-interaction based on context and purpose.

Meaning making occurs both inside and outside the individual (Fecho, 2013). As mentioned, this study is interested in how meaning was constructed by the group of participants. This is in part because learning is not only something people do for themselves, but also that “all learners carry the responsibility of meaning making for themselves as well as meaning making for the greater culture at large” (p. 129). Fecho also stressed that meaning making occurs through language; we cannot construct meaning within a context without forms of expression. Language as a form of expression is not static, nor does it achieve one purpose. Language both seeks to contain individuals in a fixed and singular belief system and to allow individuals to push against and question the status.

For researchers, understanding the process of meaning making provides insight into the greater social custom and contexts of learning (Snow, 2001; Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012). Other researchers investigate meaning making as a means to understand how the mind forms experiences and actions within cultural meaning systems. One objective of this study was to better understand the meanings students construct about what they read. During thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) it became apparent that what I found thematically relevant was that students were using the book to gain understanding of the world which “predominantly takes place in social situations” (Zittoun & Brinkman, 2012, p. 1810). In focusing on the principles of meaning making through intertextuality and symbolic interactionism, my findings

supported the idea that “learning as meaning making involves being socialized into cultural discursive systems of meaning” (p. 1810).

My research had an audience of current educators and future educators in mind. This focused my analysis on the pragmatics of meaning that are connected to the social practices of learning. Social practices are shaped by the culture and schools as learning environments and have their own cultural approaches to teaching and learning. Studies suggest, noted Zittoun and Brinkmann (2012), that “learning involves acquiring an identity in a given community of practice” (p. 1810). One way people can feel as if they have an identity that aligns with a community of practice is to allow their activities, such as discussions, to be acknowledged and interacted with by others. When this occurs, individuals try to establish a more fundamental space in the community, deepening this connection. “There is a process of meaning and identity construction in any complex form of learning” (Zittoun & Brinkman, 2012, p. 1810) that speaks to encourage educators to build discussion activities into all meaning-making activities. With regards to book clubs specifically, this speaks to my desire to learn about how my participants thought of themselves and other as readers.

Theoretical Lens

Tracing the background on constructionism as an epistemology and its split into the two theories of constructivism and social constructionism offers a strong foundation on why social constructionism was an appropriate theoretical lens for this study. It also briefly elaborates on why educational studies apply the term constructionism when constructivism would be more accurate.

Constructionism

In 1998, Michael Crotty wrote that as an epistemology, constructionism had begun to displace objectivism as the primary standard in Western academic thought. Objectivism holds that meanings are essential to objects regardless of a person's individual consciousness toward that object. A metal trashcan, for example, is a metal trashcan even if it has been turned upside down and is being used as a drum.

Constructionism, on the other hand, views knowledge as reliant on human interactions and practices (Crotty, 1998). If a trashcan has been repurposed and is being used as a drum, social constructionism allows this object to be known as a drum and to be known as a drum by others. From a constructionist perspective, meaning is not inherent in objects or actions, although there may exist a commonsense definition of the object recognized by most members of a community; meanings are constructed by the significance attached to them by the community.

As an epistemology, constructionism stands against positivism and empiricism, the backbone of traditional scientific thought. It holds that the way in which human beings look at the world, comparing one thing to another to determine difference, does not create objectivist divisions. How we consider the world in which we live does not stem from nature but from our interactions with the objects and occurrences that comprise our world. Perspective is inherent in constructionism. It is logical, therefore, that constructionism is aligned with sociological and psychological practices and research.

Social Constructionism

Because constructionism is, in itself, a construction, it is valuable to look back to the origins of the epistemology *and* toward what it means as a theoretical lens.

Constructionism has its roots in philosophy. But determining the origins of those roots by citing Hegel and Marx's concept that human consciousness is determined by our social being (Crotty, 1998), stands in the face of what constructionism is. It is a concept constructed from previous concepts, constructed from previous constructions. I would be remiss, however, if I did not give a nod to Max Scheler's term *sociology of knowledge* (*wissenssoziologie*), a term he coined during the 1920s, as an essential concept in social constructionism. Additionally, Kuhn's ideas that scientific knowledge was not based on a world that is, but is the result of communal brokering has played a significant role in how the research community has used social constructionism (Gergen, 2011).

However, it is Berger and Luckmann's 1966 *The Social Construction of Reality* that is typically considered to be the theory's key point of origin. Their seminal text provided a detailed description of the development of the theory social constructionism. A combined examination of a philosophy of language and of a philosophy of understanding provided a starting point for the current view of constructionism.

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work was built on three important intellectual drives. The first was the challenge to examine what had been considered sociological realities and the ends they achieve. The second was a stress on linguistics; the growth of semiotic theory and literary deconstruction led to increased attention on ways linguistic conventions control how we view and understand these communities. The third, stemming from Kuhn's concept of science as guided by communal thought, was the

challenge of a scientific truth. The common concept in these three movements, an examination of what human beings considered truth and reality, supported the broader theory of social constructionism.

Gergen (1973) added to this developing way of understanding, as did Harré and Secord (1972). Based in social psychology, these authors stressed the ideas that knowledge is specific to the historical and cultural context of constantly changing social life and that language is the means for creating both the understanding and the constructing of this knowledge (Burr, 1995).

The aforementioned works focused on the social aspect of constructionism, which helped to split the constructionist epistemology into theories of constructivism and social constructionism. This division caused, and still causes, blurred lines between the two theories; Hruby's 2001 article sought to clarify some of the differences. Hruby explained that the primary division is one of perspective and focus. Constructivism is a theory investigating how individuals learn and structure their knowledge; the individual knowledge assembly is as the heart of this theory. Comparatively, social constructionism looks into how and what knowledge is formed between individuals in a social context (Hruby, 2001). Extending Hruby's ideas of knowledge stemming from a social relationship between individuals, social constructionism places meaning as a derivation occurring from social interactions (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). Interactions can occur between individuals as well as between an individual and an action, an object, or an experience.

While constructivism leans more heavily on the psychological and social constructionism more heavily on the social, social constructionism does, in fact,

encompass the two practices (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2011). Indeed, the two cannot be separated. This adds another contribution to the blurred lines between constructivism and social constructionism. Confusion in the distinction between the two theories has caused confusion in research design, analysis, and the presentation of one's findings. This discrepancy may be due to scholars using the two terms interchangeably without regards for the distinctions. Others use constructionism as an epistemology without elaborating on the theoretical lens framing their particular study. This is especially problematic because our understanding of social constructionism is constructed through our use of the term.

Burr (2003) agreed that the multiple points of agreement between the two theories leads scholars to synthesize the two theories. She noted that the difference between social constructionism and constructivism is layered. In the latter, the individual is considered to have more agency and is actively involved in creating their own world. In the former, the world one experiences is created and recreated through interactions between two or more texts. In this latter context a text is not only a written document but also includes the product resulting from social interactions.

Social constructionism sees a world that is malleable and formed by language. Together we create, or construct, the knowledge that we, as laymen, call truth. Scholars in social constructionism often refer to this information as commonsense (Burr, 2003). This truth, or way of thinking about the world, is located in the individual; it is subjective, not objective. Our ideas form our understandings of the world and are constructed and reconstructed through social interactions. What individuals consider true is an evolving concept, not one fixed in time and space. Through these interactions, we

develop our commonsense understandings of the world (Burr, 2003); these shared understandings that allow members of a Discourse (Gee, 1999, 2001) or other community to understand and predict social occurrences.

Crotty (1998) suggested reserving constructivism for investigating the meaning making of the individual and using constructionism for when the research focus is on the collective generation and transmission of meaning. Because this study investigates how participants worked together to make meaning about the books they read, it uses a social constructionist theoretical lens.

Conclusion

Social Constructionism is, in part, built on collaborative action. One such action is engaging in discourse (Gergen, 1985). It is not within the individual's mind that "knowledge, reason, emotion and morality reside," but in the relationship between the individuals in the community (Gergen, 2011, p. 109). Furthermore, these dialogues that develop the aforementioned ideas or concepts are historically and culturally situated (Gergen, 2011)

Group discussions are ways that educators can "involve students as thoughtful learners in socially meaningful tasks" (Moll, 1994, p. 180). They allow students to collaboratively make meaning within a social group and to use life experiences as points of reference. "Student learning is increased when carried out in social contexts" (Wilson & Smetana, 2011, p. 84). Groups created to discuss books allow students to engage in problem solving and exploration of both actions in literature and their own lives. They are both drawing from and adding to a community's knowledge. Instruction that is dialogic makes possible "the joint construction of new sociocultural terrain" which then

creates spaces for changes in “what counts as knowledge and knowledge representation” (Pappas et al., 2003, p. 439).

Learning and the meaning making process is supported when students have the opportunity to socially construct understandings of the books they read as well as their own life experiences. From a social constructionist framework, the different life experiences are represented through language; as the meaning making process occurs, it is both referring to and constructing social understandings of a topic.

As students voice their ideas about a text through referencing other texts and textual situations, they are engaging in meaning making that has “interpersonal and ideational” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 307) functions in addition to those that are textual. Intertextuality provides the opportunity for meaning making despite the students’ lack of awareness that they are making these connections. Studies in intertextuality are supported when students are provided the opportunities to discuss texts and their voices are heard and attended to (Pappas et al., 2002).

I agree with Brevig’s (2006) assertion that “reading is a social practice” (p. 524). Book club discussions provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in talk about text. These authentic social settings are the means in which “students come to acquire and construct new knowledge, new meanings, and new interpretations of text through interactive use of language” (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996, p. 184). The focus of this study was not the interpretations of text; rather, the goal was to provide students opportunities to engage in text-related thinking and use the knowledge they are constructing to “support their own literacy activities,” which can “encourage lifelong habits of literate thinking” (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996, p. 189). The research design supported this goal.

An authentic context was created in which fourth graders had the opportunity to engage in discourse that shared their meaning making activities and processes and to provide observational clues into how they thought of themselves as readers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

*Researcher: So I thought this time I would sit with the group, but I would try to keep my
mouth closed*

Aaron: Why?

Researcher: Why would I keep my mouth shut?

Alexa: This is OUR book club.

The following chapter follows the structure set forth by Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, and Shuart-Faris (2005) regarding methodology and method. Bloome and his colleagues used *methodology* to signify the assimilation of “theoretical and methodological issues,” (p. xviii) and *method* for the specific strategies of data collection and analysis. In keeping with this understanding, I will first describe the theoretical framework used in my study. I then discuss the methods I used to design a study to answer my research questions and tell the reader how social constructionism is an appropriate framework to use in a case study. I then provide a detailed explanation of the study’s design and the rationale for this design. The research setting, sample, and data sources follow. Finally, the chapter describes the data collection methods, methods of analysis, and challenges.

Theoretical Framework

This study used social constructionism as the theoretical framework to guide its research design, data collection, and data analysis. This framework provided the structure

for how I “philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach[ed]” the study as a whole (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 13).

Constructionism troubles the term *knowledge*, and it is this troubling that permitted this study. As one seeks to understand the concept of knowledge in reference to particular objects or concepts, one can understand it only in any one particular context in time. Said Berger and Luckmann (1966), “The reality of everyday life is organized around the ‘here’ of my body and the ‘now’ of my present” (p. 22). For this reason, understanding how students collaboratively make meaning from the books they read can occur only at the time the collaboration occurs. Even a retelling of this event alters the original context and provides an additional layer of the construction of meaning.

The perspective that social constructionism provides is especially relevant to this study. A social constructionist framework is suited to the examination of literacy and the power relations concerned with subjectivity and identity. “Like social constructionism, literacy education has focused its research variously through developmental, psychological, and social lenses” (Hruby, 2001, p. 59). This study was designed to foster a space for conversation in order to allow students to provide their own ideas about texts and themselves as consumers of texts, as well as leave room for the collaborative development of these topics. This framework “situate[d] knowledge processes” outside students’ heads and allowed participants in the discourse to construct shared understandings (Hruby, 2001, p. 51). These participants were part of a “discursively mediated community” (Hruby, 2001, p. 51), a book club consisting primarily of peers (Alvermann et al., 1996), who not only shared what they considered commonsense understandings of the world, but, through conversation, created them as well (Berger &

Luckmann, 1966). Research should analyze data with an eye not only to what societies consider to be reality, but also to the process by which this occurs. Thus, a book club that permitted examining knowledge-in-process through language and social interactions provided a context for these processes to be examined.

The use of the word *language* may imply that I speak only of what is written or spoken. Language, however, moves beyond words to include actions and reactions, emotion systems, gestures, prosodics, and goes across “media systems” (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 7). Language is not only a way of communication, but also a way of “constructing social relationships and of bringing a cultural ideology to bear on an event, group, or other phenomenon” (p. 46).

The term discourse and discursive practices are used “for all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 88). *Reality* is understood in this case to lie in the minds of those experiencing the activity, not as a positivist reality that is shared by everyone. Discourse encompasses the verbal and written language, sign systems, and other modalities that permit people to make and share meaning. “Discourse is a multifaceted public process through which meanings are progressively and dynamically achieved” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 89). There are a number of discourses surrounding an object and these discourses may attempt to construct the object differently (Burr, 2003). It is not that we come to an understanding of something and attempt to describe it in words; rather, it is that “language, in the form of discourses, provides our subjective experiences of the world” (Burr, 2003, p. 119).

Readers use discourses as devices to share their thoughts in communities (Galda & Beach, 2001). These discourses provide us with ways to frame and interpret the world,

allowing more ideas to take shape. When considered in an authentic environment that allows for different types of discussion to occur—such as a book club—reading, writing, and talking are placed at the center of the construction process. The social setting created by a book club is the means by which participants engage in discourse that will allow them to construct new knowledge and consider their senses of selves as readers.

In my study meaning is constructed on two levels. Constructionism is something we are engaged in throughout our daily lives as we make sense of the things we do and that other people do (Burr, 2003). As we share these meanings through different modes of communication, we are not simply describing but are also constructing. Thus, as the student-participants communicated with each other, they were making sense of the book club, the text, their community, and of themselves as readers of the text. They were creating their own knowledge.

I, in turn, used the discourse generated during the book club meetings to make sense of the clues students gave about themselves as readers. I also analyzed their meaning-making process. Because this knowledge was dependent on time and space, or the specificity of a situation (Burr, 2003), this constructed knowledge was fluid and dynamic throughout the study.

At first this duality may seem problematic. It is, at the very least, complicated. Maxwell (2013) addressed this dualism, noting that qualitative research is influenced by the belief that there is a world that “exists independently of our perceptions and theories” and that “our understanding of this world is inevitably our own construction” (p. 43). While observing students construct their own understandings of the text, I recognized that their constructions were independent of my own perceptions. As I observed the discourse

being enacted through the book club meetings, I was constructing my own understandings of their practice.

Rationale for Research Approach

This interpretive case study (Burr 2003; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995) was developed to place the research questions as the focal point of research design (Maxwell, 2013). Following this model permitted me to “construct and reconstruct” (p. 3) the design as the study unfolded. This is not to say I did not follow a structure. However, an interactive, or systemic, model remains flexible as unforeseen situations arise (Maxwell, 2013). This flexibility pushed me to return repeatedly to my three research questions to determine whether the evolving data collection methods and conceptual framework continued to align with the goals of the study.

Implications for use of this research will be discussed in Chapter Five, but this study is not meant to generalize across multiple and diverse settings. For this reason, an instrumental case study was developed. One might argue that a better case study typology would be intrinsic because my interest lay in the case itself. I considered this possibility myself. However, this book club was created to answer the research questions; the questions were not created to understand the book club. So I feel the instrumental typology is more appropriate.

Using a case study as the design for data collection and analysis also provided me with flexibility to broaden or narrow my focus as I began my analysis. Each research question was answered using the case study that was bound by the series of 20 book club meetings and associated conversations encompassing all participants.

Case study aligns itself nicely with social constructionism (Burr, 2003). A researcher using the social constructionist framework would examine the verbal and non-verbal interactions that occur between an individual and an object; that object can be another individual. It also examines the results of this interaction. Case study allowed me to observe the participants collectively use the text and each other to develop new understandings of the text and their worlds. Furthermore, case study allowed me to observe participants as they performed themselves and positioned themselves or others. Performing and positioning can be considered one aspect of a Discourse group (Gee, 2003) constructed by the individuals within and outside of the discourse.

Research Design

Designing a qualitative study begins with the worldview one brings to research and a “theoretical lens that shapes the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 42). One’s theory does not simply provide a lens for viewing collected data during analysis; it also structures, or frames, how the study is designed and implemented.

I bring an interpretivist worldview to my research. This set of beliefs pushes me to understand the world in which I live. From an interpretivist worldview, the goal of research is to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Creswell added that these “subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically” (p. 21) which provides additional support for social constructionism as my theoretical lens. These meanings are found through the interactions participants have with other individuals and objects, as well as through the historical and cultural norms that exist in their lives. Individuals drawing on these resources in order to discuss books and other texts are using intertextual references

(Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Galda & Beach, 2001; Gee & Green, 1998).

Researchers with an interpretivist worldview “recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation and they ‘position themselves’ in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21).

There is no agreed upon structure for how to design a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). This does not mean that qualitative research has no structure; rather, it means the structure of qualitative research is flexible (Maxwell, 2013) and involves choices based on the researcher’s worldview and theoretical lens (Creswell, 2007). In fact, what researchers do in the field relies on their research questions (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative methods within a research design have four primary components (Maxwell, 2013). Relying on these broader components provided a framework for my design. Therefore, in addition to outlining what constituted my case, I also discuss research relationships, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. In qualitative research, the individuals responsible for engaging in the analysis and interpretation should be in the field observing and practicing. I remained flexible to allow for an examination between structured and inductive approaches during my research, and my research practices occasionally deviated from my original design. “In qualitative research, any component of the design may need to be considered or modified during the study in response to new development or changes in some other component” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 2). For example, my original design indicated that the book club facilitator would read the participants’ bookmarks. The participants, however, decided that they

would like the option of reading their own bookmarks, but would allow the facilitator to read the ones the author of the bookmark did not want to personally read aloud.

Designing a case study also entails defining the case, or determining the bounds of the case, as well as identifying who will help with data collection, the sources of data to be used, how much time the study will take, and deciding for whom the final report will be prepared, and how.

Case study. In order to examine the process of interaction and the language used by student-participants, I used a case-study methodology. Case studies are well suited to answering how-and-why questions (Baškarada, 2014; Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995) and are used commonly in studies of education and social services (Stake, 1995). Moreover case studies involve studying one unit, or case, closely in order to better understand a “larger class of (similar) units” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). They permit us to examine phenomena that are either commonplace or unique in order to “hear their stories” (Stake, 1995, p. 1).

There are multiple considerations to explore when designing a case study. The most important concern is defining what constitutes the case. Although the literature is not consistent with such a delineation (Baškarada, 2014; Gerring, 2004), key research nonetheless provided a uniform definition that was used in this study. Defined as a bounded entity, a case is the primary unit of analysis (Baškarada, 2014; Creswell, 2007; Simons 2009). This entity may be a person, an organization, or, as in my case, an event. The series of book clubs and their associated activities, such as interviews, constitute the bounded event of my research. I also called this bounded event a literacy event.

Research Context

This research study is contextualized by the current political climate that envelops education like a green fog hovering over a city. My experience in the classroom demonstrated that teachers' autonomy is disappearing as they are handed curriculums or are forced to develop and use district-wide lesson plans. As a middle grades teacher, I was in fact involved with developing such district-wide plans. With the educational focus on passing tests, many teachers have become more concerned that their students will pass a test rather than with students internalizing what they are learning.

Obviously this is a broad generalization that has skipped the nuances of the situation. There are, of course, many teachers who create and maintain student-centered classrooms, or who provide time for student discussion before or following activities. However, as these practices are not accomplished in a way that other educators can recreate them as a normative way of working with students, they remain individualized occurrences.

Additionally, this study intentionally examines fourth graders because it is during this year that disengaging from reading activities most often occurs. (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009; Vacca et al., 2006). It is significant to work with participants at this grade level over an extended period, in my case seven months, to gain deeper understanding into changes in their language, ways of thinking about reading, and ways of thinking about themselves as readers.

Research Setting

Mr. Leopoldo's fourth-grade classroom was located on the second floor of Benton Elementary School. Benton Elementary is one of 14 elementary schools in a small

southeastern county located in Georgia. Benton Elementary is located in a brand-new two-story building with a numerous glass interior walls that give it a feeling of openness. Outside the classrooms there are large alcoves for the use of student groups, and small alcoves in the corners for teacher's aides and volunteer to sit and work with one or two students. Directly outside the cafeteria is a colorful mural painted by a local artist. Preschool students are taught to walk the hallway with bubble mouths and ducktails—mouths closed and hands behind their backs. The older students' classrooms are upstairs where lockers line the walls between classrooms. Teachers keep their doors open when they teach and the hallways reverberate with the rhythmic clapping of teachers trying to get students' attention.

Benton Elementary School is a Title 1 school with 815 students, 87% of whom participate in the free-and-reduced lunch program. Additional demographics are found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Benton Elementary School Demographics

Percentage	Demographic
40%	African American
38%	Hispanic/Latinx
14%	European American
4%	Asian
4%	Multi-Racial

Note. Information retrieved from: <http://www.clarke.k12.ga.us/Whitehead.cfm>. Enrollment in the school's ESOL program was 34%.

Walking into Mr. Leopoldo's room, you first notice the brightly colored walls and the new, gray-patterned carpet. Each student desk contains a removable clear plastic

drawer for school supplies; students keep their backpacks in lockers. To thank Mr. Leopoldo and his students for letting me into their classroom, I frequently purchased books, directly for the students and for their single small bookcase. I also spent time organizing the bookcase so titles could be easily seen. When I began my study, it was not very full, but by the end of the year it was spilling over with books.

The desks were arranged in long rows with several desks set apart for students who might need a buffer from other students. There were 27 students. The teacher's desk was located at the front corner away from the door, and a long rectangular table stood in front of the students. Much of the instructional materials for the day were placed on this table for easy access, and it was also the destination for random materials found around the room. If the special education teacher was in the room, this is where she sat. We held our first eight and last two book club meetings at this table.

Next door was the special education room. This room had the same gray carpet, but the walls were a muted magenta. The teacher had color-coordinated supplies to match the walls. This room was approximately half the size of Mr. Leopoldo's room and the desks stood in two adjacent groups of five. Book club meetings 9 through 18 were held in this room. While doing research, it is important to be respectful of the individuals involved, even those on the periphery. The special education teacher came in and out of this room frequently during our book club meetings. Out of respect for her desire that the desks not be moved, we left them in two groups even though this hindered our discussion. Instead, we moved chairs to create a whole-group atmosphere, although students tended to inch their way back to the desks during our discussions.

For seven of our meetings, we created two small discussion groups. The number of students in the two groups changed weekly, but generally they split themselves evenly. The students did not name their groups; for clarity, I called them the Door Group and the Window Group based on their location in the special education room.

The book club met each week, primarily on Fridays, for approximately an hour starting at 8:10 a.m. after the morning announcements and during the students' extended learning time (ELT). I arrived before 8:00 on the days we held book club in order to set up the recording devices and distribute any materials the students needed.

Participants

I would like to note for the reader that unless I'm discussing a specific participant, the non-gendered "they" and its various forms are used instead of he/she or choosing one gender to represent the participants. Student-participants (Boyatzis, 1998) were recruited from Mr. Leopoldo's ELT in which he served ten students when the school year began. During the course of the study, one student was removed from this class and placed in Read 180; later in the year the same student moved to another school district. One student transferred to the school in November and was placed in Mr. Leopoldo's class. Although he qualified for Read 180 based on his mid-year Lexile scores, he remained in Mr. Leopoldo's ELT and the book club. The eleventh member of the book club was not officially in Mr. Leopoldo's ELT, but often remained in the classroom until his reading instructor arrived to pull him out for individual instruction. This frequently did not occur until book club was well underway and he would listen to me read the book and offer comments. After this became an on-going situation, I provided him with a permission slip

and he was able to join the book club, officially, until his instructor arrived. Eventually, she allowed him to stay in the book club and stopped removing him on Fridays.

Mr. Leopoldo's ELT consisted, by default, of the students in his daily class who officially did not need support instruction through Read 180 or ESOL services. The school determined who needed reading support services based on Lexile Scores, IEPs, and ESOL service requirements. Although these students did not receive reading support services, Lexile scores varied from 400 to over 1000. Thus, there was a wide variety of fluency and comprehension abilities as determined by the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). The gap grew larger when James and Red Walker joined the book club as the school year progressed.

All students in Mr. Leopoldo's ELT were invited to participate in the study. After spending several class mornings with Mr. Leopoldo's students, I was able to speak to the students in his ELT personally in order to explain the study and their role if they became participants. Because Mr. Leopoldo agreed the book club would be his regular Friday morning activity, all of his ELT students would participate in the book club activities regardless of whether they participated in the study. Therefore, all students received a letter for their parents or guardians explaining the study, two copies of my permission form, and the permission form from the district allowing audio and visual recordings. Parents and guardians were asked to accept or decline the invitation, to sign one copy, and return it to Mr. Leopoldo, who gave them to me, and to keep the second copy for themselves. When new students joined Mr. Leopoldo's ELT, they were also informed about the study and provided with the set of permission forms for their parents and guardians to sign and return to the class teacher, who then gave them to me.

The book club meetings provided the nexus for data collection. The majority of data, simply gauged by time and length of transcriptions, came from book club meetings. I collected and analyzed pre- and post-interviews, comments on the web program Padlet, bookmarks, and Post-It Notes that were written and drawn on by the participants, as well as pictures of student artifacts created for book club.

Data Collection

Data collection begins before the actual study does (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). It starts with the research conducted in order to prepare for the study: reading similar studies, gathering background data on the potential research site, and determining the best design for one's research (Stake, 1995). It was understood that much of these first impressions would be honed and altered during the study, but "the pool of data includes the earliest of observations" (Stake, 1995, p. 49). My data collection first began when I became teacher who worked with a diverse population of students. The collection process continued with each course of my three post-graduate degrees and the books and articles I read. It grew with the planning process as I focused what I wanted to learn from my research and the best way to expose myself to this information. Once the study began, data collection occurred primarily at Benton Elementary School, although there were moments, primarily through texts, email, and phone calls during which I collected data off-site.

As stated, the majority of data collection occurred at Benton Elementary School in a small southeastern county in Georgia. This school was specifically chosen because I had a professional relationship with one of the teachers at this school and because this was a feeder school into the middle school where I previously taught. It was also one of

two elementary schools in my immediate community, both schools being within five miles of my neighborhood.

Schools in this university town are familiar with graduate students from the university wishing to engage in research. There is, therefore, a system in place by which to request permission from a principal and from the school district before an IRB can be approved. Additionally, it means that some principals welcome researchers based on past experiences while others are less likely to approve a study. Maxwell (2013) stated that relationships are important to research and this includes the process of choosing a location. I began to cultivate a relationship with the principal as I discussed holding my study in Mr. Leopoldo's classroom and continued to develop this relationship as the school year progressed.

In order to maintain a positive relationship with the general education teacher who allowed me to conduct this study with his students, I worked with him to coordinate the activities that made up the literacy event, or bounded case. The literacy event was composed of the book club meetings and connected activities. The events included oral text reading during book club meetings, during which comments by the participants or myself were often stated; discussion between participants and comments from the general education teacher and myself; whole class discussions at the beginning and end of book club meetings; and the pre- and post- interviews conducted with the participants. Unplanned literacy events included discussions during the transition from book club to their general education classroom during which students would often ask me to buy certain books.

Data collection methods. Data collection was done methodically, fluidly, and flexibly. For example, the original research design planned for only audio recording to not unduly influence the students with the presence of a video camera. The original concept was to use a Live Scribe Pen to write down the names of the students as they spoke; I would correlate the recording from the pen with the transcribed meetings and note who was speaking. After the initial meeting, however, I realized that it was very difficult to determine who was talking on the audio recordings because of students' crosstalk. Additionally, I missed non-verbal communication because I was focused on writing down the names of students as they spoke. After the first book club meeting, it became apparent that it would be necessary for me to have video recordings of the book club meetings as well as audio recordings. I therefore communicated with my IRB reviewer, updated my IRB to include video recording and sent a letter home to each participant's parents and guardians, who had already signed a school district release form for audio and video recording, and notified them of the video recordings notified as per IRB requirements. Additionally, I later introduced a second camera to capture both sides of the book club at the long table when we were in whole group and to record both groups when we split into sections.

Although the teacher and I planned for students to have time during the week to read their books in his classroom during our 20 weeks together, this rarely occurred. Several students took the book home and read ahead, but primarily the students' initial interaction with the text occurred through listening to me read aloud. Before I read, bookmarks, and eventually sticky notes, were placed on either end of the long table in the general education classroom or on the center of the two groups of tables in the smaller

classroom. Students were never required to write on the bookmarks or sticky notes, which were introduced as an engagement tactic when students wrote less often on their bookmarks than hoped for, but I continued to mention writing down questions throughout our meetings. As some participants noticed others writing on the bookmarks, they often did as well.

Flexibility was also needed in how the bookmarks were used and how book club meetings were facilitated. The original study design indicated that students would write on their bookmarks if they chose, either during independent reading or when I read the books aloud, and then give them to the book club facilitator to read aloud for discussion. The facilitator was to be a rotating responsibility determined the previous week. During the study, I noted that students often forgot, or chose not to, to write on the bookmark so I would insert comments when I read aloud that reminded the fourth-grade participants to use their bookmarks. For instance I might say as I read along, “Oh, that makes me curious about why Joey wants a dog. I need to write that on a bookmark before I forget” and then I modeled this activity by writing on a bookmark. Or, I might say, “Don’t forget you have bookmarks if you have any questions or topics you want to talk about.” Either of these prompts usually encouraged students to pull their bookmarks closer and possibly write a comment on them.

After the first book club discussion group the participants, teacher, and I held a brief meeting to see what the participants thought about the book club. They decided that we needed rules for the book club and one of those rules was that students could read their own bookmarks instead of having the facilitator read them. I suggested it be a choice, and the participants agreed that they could read their own bookmarks or ask the

facilitator to read them. For this reason, the facilitators ended up assuming a normalized teacher role and calling on students to read their own bookmarks and to discuss the topics brought-up.

Audio and video records were used to capture data during the book club meetings. After each meeting, the recordings were placed on my password protected computer and backed up onto an external hard drive that was located in a locked file cabinet at my home. Video recordings were uploaded to a private YouTube channel so that I had easy access to them for transcription and analysis.

Bookmarks and other written materials were collected or photographed at the end of each meeting. The artifacts were labeled with the date of the book club meeting and the participant author's name. Physical artifacts were kept in the locked file cabinet; digital pictures were stored in a file on my password-protected computer and uploaded to the external hard drive for backup.

After Padlet was introduced to the students, I collected data from the website in two ways. First, I took several screen shots of the participants' posts. This allowed me to see where the participants had placed their posts. Padlet also allows the posts to be exported into a spreadsheet which also noted the name of the person who posted if they logged in as well as the date and time of the post. A file folder on my computer was labeled Padlet and both the screen shots and the excel files were stored there. After the screenshots and exports were completed, I moved all participant comments to the side of the Padlet screen to provide more room for new comments.

All digital data were stored on a password-protected computer, on an external hard drive stored in a locked file cabinet in my home, and on a private YouTube channel. Permission forms and physical artifacts were also stored in the locked file cabinet.

Data sources. Case studies concentrate on a single phenomenon in order to describe it in depth (Merriam, 2002). I wanted to understand different aspects of the phenomenon of how and what students reveal about themselves as readers and how they make meaning through discussion. So I used multiple data collection methods (Maxwell, 2013) designed to complement each other. Simons (2009) reminds us to look, listen, and document when engaging in data collection for case study research. And, while I did not use Yin's methods of analysis for case studies, his 2012 text provides a useful summary of six common sources of data collected in case studies: direct observations, interviews, participant observations, archival records, documents, and physical artifacts.

Each type of data collected should be purposeful (Merriam; 1988; Stake, 1995). For example, observations may be used to describe settings, behavior, and events—such as literacy events—while interviews may help a researcher understand the goals of participants (Maxwell, 2013). I used three methods of data collection: conducting observations, holding pre- and post- interviews, and gathering artifacts. [Please see Appendix B for my data collection and observation protocol.]

Observations provided an effective way to learn about participants' language and behavior (Maxwell, 2013). These have a long tradition in social qualitative research (Simons, 2009). Observation as a data collection tool helps provide a comprehensive picture of the site and setting where the research is occurring. It leads to rich descriptions and provides an additional basis for interpreting the additional data (Simons, 2009; Stake,

1995). During observations, it is important for the researcher to balance keeping useful and informative field notes while still being in the moment. The researcher must know what they are looking for. They must also keep their mind open to see new threads of information that return to original research questions (Stake, 1995). In fact, researchers should make a “conscious effort to see differently” (Simons, 2009) in order not to limit what they observe. Because data collection begins before the study, researchers can have pre-conceived ideas about what they are looking for and how this information will be displayed. As I will mention in Chapter Four, this need to see differently also applies to analysis and sharing the research (Simons, 2009). Observation as a method of data collection was particularly salient because it allowed a method of obtaining information from participants who may not have had the articulation to answer interview questions in depth. While fourth-graders have strong opinions and ideas about their lives and their communities, they are limited in vocabulary and experiences compared to many adults; observations provided a means of cross-checking information provided in the interviews.

As a participant-observer in the book club discussion groups, I collected data that pertained to my research questions in three ways: audio recording, video recording, and note-taking. Recording the participants’ discussions allowed me to devote greater attention to the book club discussion as a whole instead of compartmentalizing it into individual comments about which I would otherwise be taking notes. Taking observational notes provided context for listening to the recordings as well as providing thick, rich descriptions of what occurred during our book club (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2002).

Observations are most useful when they are conducted over time in order “to gain insight into the complexity of the phenomenon” (Simons, 2009, p. 58). Observations of the participants spanned 20 weeks of one-hour book club meetings, and also several additional hours during which I observed the participants in their general education class or their traditional ELT class.

I also conducted pre- and post- interviews with participants. To reduce the impact of the inescapable hierarchy between the fourth-grade participants and myself, I sat on the floor with the students during the interviews and gave them opportunities to ask questions about the interview, the study, and myself. While I did spend several mornings getting to know the students before the first set of interviews, I established a clear rapport with them before the post interviews. I also employed active listening and opening questioning (Simons, 2009). If a participant had difficulty finding words to answer a question, I waited approximately 30 seconds and then asked the student if they would like to skip the question and come back to it at the end. I also reworded questions if the participants were not clear on what I asked. I developed open-ended questions and prodded the participants to expand on their ideas. While the interviews were semi-structured—I had prepared questions (Simons, 2009)—I frequently inserted follow-up questions to learn more about specific statements and answers.

All students present at the beginning of the study were interviewed in the two weeks before the first book club meetings. The two students who joined book club after it began were not interviewed before they began the study. I made the decision not to interview these two students because the students attended several book club meetings before it was determined they would be participants in the study. I did not collect data on

their input prior to receiving parent or guardian permission. I also did not feel that the interviews would provide useful information because the students had already participated in or observed book club meetings. All students who participated in the study were interviewed. For ten of the students, post-interviews occurred when the book club meetings were complete. The student who left book club to participate in Read 180 was interviewed after it was determined he would not return to book club.

I also examined artifacts produced by the participants. I collected bookmarks and sticky notes used to write questions, comments, or to draw scenes from the books. Drawings on the whiteboard or other materials that belonged to the students or the school were photographed and a digital image was stored. The students wrote letters to author Jack Gantos whom I saw at the NCTE and ALAN conferences in 2015. Before I hand-delivered them to Mr. Gantos, I scanned the letters and stored the images on my computer. The thank-you notes that the students wrote me after the book club ended were also saved. Finally, comments made on Padlet were saved as images and as exported Excel files.

Data Analysis Methods

I processed my data using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to examine it holistically before narrowing it down into small units of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Thematic analysis has several qualities which made it an appropriate method for this study. It can lead the researcher to unanticipated revelations, it is useful for summarizing “key features of a large body of data,” it highlights both “similarities *and* differences across the data set,” and the results are accessible to researchers using different paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97).

I originally considered using discourse analysis when designing this study. Social constructionism and discourse analysis are well paired as a theory and method of analysis. In fact, discourse analysis is thought to have developed from social constructionism (Potter, 1996). Gee (1999) described discourse analysis as a tool to examine semiotic cues that shed light on six “building tasks” (p. 85). Briefly, these tasks include semiotic building, political building world building, activity building, socio-cultural situated identity and relationship building, and connection building. The latter two building tasks are indeed related to my research questions. Gee also stated that discourse analysis studies *how* features of language construct social activities and identities.

After I began data collection, however, I realized I was less interested in how language functioned than I was in *what* the students constructed through language. I was less concerned with building tasks than I was with what was built. While discourse analysis may have also allowed me to answer my research questions, it is a multi-faceted type of analysis that requires significant understanding to use properly. My one course in discourse analysis provided me with an overview of the approach, but I lacked the skills to use the approach with fidelity. Thematic analysis, however, allowed me to focus on what was said and what the students knew, as shown through semiotics, so I was able to look for patterns that suggested deeper meanings made during our weekly meetings.

Thematic analysis guides the researcher toward perception (Boyatzis, 1998). It is an analytic process frequently used with qualitative data, in part because it can be used with a wide variety of different types of information. As mentioned, it can also provide a connection between researchers in different fields. It is important to ensure we “re-

present our images” in a manner that allows others to engage with the phenomenon being researched (Simons, 2009, p. 58). Thematic analysis permits researchers to “more easily communicate his or her observations, findings, and interpretations of meaning to others who [use] different methods” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 6). This is due, in part, to theme development as one of the few “generic skills” shared across different methods of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78).

Flexibility is another draw of thematic analysis because it is not tied to one particular framework or epistemology and is in accordance with the “constructionist paradigm” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). This flexibility can also be one of this method’s limitations; however, with deliberate and rigorous intent as well as clear and explicit explanations about the process, this limitation can be obviated. Method and theory “need to be applied rigorously” by the construction of a “systematic method” in which the inferences and assumptions made about data and methods align with how one views the subject (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96).

Using thematic analysis systematically leads the researcher through three interrelated phases of questioning:

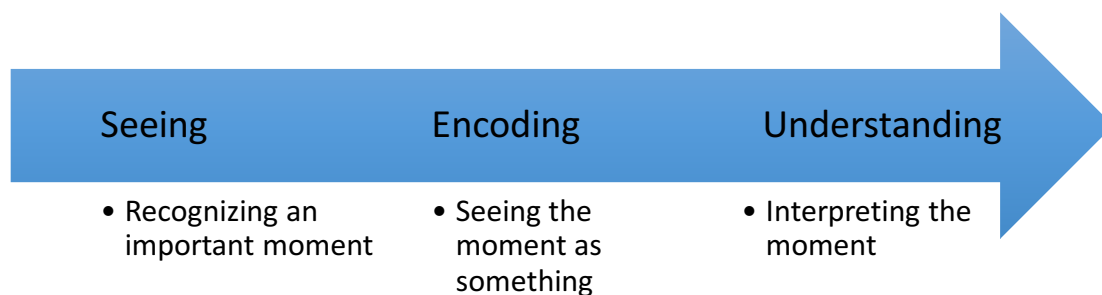


Figure 3.1. Phases of Questioning

Figure 3.1. was adapted from “Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development,” by R.E. Boyatzis, 1998, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The second phase is what leads to coding, an important component of thematic analysis. The development of thematic codes pushes the researcher in the direction of developing theories about the data that leads to one's findings. Codes can be developed using a "top-down" or a "bottom-up" approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The inductive, bottom-up approach strongly links themes to data; the coding process does not employ pre-existing codes or preconceptions of the researcher. It does, however, stay within the theoretical framework structuring the study. The top-down, theory-driven approach, on the other hand, relies on "the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). The intent is to illuminate a component of a theory, and the researcher may have preconceived codes in mind before engaging with the data.

This study used the bottom-up approach in which codes developed from my immersing myself in the data and seeing patterns that were then tested to see if they could be developed into themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a series of iterative phases for moving from data collection to producing the findings section of a final report. While these phases can be conceived as steps, each phase can lead either forward to the next step or backward to one of the previous steps. This recursive process allows one to develop criteria for validity to support both one's process and one's findings.

Table 3.2

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description
1. Immersion	Data Transcription, reading data collected, writing comments and ideas

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 2. First Round of Coding | Assigning codes systematically and collecting data appropriate for each code |
| 3. Finding Themes | Examining coded data and determining potential themes. |
| 4. Reviewing Themes | Aligning themes with entire data set to see if they are accurate and useful. Create thematic maps to show connections among data. |
| 5. Naming Themes | Continuing process of refining or expanding themes; creating definitions for each theme. |
| 6. Writing Findings | Continue analysis by selecting data to be explored through writing, revising and connecting themes to research questions. |

Note. Adapted from “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), p. 87

Trustworthiness

Attempts to apply the concept of validity to qualitative research may “result in distorting the nature of qualitative inquiry—straining the data to meet the concept and losing the meaning in the process” (Simons, 2009, p. 128). Instead, Simon noted that Henry Wolcott’s 1995 text *The Art of Fieldwork* suggested the use of credibility and trustworthiness. For credibility, accuracy in reflecting the situation, relevance, timeliness, and utility are important. It is important to have protocols in place to ensure that researchers use more than intuition when collecting, interpreting, and presenting data (Stake, 1995). Although qualitative research deals with phenomena that one researcher may not interpret in the same way as another, there are still ethical obligations to reduce misunderstanding and avoid misrepresentation.

Authenticity was established by respecting the perspectives of the participants, empowering the participants to act and talk, and being fair to the participants. In addition, triangulation was employed by cross-checking multiple data sources (Simons, 2009). In

order to implement investigator triangulation (Stake, 1995), I shared my observations with the general education teacher to confirm that his interpretations of events, or of the participants, were aligned with mine. Because Mr. Leopoldo was not always in the room during book club meetings, I shared videos and specific comments from transcripts, as well as from my field notes. In order to ensure theory triangulation, I participated in the defense of this study; professors noted whether their interpretations were similar to mine and questioned differences that arose. I also engaged in data source triangulation to see if phenomena occurred the same way in different settings or with different participants. Interestingly, it was because the participants did not behave the same way when in different rooms, or when some participants were absent or changed groups, that I felt confident in my observations. When students behaved differently in one room as compared to another, this was reminiscent of my teaching experiences and influenced the way I examined different actions within the case.

Challenges

Case study research can have what are considered as limitations if they are not recognized and considered while the researcher is designing, conducting, analyzing, and writing about the research. Such research is linked to time and place; it can provide a picture of how things were only during the case study (Burr, 2003; Simons, 2009). This method of research, indeed most methods of qualitative research, must take into account how the researcher's subjectivities and presence influences the research. Case study research can generate a large quantity of information, which can be overwhelming for both the researcher and the readers (Simons, 2009). Finally, the unexpected often occurs

during a case study because the researcher is observing or participating in someone else's world.

But these various aspects of the case study constitute limitations only when considered within the design of a positivist or quantitative study. They cease to be problematic if examined solely from a qualitative perspective. I therefore consider these limitations to be challenges and will use this term throughout this dissertation. Case study research is designed to provide additional depth to past research and to suggest new understanding of phenomena (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). The goal is not to generalize, but to understand. The purpose of this case study was to identify new ways of considering the collaborative discussion of fourth graders, not to suggest that all educators will have a similar experience in their own classrooms.

That being said, there were situations that changed the book club's setting, the participants I was able to recruit for this study, the roles I assumed during the meetings, and the time I was able to dedicate to the study. Each of these situations changed the original study design, limiting some aspects of the study while opening doors in other ways. These occurrences are labeled as challenges and are addressed in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

My subjectivity drove my study. I embrace my love of reading and my pure enjoyment of sharing this passion with others. While I attempted to remain a neutral participant during participants' discussions, the student-participants did recognize that I enjoyed reading and that I was pleased they wanted their own books to read.

Because of my theoretical framework, I also needed a significant amount of time for collecting data. In order to see how students made meaning through discussion and

how they showed aspects of themselves as readers through a social constructionist lens, numerous interactions had to occur. Over twenty hours of data collection was daunting to transcribe, organize, and analyze. My extensive data corpus, however, provided me with multiple data sets to examine.

Finally, unlike quantitative data in which unexpected occurrences or results can be dismissed as outliers, working with unexpected situations provided additional data representative of the bounded case. They also prompted me to return to the study's research design; I wanted to be sure I was structuring our meetings in such a way that the design remained within IRB regulations even while allowing an accommodation of the unexpected.

While specific challenges are discussed in Chapter Five, I provide one example here because of its influence on which data were considered for analysis. Further elaboration is also included in Chapter Four under the section titled Meaning Making.

The original plan for data collection was set in Mr. Leopoldo's classroom with Mr. Leopoldo present. After our eighth meeting, however, our setting changed and the new classroom had desk placements that divided the book club into two sections. Observed behavior of several students also led me and the teacher to temporarily separate certain students and create designated participant groupings. Finally, while the teacher indicated he would supervise one of the newly established groups, he was frequently absent from the room.

As a result of these three challenges, the participants did not engage in discussion about the book *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012) as they did the book *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998). Unsupervised participants did not read the book; students reading

with me discussed occurrences as they transpired, but rarely went back to previous discussions. Both situations hindered theme development and the social construction of understandings under the guidelines I developed for analysis. Therefore, analyses focused primarily on the participants' discussion of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) and rarely included *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Rosa: Most of the whole class...most of the class choose Maria...because it was all her fault.

Alexa: Wait. We should do a vote

Rosa: Yeah, we should do a vote. Who thinks it was Joey's fault?

My findings in this study are intricately connected to my analytic process. Through each stage of deconstructing and reconstructing the data, I fleshed out my ideas as I wrote. I then would often realize that I had just part of the picture and return to the original sources yet again to shape responses to my research questions, which are broad. The findings I here present and support—my ultimate response—emerged from this ongoing analysis. For this reason, it is important to provide analytic context for the reader, context that expands the reader's understanding of how I used thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun & Clarke, 2006) to construct my findings.

In this chapter, I first expand upon my analytic process in context with data excerpts. I locate the details of my analysis in Chapter Four to better support my findings. I also provide brief summaries of the two books my participants and I read during our 20 weeks together. Moreover, I describe how participants explored through dialogue the topics that arose from reading the book, *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998), topics that were socially relevant to their own lives. Through the use of intertextual links (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Blumer, 1969; Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Gee &

Green, 1998; Lemke, 2004), the participants could reference previous texts and textualized experiences while collaboratively discussing the book. These links were used to engage in meaning making that explored the students' own ideas of three socially constructed topics, thereby contributing to the very construction of the concepts in the book club community. The fourth section provides insights into how the participants described real readers and whether and why they considered themselves real readers. This section also shares how the participants choose books for ownership.

Sections three and four, described above, respond directly to my second and third research questions at the center of this study (Maxwell, 2013). As I respond to these two secondary questions, I am, in turn, responding to my primary question: What happens as a group of fourth graders engage in student-driven discussion around books? My secondary questions are:

- What meanings do students construct about what they have read, and
- What do students share about themselves as readers

Analysis

In Chapter Three, I provided an overview of the steps I used to analyze my data. The intricacies of this analysis were far more involved than the overview suggests. When the seven-month literacy event concluded, my data corpus included over 13,000 lines of book club group transcriptions, nine introductory interviews and 11 post-study interviews. Additional artifacts included bookmarks, pictures, copies of letters to the author, and lists of books requested by the participants. I also used my observational field notes that spanned the entire data collection period.

My process of data analysis followed the research matrix found in Appendix C, written prior to immersing myself in the analytic process. This matrix provided a systematic structure used to examine my data while keeping in the forefront of the process my research questions and my use of thematic analysis through a social constructionist lens.

Analysis of constructed meanings

I analyzed my data using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun & Clarke, 2006) to first holistically examine the data corpus (see Figure 4.1) and then focus on several data sets for in-depth analysis (see Table 3.2) to understand how my participants made meaning around books. These data sets were determined in the third phase of analysis as shown in Table 4.1. Data extracts, or data units, from the data sets were chosen in phases four and five. I find it important to note that despite the phases outlined in Table 4.1, my analysis was an iterative process. As I wrote narratives, phase six, about my findings, I frequently returned to phases three through five in order to refine or expand codes and coded data sets before returning to explore the findings through additional writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Figure 4.1: Progression of Data Corpus to Data Excerpts

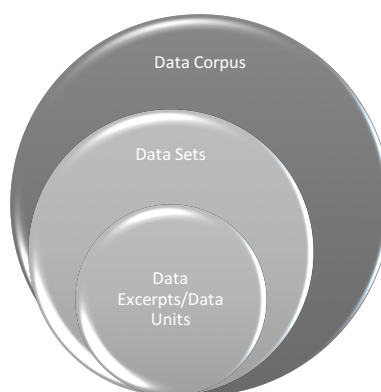


Table 4.1 details the steps taken during analysis. The phase and description columns derive from Table 3.2 in Chapter Three in which the thematic analysis process was described in phases. This table takes the reader through the steps I used to initially reduce the amount of data needed to conduct the deeper analysis to determine themes that responded to my research questions as seen through the lens of social constructionism. As I moved through each phase, iteratively returning to earlier phases when necessary, I was able to think of my *data* in terms of my *findings*, the very place I wanted to be.

Table 4.1

Thematic Analysis: Meaning Making

Phase	Description	Analysis
<i>Immersion</i>	Data Transcription, reading collected data, writing comments and ideas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make transcriptions anonymous 2. Create one MS Word document of 20 book club transcriptions 3. Unitize data by turns taken (minimum of three)
<i>Initial Coding</i>	Assign codes systematically and collect data appropriate for each code	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Color Code MS Word document of compiled transcription (37 codes) 2. Re-read coded data; find overlaps, gaps, and repetition 3. Remove data without codes 4. Enter coded MS Word data into Atlas ti 5. Generate reports by coded data 6. Look for trends by code repetition
<i>Finding Themes</i>	Examine coded data and determine potential themes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add 34 codes to note book club meetings and speakers 2. Find topics repeated over multiple meetings 3. Refine codes
<i>Review Themes</i>	Align themes with entire data set for accuracy and utility. Create thematic maps to show connections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine themes with relation to Theoretical Framework and Research Questions 2. Create thematic mind map connecting each code to a research question

<i>Name Themes</i>	Continue to refine or expand themes, define and name them	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create excel table noting conversation initiator, number of turns taken and speaker 2. Compare to Mind-Map and label three primary themes
<i>Write findings</i>	Continue analysis through exploration during writing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write narratives about themes as they occurred in book club 2. Refine themes and put them in context with supporting data

Phases two through four of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1996; Braun & Clarke, 2006) involve coding data broadly at first and then returning to the codes to determine which need to be expanded, refined, eliminated, or added. These phases also required me to determine what boundaries I would use for data excerpts. I used a color-coding system with the book club transcriptions in Microsoft Word. I then imported this document into ATLAS ti (Version 1.0.43) to create reports that allowed me to examine coded data in isolation in order to look for patterns, as well as an absence of patterns. This organization prompted me to create a tree map (see Appendix D) and link the code descriptors to the research questions. I was then able to make the important and difficult decisions about what findings best responded to my research questions. This was perhaps the most difficult part of the data analysis. Each line of transcription had a story, and each story was one I wanted to share.

As seen in the research matrix (Appendix C) different data sources were used to answer questions two and three. Book club transcriptions and field notes were used to answer question two; transcribed pre- and post- interviews, and a list of book requests, was analyzed to respond to question three.

With regard to question two, my initial step was to determine which of the 13,000 lines of transcription were important to my questions and which to set aside. In order to

align with social constructionism as seen through dialogic collaboration, I made the decision that a discussion, also called a conversation, throughout this process would be defined as between a minimum of two participants and would require at least three turns. For example, Rosa could ask a question, Alexa respond and then Rosa or another student would then need to speak to the same topic. I also required these discussions to engage in meaning making in response to the book and be returned to over the course of more than one book club. Again, this was to align with the intersection of social constructionism, meaning making, and fourth grade participants discussing books.

Based on these criteria, transcribed data excerpts from *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) were used; excerpts from *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012) are primarily absent. As mentioned in Chapter Three, challenges from the book club's change in setting and the absence of the general education teacher to help supervise the student-participants influenced discussion. These influences changed how participants discussed our second book. When reading *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012), students rarely returned to previous conversations or thoughts unless they involved our first book.

Table 4.2 represents how I used thematic analysis to examine four broad topics, refine those topics and then see them as the themes I would discuss in this paper. Coded discussions about these topics led me to consider four broad codes: "Maria" (a character in the book), "parents," "school," and "morality." Through cyclical analysis I continued to refine the codes, as demonstrated in Table 4.2, until I found three primary themes that responded to my second research question, how did students engage in meaning making around books: "parental roles," "parental responsibilities," and "social status." Two sub-themes that intersected the primary themes about parents were "gender" and "influence,"

while two sub-themes that intersected with the theme of social status were “revenge” and “character traits.”

Table 4.2

Cyclical Analysis

Broad Codes	Refined Codes First Pass	Excerpts	Refined Codes to Themes	Excerpts
<i>Maria</i>	• Connections	28	Social Status	10
	• Narratives	112	• Character Traits*	6
	• Questions	14	• Revenge*	17
<i>Morality</i>	• Punishments	7		
	• Faults	12		
	• Right and Wrong	7		
<i>Parents</i>	• Connections	111	Roles	12
	• Beliefs	3	Responsibilities	6
	• Family, Children	3	• Gender**	5
	• Gender	3	• Influence**	11
	• Influence	15		
	• Narratives	113		
	• Questions	30		
	• Responsibilities	10		
	• Roles	6		
	• Expectations	19		
<i>School</i>	• Parental Connections	1		
	• Role of Teacher	8		
	• Social Status	8		

Note: * Character Traits and Revenge are considered sub-themes because these codes were used in relation to participants’ discussion of social status. **Gender and influence are included as sub themes under Parents Roles and Responsibilities

The themes, therefore, that appeared significant to the participants were those of “parental roles,” “parental responsibilities,” and “social status in the classroom.” Social status was broached by the participants as discussion of character traits and revenge while parental roles were discussed as gendered and parental responsibilities were discussed in terms of (ir)responsibilities. These conclusions were based on the number of book clubs

from which data excerpts were examined, the number of participants engaging in the discussion, the number of turns in a data extract, and anecdotal notes from my field notes.

Analysis of participants as readers

Question three, “What do students share about themselves as readers?”, required other types of data sources for analysis. Interview transcripts from pre-and post-interviews were used to examine how students thought of being a reader, called a *real reader* (Knapp, 1998), as well as how they thought about the activity of reading. A list of book requests was used to determine how students chose the books they wanted to read. Despite their dissimilarities, the phases of thematic analysis (Boyzatis 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) were used for both data sets. Table 4.3 describes the phases and how each was executed in order to respond to this third question.

Table 4.3

Phase	Description
Immersion	Transcription and creation of a list of requested books.
First Round of Coding	Located key words in the transcribed data sets, determined connections between the books, and imported the transcriptions into ATLAS ti.
Finding Themes	Interviews: Visible, academic, and emotive. Books: Pop culture, multi-student, previous connection, and book talk.
Reviewing Themes	Tables reducing data sets to data excerpts.
Naming Themes	Visible: Seen reading. Academic: References grades and teacher praise. Affinity: References enjoyment. Pop culture: Connection to movie, television, game, or YouTube. Multi-student: More than one participant requested a book.

	<p>Previous connection: Affinity for an author, series, or previously mentioned topic.</p> <p>Book talk: Heard about a book through book talk.</p>
Writing Findings	Narratives and dissertation.

Thematic Analysis: Participants as Readers

In order to learn more about my participants and their thoughts about reading and being a reader, I sat down with my participants and administered an interview prior to our first book club meeting. The pre-interview contained nine primary questions with additional secondary questions that could prompt the interviewee if necessary. These interviews were conducted during the last week of September and the first week of October 2015. I also conducted post-book club interviews with the participants in order to learn whether their ideas had changed and to learn how they thought our book club meetings had gone. These questions were structured in the same manner: primary questions with secondary probing questions to elicit additional information. The post-interviews were given during the first two weeks of April 2016.

Table 4.4

Interview Questions for Analysis

Interview	Questions
<i>Pre-interview:</i>	<p>Is there someone in your class, besides you, who you'd say is a real reader?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why did you pick him/her? b. How do you think that person became a good/real reader?
<i>Post-interview:</i>	<p>When we met at the beginning of the year, you said that ____ was a real reader. Do you still think that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How come b. Are there other students who you would say are real readers? c. Do you think you are a real reader? Why/Why not?

Both interviews: Tell me about how you read?

- a. Are some things harder to read than others?
- b. What can you do if something is hard to read?

While the transcribed interviews in their entirety were of significance, the questions that proved most valuable are noted in Table 4.4. My intent was not to determine if book club participation gave participants new ideas about reading or changed their minds about who they thought was a real reader and why. To attribute changes in responses to the book club would be assumptive; the participants engaged in almost an entire school year and seven more months of living in their homes and communities. Examining the transcriptions from a social constructionist lens means recognizing that all experiences alter the way individuals and communities—including our book club—see the world. Instead, by conducting two sets of interviews, I learned what my participants thought about reading and readers during two different times in their lives.

The second data source was serendipitous. During the sixth book club, I asked the participants for a list of books they could consider reading for our next meeting. I purchased these books as well as several others and did book talks on each of the books during book club number eight. I allowed the participants to keep the books I had purchased and, if more than one participant wanted the same book, I purchased extra copies. This led to an ongoing request for books from the participants and from other students in Mr. Leopoldo's homeroom. A list of these books organized by participant can be found in Appendix E.

These findings surprised me and enlightened my understandings of my participants' understandings of how they thought of being a real reader and how they decided what they wanted to read and to own.

Book Descriptions

The books the participants and I read and listened to will be referenced throughout the rest of this chapter. I will therefore provide a brief summary of each in order to give the reader proper context for the findings I will subsequently share.

The fourth-grade participants, five girls and up to six boys (depending on when they joined), and I read two books during the course of this study. I chose the first book, *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998), so that we could begin reading immediately after all signed permission slips were collected from the participants. The participants chose *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012) as the second book; I will discuss the selection process in the section titled *Selves as Readers*.

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key. I selected *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) because it was part of a series, the main character was the same age as the participants, the protagonist has a difficult home-life, and because all classes have a student like Joey in their room. He is a recognizable character students are familiar with and can relate to.

Joey's father left home while Joey was in kindergarten, and his mother quickly followed. Joey was raised by his mentally abusive paternal grandmother, an unwilling caretaker who resorts to lying to Joey and closing him in the refrigerator to manage his behavior. We meet our protagonist when he is approximately nine years old, and his

mother has just returned to care for him. The grandmother leaves soon thereafter, and Joey and his mother are forced to work on the problems created when he was left behind.

To further complicate Joey's life, he has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) that had not been medically treated before his mother returned. He is well known by his teachers and administrators as an impulsive and disruptive student, but also as one who is caring and who wants to learn. Throughout the book, we get to know Joey as he swallows his house key (twice), sneaks a sugary treat, and jumps from a barn loft onto a bale of hay and sprains an ankle. He hurts another student with a pair of scissors, and is sent to the special education classroom before being sent to a special education school. We watch as Joey's mom learns how to be a parent and then how to be the parent of a child with distinctive needs. The study participants' favorite word during their discussions about *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998), used 94 times, was *crazy*.

Coraline. If crazy as the most often used word in reference to Joey Pigza, creepy (used 59 times) was the most commonly used word in reference to *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2002). *Coraline* is set in an old house divided into flats in a present-day, damp and wintry London. Coraline and her two parents move into one of the flats; above her is Mr. Bobo who is training a mouse circus, and below her live Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, two retired ladies of the stage, and their two Scottish terriers.

Coraline's adventure begins when she explores her new home after her busy parents tell her to entertain herself. She discovers a locked door, which she learns used to lead into another apartment, finds the key, and unlocks the door only to find the doorway bricked over. That night while Coraline is in bed, she hears a scuttling noise across the

floor and manages to get a glimpse of a hand-like spider (spider-like hand?) running through the mysterious doorway. When Coraline opens it a second time, it is no longer bricked over but leads to another world with an “other mother” and “other father.” All the characters, in fact, have been duplicated, yet we learn it is the “other mother” who is in charge. She wants Coraline to stay with her forever, and Coraline must battle wits with her other mother and then rescue other children who were captured by the mother-creature before rescuing her own parents. With a talking black cat at her side, Coraline manages to conquer all and oust evil from the house.

Meaning Making

Based on the tenets of social constructionism, intertextuality and learning, I determined that the themes that appeared significant to the participants, stemming from the number of book clubs from which data extracts were examined, the number of participants engaging in the discussions, and the number of turns in a data extract, were those of “parental roles,” “parental responsibilities,” and “social status in the classroom.” The themes of parents’ roles and responsibilities overlapped with the sub-themes of gender and influence. All of these themes were of social significance, an essential component of intertextuality (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993).

Parents

As I read one to two chapters of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) each Friday, I occasionally reminded the participants to write down any question or ideas they had on the bookmarks I provided. Several participants would then take their bookmarks and quickly jot something down. Aaron would often be standing beside his

seat, drawing. Red Walker would be antagonizing James. And Fred would occasionally provide sound effects while I read.

I described the participants in the preface of this dissertation, however, it is valuable to return to these descriptions prior to discussing their comments, questions and behaviors during our time together. While each participant brought their own story to our book club meetings, they also could be portrayed in reference to each other and to the book club as a whole. For example, Ally and Victoria put on a more serious countenance each Friday, actively listening but speaking significantly less than many of the other students. Aaron and Fred, however, seemed to be complete opposites. Aaron spoke often, referenced the book when he did, and looked for rational explanations for characters' behaviors. He stood while we read and talked, drawing pictures and sharpening his pencil repeatedly as we talked. He was the student who needed to have something in his hands at all times. Fred, on the other hand, focused intently on the book and could sit perfectly still as the book was being read or discussed. James and Red Walker joined the book club after the other members; Red Walker seemed to be able to build on others' topics but not create his own questions or formulate original ideas unless I spoke to him directly in a small group. While he became an important member of the book club, James is rarely discussed in this dissertation because he joined about two-thirds of the way through our time together. He enjoyed being helpful and adding his ideas when he thought of something to say. Little D almost always could reference a participant's comment back to his own family. Rosa and Alexa were the two participants who contributed the most in a large group and participated the least in small groups. Denny and Terrell added to the conversation when they had something to say, however Terrell

seemed to lose interest in the book club meetings, while Denny appeared, through her participation, to enjoy the book club more as time progressed and she became more comfortable sharing her thoughts.

Discussion about Joey's parents began in the first meeting, and his parents or grandmother entered the group conversations in each of the book club meetings during which this book was read. It was in the first book club that the concept of parents negatively influencing their children was first brought up. As the meetings continued, the participants built on this idea until they had an understanding of parents that became part of the book club's view of the roles and responsibilities of being a parent.

The participants' perspectives of parental responsibilities were viewed both in a negative framework as demonstrated by the ongoing discussion of parents engaging in irresponsible behaviors, and in a positive framework as parents wanting to protect their child. Because an irresponsible choice can influence children to behave similarly, the participants were also implicitly stating that parents should behave responsibly. The theme "parental roles" primarily refers to the students' construction of normed gender behavior roles for mothers and fathers. In this case, gender is being used to describe the biological sexual markers that made Joey's father a male and his mother a female. Neither the book nor the participants questioned these identifications, so I will continue to refer to boys/males/fathers in one category and girls/women/mothers/grandmothers as another within the findings section of this paper.

During the first six, and then the eighth, book club, conversations with three or more turns and that fit into the themes of "parental roles" and "parental responsibilities" occurred twenty times. The number of turns taken was multimodal: 3 turns, 7 turns, and

12 turns. In this case, the mode would be 12 turns. The mean number of turns was 9.9. I provide this information not to quantify the analysis, but to demonstrate that initiated interactions ranged from multiple short exchanges to an equal number of longer ones, with the longest being 35 interactions. Figure 4.2, from ATLAS ti (Version 1.0.43), shows the network between the two themes and engagement, as demonstrated by number of turns for each conversation.

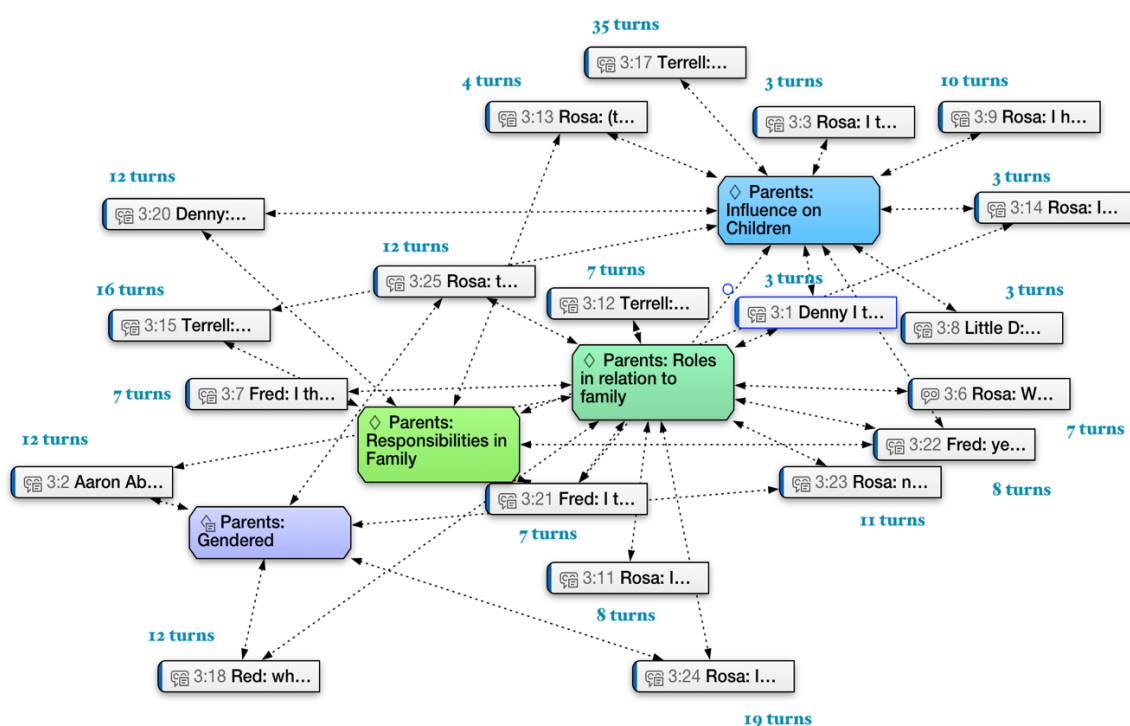


Figure 4.2 Network of Parental Codes

As the participants engaged in group discussion each week, they constructed an understanding of the behaviors of parents, both specific to Joey Pigza's, as well as to parents in real life. In fact, engaging in discussion about parents was so important to the participants, that it crossed over into their discussion of the second book, *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2002). One such example was when the participants used Venn diagrams (see

Figure 4.3) to compare and contrast the parents of Joey and Coraline. The intertextual connections made in this example not only referenced one book while discussing another, but also brought in the text of the classroom lesson during which the students had just learned about Venn Diagrams and the text of “doing school” that was seen when students used the dry-erase board in the front of the class to build their graphic organizer. As you may note from Figure 4.3, however, the topic evolved from being about parents to being about the characters.

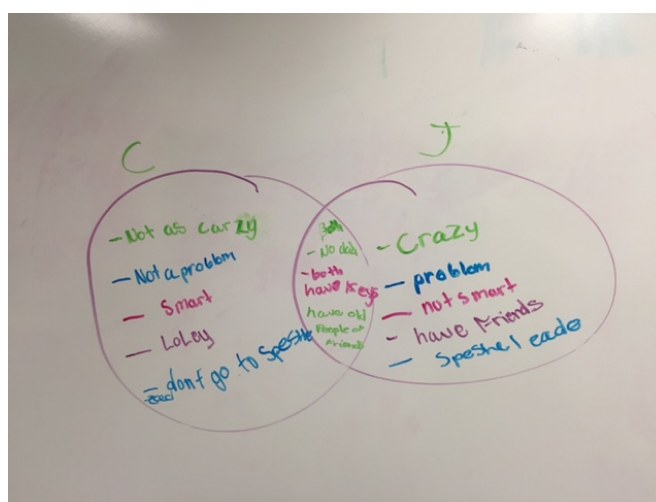


Figure 4.3. Venn Diagram: Joey and Coraline

Parental (ir)responsibilities. A parent’s responsibility is to protect their child. As the students discussed parents, they considered that the parents in the book wanted to protect their child from harm, but frequently engaged in behavior that did the opposite. I begin with the following brief narrative to demonstrate that the participants began to investigate the roles and responsibilities of parents in our very first book club meeting. Each subsequent meeting included discussions about parents both in the book and in real life. The first page of the second chapter of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) reads, “My dad ran off when I was in kindergarten and my mom went after him. My

grandmother raised me until this past summer” (p. 7). This quotation stimulated the first question about Joey’s parents. Alexa, who seemed to enjoy calling on her classmates, was the first facilitator. After asking her if she needed help reading the writing on the bookmarks, I sat back and observed their first comments, noting that they needed support moving beyond the format of asking a question, getting an answer, and going on to the next question.

Alexa read the bookmark that asked why Joey’s grandmother left soon after Joey’s mother came home. The second question was about Joey’s father leaving. With the stack of bookmarks in front of her, Alexa read this question as well; Fred was the participant who wrote the question. Aaron, as was typical for him, only half-listened and answered the previous question instead of the current one. He regularly asked to sharpen his pencil, drew in his notebook, played with the stapler or other items on desks, and stood at his desk as if sitting were too settled for him. As this instance shows, the participants regularly posed questions that they themselves answered.

Alexa: Why did J-Joey’s (mumble) dad run away?

Fred: Joey Pigza

Denny: Because he probably didn’t want to be around Joey’s mom, and like...

Fred: I think that he ran away, he’s like Joey, he just goes crazy sometimes

Alexa: Aaron?

Aaron: I think she just ran down the street

Alexa: We’re not talking about the grandma anymore

Researcher: That’s ok

Ally: Because he didn’t want to deal with a child

Researcher: Do you think any child or just Joey?

Ally: Any child

Denny: I think the dad ran off because he didn't want Joey to like, be like him.

And I think he wanted him not to be like him because when he grows up maybe he's going to be like him. He going to be just like=

Little D: (mumble)

Denny: =him right now

Fred: Because he was like Joey and he ran away when he was in kindergarten before he got a good look or got had his actions, so. And I think he is just trying to protect him.

Intertextual links require a "recognition and acknowledgement of intertextuality (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 314). When Ally commented that he (the father) did not want to deal with a child, I acknowledged, either correctly or not, through a question that her comment was possibly a link to her own life. I was already aware that Ally, her sister, and her mother lived in the women's shelter and that there was not a father present in Athens. Similarly, when Denny noted that the dad did not want Joey to be like him, she used the phrase "when he grows up" and Fred acknowledged this by agreeing and elaborated by adding the word "protect him." These comments referred to the participants' understanding of a fourth-grade world: you are young and easily influenced so it is important to have positive influences so you will follow the right path. Fred also referenced the idea that parents protect their children so they can grow up to be emotionally healthy adults; this link is not acknowledged, however, until future conversations return to the topic. This exchange notes the building blocks of how

members of the book club come to understand the roles and responsibilities, as they constructed them, of adults as parents. Please see Table 4.5 for an example of one of the aforementioned data excerpts examined for intertextuality.

Table 4.5

Analysis for Intertextuality

Steps	Explanation
<i>Describe Message Unit</i>	Source: Discussion in book club by Alexa, Fred, Denny, Ally, and researcher. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form: Question and responses. • Function: Initiating topic.
<i>Identify Units of Interaction</i>	Two inter-related interactional units that complement each other.
<i>Determine Proposal of intertextuality</i>	Ally: Parent did not want to deal with child Link: Textual life experience.
<i>Determine Recognition of intertextuality</i>	Researcher: Recognizes that Ally, her mother and sister lived in Women's shelter. Verifies meaning of Ally's comment.
<i>Determine Proposal of Intertextuality</i>	Denny: Dad did not want Joey to be like him. Link: Embedding social messages.
<i>Determine Recognition of Intertextuality</i>	Fred: Agrees Dad was trying to protect Joey.
<i>Describe Social Consequence</i>	Becomes text returned to in future discussion. Initiated on-going construction of parents as influencing their children.

In the second and third book club meetings, Alexa, and then Fred, brought up the topic of Joey's behavior. The first exchange was brief, just five turns were taken. Fred was the first to answer Alexa's question about why Joey acts bad. Fred typically responded first; he loved to read and paid close attention to what the book said and what questions were being asked. Fred was pragmatic and logical (he loved science), and he

often referred to the book when making a point. Rosa also joined in this exchange. Rosa was a “frenemy” to Alexa, though more friend than enemy. She and Alexa were both popular students, but Alexa more popular, and Rosa often strategized how to have more friends, or more loyal friends, than Alexa. As a team, however, the two girls formed the backbone of the book club.

After Alexa asked why Joey acted badly, Rosa and Fred provided a link back to a comment made in the first meeting, noting that Joey got it (the bad behavior) from his grandma and his whole dad’s family. Although the book explains Joey’s behavior is a result of his ADHD, the participants chose to continue the narrative of blaming parents’ irresponsible behavior.

Figure 4.4 provides a visual demonstration of how the participants brought up and returned to the theme of “parental influence” in citing parents’ unhealthy behaviors as negative influences on children, as well as how parents either wanted to protect, or should have protected, their children. The nodes connected to each book club meeting summarize the results from longer conversations.

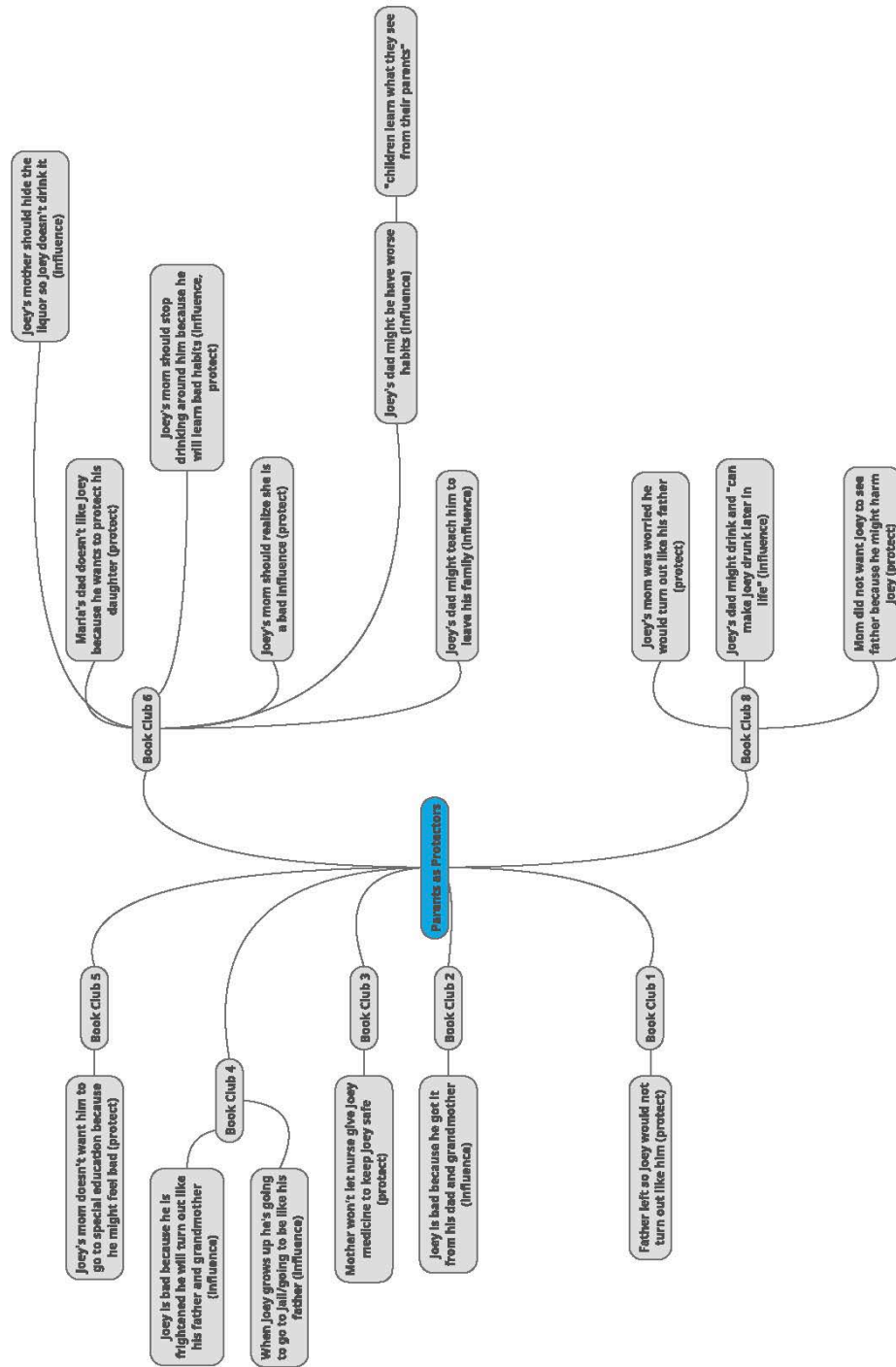


Figure 4.4. Tree Map: Parents as Protectors.

While engaging in these conversations, the participants referenced specific situations in the book as well as texts from previous meetings and texts from their life experiences. It was these latter texts that led the students to build narratives for the characters the book did not include. In the fourth book club, for example, Little D asked why Joey was so bad. Little D was not, it seemed, asking why Joey was bad at that particular moment, but why he frequently engaged in activities for which he got in trouble. As before, the participants could have provided several different responses to this broad question. His medicine did not work properly and his grandmother did not teach him responsible behavior could have been two answers drawn from the book. Instead, Denny, Rosa, Terrell, and Little D contributed to the ongoing construction of parents' behavior influencing their children by linking this new question to previous conversations. Fred's sensible comment was ignored by the group.

Denny: Because he could have been afear (sic) of being like his dad

Little D: Or his grandma

Fred: Because he's a special kid. He does stuff that no one else really does because he's different.

Rosa: I have a feeling that when Joey grows up he's going to be=

Denny: =like his dad

Rosa: =like he's going to be in the newspaper and he's going to be a prisoner and he's going to escape and come back to prison and they're never going to find him.

Terrell: Because he's going to be inside the prison!

Rosa: No, he's going to escape and find a way to not go back to jail.

Little D: Like my daddy.

In *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998), Joey's father had not gone to jail and Rosa's comment did not compare Joey to his father. Instead, she equated being a bad fourth grader with growing up to a life of crime. In this low-income community, it was not unusual for teachers to remind students that they would end up in jail if their behavior did not improve. While I did not hear this warning at the elementary school level, I certainly did in middle school. Rosa may have been drawing on such a narrative when she brought this topic up while also adding a bit of drama to the conversation.

Denny stayed with the idea that Joey would become like his dad and added that this was something that scared Joey. That particular comment was not referenced in the book. Because the book group discussion was composed of intertwined comments, especially when Denny anticipated what Rosa was going to say and interrupted her, the conversation came back to fathers. This allowed Little D to interject that his father had been in jail; I had learned this information from Mr. Leopoldo before the book club began meeting. His interjection also ended the interactional unit because the participants then began discussing Little D's father.

For the students, his father was not the only negative influence in Joey's life. Participants also talked about Joey's mother as they continued to make meaning about specific book events or about their own already verbalized interpretations (i.e., texts). The first discussion of the mom's influence stemmed from her saying "damn" in the book and occurred in the 6th book club meeting. Interestingly, the participants were more surprised this word was used than they were a description of the mother drinking.

Rosa was the facilitator and called on Little D, who asked why there was a cuss word in the book. Rosa, who was being particularly divisive that day, responded that was

not a question. The teacher hat magically appeared on my head and I intervened, saying it was a question, so the participants offered reasons why either the author would include the word or why the mother would say it.

“She’s an alcoholic,” one student ventured. Terrell added, “Yeah, she was drunk.” The conversation then drifted from this topic to discuss Joey’s new enrollment in the special education school. The topic returned when Rosa asserted that Joey’s mom should have to go to special education also. I later asked if the students thought special education was a punishment, and they agreed it was.

The students spent six minutes discussing alcohol, moonshine (Red Walker), Laurel who drinks on the show Arrow (Terrell), and what it would look like if the mother fell up the stairs (Little D and Red Walker). Rosa asked me “Did she have to hide the liquor? Because what if Joey tends to drink it one day?” Red Walker responded, “Oooo oooo, that would be....” And Aaron added, “True, Rosa, you have good predictions.” I suggested Rosa direct this question to the class; instead Rosa said, “I think that she should hide the liquor because one day Joey could tend to want to drink it, because she drinks it all the time.” Aaron added, “Because kids make bad choices sometimes.”

Rosa was saying, then, that she thought Joey eventually would get the alcohol that he pours for his mother’s and drink it himself, either as a child or, possibly, later as an adult. Additionally, this was a new introduction of the mother, rather than the father, as a negative influence. It was equally unclear if Rosa made a connection to previous texts created in book club in which it was established that parents can be poor influences, or if she was making a connection to something she had learned at home or through the media. This comment, then, could be the beginning of a new narrative or be linked to those in

our previous meetings. The subsequent comments about Joey's mother with regard to parental responsibilities provided an intertextual link from the current comment to a previous text and added to the participants' socially constructed understanding of what it means to be and to have a parent.

Other than Aaron's brief response, the other participants did not initially respond to this topic. Their discussion first considered why the mother drank alcohol. Red Walker suggested that she did not have anything else to drink. Rosa said that she wanted to feel better. Little D thought she had a bad day. And Terrell added that it makes her feel relaxed. Red Walker, Rosa and Terrell all agreed that working in a barbershop can be stressful because the customers are picky. Terrell then rephrased Rosa's question, using incorrect pronouns, "If his mom drinks, doesn't she think that later in life he'll do it too because she sees him do it." After a minute of figuring out what Terrell meant, the participants were willing to discuss this topic the third time it was broached.

In a conversation, transcribed below, the participants discussed both the mother's drinking as an influence on Joey and what would occur if Joey found his father. In reference to the latter topic, the participants then discussed whose behavior, the mother's or the father's, was a worse influence. This required a considerable amount of guesswork since the author had not discussed the father other than to say that, like Joey, he was wired. This discussion is an important one. It was in this conversation that the theme of "parental influence" broadened to a discussion of multiple parents and multiple behaviors. It became a conversation about children and their parents in general, rather than a specific one about Joey. It was also in this discussion that the fourth graders revisited the topic of gender roles, a topic I address in the following section.

After Terrell asked his version of the question that Rosa had asked twice already, the two participants introduced the concept of Joey living with his father; Rosa added that he also behaved badly in front of his children. In this comment Rosa used the phrase “his children” although, from the book, we know of no children other than Joey. I believe that Rosa referenced her understanding of fathers who leave their wife and child, and then remarry and have additional children. She then called on Denny to add to the discussion. Denny incorrectly mentioned another bad habit, smoking, that was then discussed.

Denny: Joey might drink because...if he sees his mom be smoking and all that, he's gonna=

Rosa: = You mean drinking?

Red Walker: Drinking.

Denny: He's going to be.

Aaron: Please excuse me guys. I've got to sharpen my pencil.

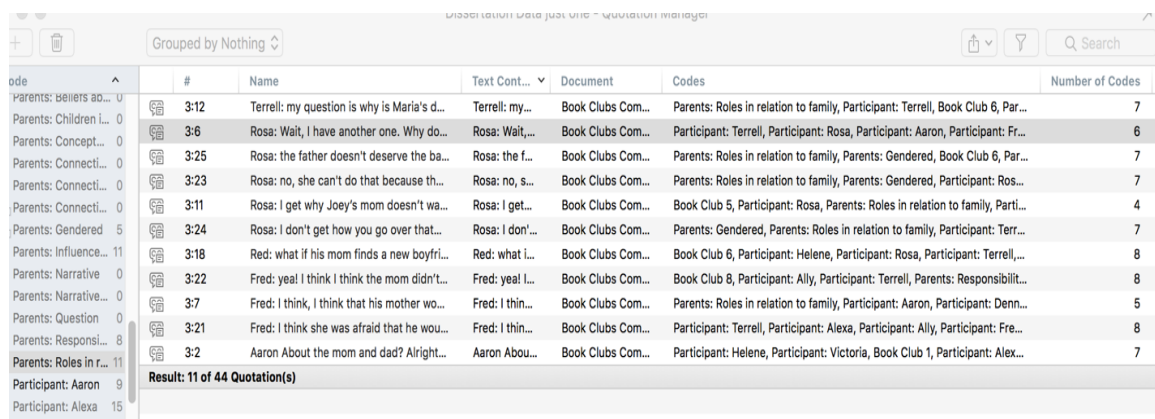
Researcher: Thank you, Aaron.

Denny: Children learn what they see from their parents. So Joey will be learning what he sees from his mom.

Red Walker: Ummm, what if his dad starts to do drinking?

While Rosa reminded Red Walker that the father doesn't live at the house, Terrell jumped in and said that Joey is going to Pittsburgh and that is where his father lives. Rosa then questioned, twice in case no one heard the first time, what would happen if Joey decided to go live with his dad. In the responses to this question, the participants discussed both bad habits and gender roles. Although these themes often intersected in the subsequent 135 lines of transcription, I discuss these topics separately.

Parental roles. As the participants continued to construct their understanding of parents as people who can model harmful, or irresponsible, behavior to their children, they also questioned why a parent behaved in a certain way and discussed proper behavior for women and mothers, as well as for men and fathers. Of the 44 quotes coded as the primary and secondary themes, one quarter were assigned to quotations, or data excerpts, exploring parental roles. Figure 4.5 is a code report from ATLAS ti (Version 1.0.43) demonstrating both the frequency in which this code was used as well as the number of other codes assigned to this quote. Because this report was generated in a later phase of analysis, it includes only codes related to themes, sub-themes, book club meeting number, and the participants involved in the discussion. The first quote in the figure, therefore, would have the code “parental roles” and the number of the book club meeting in which the discussion occurred. The other five codes would be the participants who spoke and possibly another intersecting code.



The screenshot shows the ATLAS.ti software interface with a code report. The table displays 11 quotations, each with a unique ID, a timestamp, the speaker's name, a snippet of the text, the document name, the assigned codes, and the number of codes. The interface includes a search bar at the top right and a sidebar on the left with a list of codes.

code	#	Name	Text Cont...	Document	Codes	Number of Codes
Parents: beliefs ab...	3:12	Terrell: my question is why is Maria's d...	Terrell: my...	Book Clubs Com...	Parents: Roles in relation to family, Participant: Terrell, Book Club 6, Par...	7
Parents: Children I...	3:6	Rosa: Wait, I have another one. Why do...	Rosa: Wait,...	Book Clubs Com...	Participant: Terrell, Participant: Rosa, Participant: Aaron, Participant: Fr...	6
Parents: Concept...	3:25	Rosa: the father doesn't deserve the ba...	Rosa: the f...	Book Clubs Com...	Parents: Roles in relation to family, Parents: Gendered, Book Club 6, Par...	7
Parents: Connecti...	3:23	Rosa: no, she can't do that because th...	Rosa: no, s...	Book Clubs Com...	Parents: Roles in relation to family, Parents: Gendered, Participant: Ros...	7
Parents: Connecti...	3:11	Rosa: I get why Joey's mom doesn't wa...	Rosa: I get...	Book Clubs Com...	Book Club 5, Participant: Rosa, Parents: Roles in relation to family, Parti...	4
Parents: Gendered	3:24	Rosa: I don't get how you go over that...	Rosa: I don'...	Book Clubs Com...	Parents: Gendered, Parents: Roles in relation to family, Participant: Terr...	7
Parents: Influence...	3:18	Red: what if his mom finds a new boyfri...	Red: what i...	Book Clubs Com...	Book Club 6, Participant: Helene, Participant: Rosa, Participant: Terrell,...	8
Parents: Narrative	3:22	Fred: yeah I think I think the mom didn't...	Fred: yeah I...	Book Clubs Com...	Book Club 8, Participant: Ally, Participant: Terrell, Parents: Responsibilit...	8
Parents: Narrative...	3:7	Fred: I think, I think that his mother wo...	Fred: I thin...	Book Clubs Com...	Parents: Roles in relation to family, Participant: Aaron, Participant: Denn...	5
Parents: Question	3:21	Fred: I think she was afraid that he wou...	Fred: I thin...	Book Clubs Com...	Participant: Terrell, Participant: Alexa, Participant: Ally, Participant: Fre...	8
Parents: Responsi...	3:2	Aaron About the mom and dad? Alright...	Aaron Abou...	Book Clubs Com...	Participant: Helene, Participant: Victoria, Book Club 1, Participant: Alex...	7
Parents: Roles in r...	Result: 11 of 44 Quotation(s)					
Participant: Aaron	9					
Participant: Alexa	15					

Figure 4.5. Roles of Parents..

The theme of “parental roles” and sub-theme of normative gender roles for parents began in the first book club meeting with Denny’s clarifying question about the author’s intent. The participants’ talk did not deviate from the normative concepts of biological women and men marrying to become parents. In fact, their discussion primarily used this traditional narrative as the basis for their arguments and meaning making. Alexa, the facilitator, read the bookmark. “Denny said: why does the mom chase the dad when he’s running away?” Denny corrected her, “No, I said, what does it *mean* that, uh, the mom went after the dad. Did she actually raaaannn for the dad or....” and trailed off. As a teacher, I was excited by this question because it seemed as if Denny was trying to get a mental picture of what occurred in the story. As a researcher in the initial stages of data collection, this question was interesting because it gave me a glimpse into Denny’s meaning-making process.

Victoria provided a pragmatic interpretation and replied that she thought the parents got in a fight. This, however, did not specifically answer Denny’s question. Alexa called on Aaron next, interrupting his sketching and drawing him into the conversation. Aaron decided, “it seems kind of crazy for the woman to chase the dad,” and added that it was wrong, really wrong, for families to do that. Neither one, he added, should chase the other. Terrell interjected and created a scenario in which it might be all right. “If one is crying and they just have to chase one another,” he said, “I think the dad should chase the mom.” Victoria agreed that there was something wrong “with the girl starting.”

This data excerpt provided insight into the personal textual experiences the participants brought with them to book club. In addition to the discussion not answering Denny’s question about what the author meant by “ran,” the participants challenged the

characters in the story rather than each other. They ignored the storyline in which the dad leaves the mother and her son, and in which the mother is then faced with the choice of staying with her son or following her husband. In retrospect, now that I have conducted an in-depth analysis of the participants' discussion about parents, I am surprised that the students did not bring up the fact that it was wrong for the mother to leave her child. Nor did the students note that if the dad was the one chasing the mother, it meant that the mother left her husband and child, which did not occur. Instead, the group worked to develop the idea that women should not chase men. Additionally, Terrell's comment (i.e., "If one is crying and they just have to chase one another, I think the dad should chase the mom.") provided a link a future conversation returned to regarding the same theme.

During the sixth book club meeting, the participants entered into a lengthy conversation that returned to the gendered role of parents. During this collaborative discussion, the participants created intertextual links to television pop-culture, to personal experiences, and to previous texts created in earlier discussions. The following extended transcription comes from this sixth meeting.

Terrell: Ok, so Joey goes with his dad, then he stays with his dad. What would happen if his mom came?

Rosa: Ooh, that would be fun.

Terrell: That will be fun-eee.

Rosa: No, she can't do that (angrily tosses her hair) because they're both parents.

So, he can stay. He can choose.

Terrell: I know, but the dad left him.

Rosa: Unless they got married. If they didn't get married, Joey belongs to the mom. And if they do get married, they have to fight for the child.

Red Walker: Noooo, they gotta go to the, ahhh.

Terrell: Well, that's not fair because the woman generally just has the baby.

Rosa: Yeah, I don't get it how the father gets to have the baby, but the mom did all the work.

Red Walker: Well, they go to Judge Judy, and then who=

Terrell: =Judge Judy don't do that. That's Maury.

Red Walker: Maury.

Rosa: I don't get how you go over that and sometimes the father gets to win.

Researcher: Why wouldn't the dad be the winner?

Rosa: Because the mom suffered through everything having him in the stomach.

Red Walker: And then, and then, that's how more blood from the mom...

Rosa: And she's the one who gave birth to the baby.

Researcher: So giving birth automatically means you should be the one who takes care of the child?

Participants: yesses and nos.

Rosa: The mom, if the mom wants the baby, then she gets to have it because that's fair. But if she doesn't want it, then the father gets to have it.

Terrell: No, that's not fair.

Little D: It *can* be.

Rosa: But the mom gave birth to the baby. The dad was just watching.

Terrell: That's not the fair part.

Red Walker: Eeeew!

Terrell: That's not the fair part. The mother (mumble) has the baby.

Rosa: Yeah. That's what I said.

Terrell: It's not fair because

Rosa: The father doesn't deserve the baby.

Red Walker: Huh?

Little D: My father deserves me!

Rosa: Yeah, but still. Your parents probably weren't married.

Little D: Yeah they are.

Rosa: Whatever.

Little D: Why is my mom Mrs. Little D?

Rosa: But if the mom wants him too, then the mom gets to have it. Little D.

Little D: Um. It's better because some moms, they don't care about their babies.
and they go (mumble) and stuff.

Researcher: Okay, what might make a mom not care about her baby?

Rosa: She might not want to be a mother yet, because she might not be ready. Or
she might not want to take care of a child, and live her life. Terrell?

Terrell: She should give the baby, I mean Joey to, um, the dad because she keeps
drinking and she should know.

Red Walker: What if his mom finds a new boyfriend and they start coming after
the dad for their child, well, the mom's child.

Terrell: Well, the boyfriend can't do nothing, cause they're not even related to
each other.

Red Walker: But what if they start fighting?

Little D: Uh, that was something about the mom not wanting the baby. Because uh, like some crazy, like Joey, and people might (mumble) and since my dad got out of jail, I moved in with him because my mom can't take care of me.

Researcher: So sometimes the dad can do a good job.

Rosa: But in the book, the mom cares about Joey.

Little D: Yeah, but Joey wants to go to his dad. So...

Rosa: How do you know? He's supposed to go there cause of the little brain thing.

Terrell: Well, I went through something like this before, because my mom and my dad...

Terrell continued to link to this textualized experience to describe, in detail, a fight his parents had and not only how scared he felt, but also how he perceived that his parents were each trying to win him over so that he was on their side of the argument.

This lengthy discussion contained multiple interactional units with intertextual links to a fight Terrell's parents had; to a personal story of how Little D was raised by his father, even though his parents were married and his mother lived nearby; to Judge Judy and Maury who were television celebrities who get involved with court and custody cases; to information learned in health class or from parents about childbirth; to learned information about divorce and child custody; and to texts from previous discussions. Through the use of these links, the participants supported their claims about who should be awarded custody in a situation that did not actually occur in the book.

The participants' comments sometimes addressed a particular situation in the book, at other times they addressed a generalized situation. Terrell and Rosa added

general comments: Moms suffer through pregnancy; Fathers just watch; Parents who get divorced do not handle custody in the same way as parents who have never married. Other comments were specific to our book: What if Joey wanted to live with his dad? What if the mom got a boyfriend, and she cared about him? Little D accepted the suppositions being put forth enough to claim that Joey wanted to go live with his dad, something that was never mentioned in the book—although Joey wanting to *meet* his dad was.

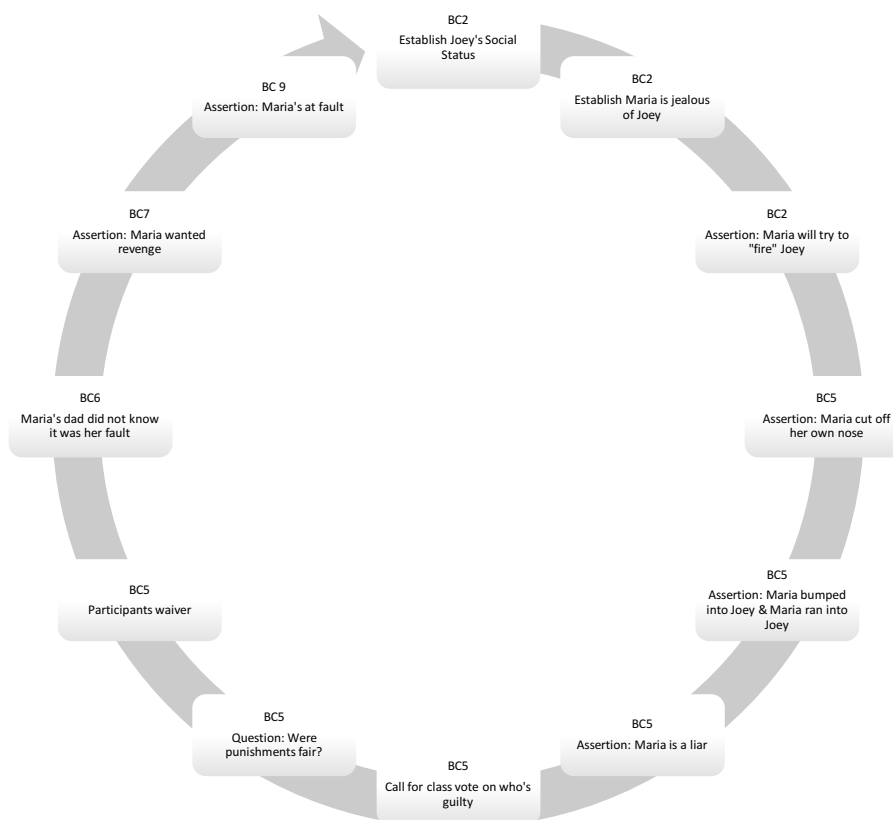
As I analyzed data from book club transcriptions that examined the meaning making undertaken by the group as they explored both the novel and potential life experiences, I noted that they consistently used intertextuality to explore parents' gender roles and responsibilities in their children's lives. In addition to the participants coming to the conclusion that parents must behave responsibly in front of their children, they also reinforced the normative gender roles for men and women. These roles were discussed both in relation to being a parent as well as just in regard to being biologically female or male.

Social Status

In addition to the two themes that gave participants many opportunities for meaning making through intertextuality, several times the participants used the book to build their own imaginary narratives. The *what if* building block that helped the participants engage in meaning making inside and outside the novel moved them from book to world. It was this *what if* foundation that allowed the students to create their own story with the underlying theme of classroom social status. This was a topic they returned to even after book club had ended and I was conducting post-interviews.

During our fourth book club meeting, the participants listened to me read a scene about Joey accidentally injuring Maria Dombrowski. This brief scene constituted what the participants repeatedly referred to as the action in the story.

Figure 4.6. Construction of Social Status



As seen in Figure 4.6, the participants began their construction of Maria early in the book club as a student who would protect her classroom social status, status established by her role as class president. Before they discussed Maria, however, they worked to determine Joey's place in the classroom. Denny first wondered if the teacher, Mrs. Maxey, liked Joey as a student. Victoria quietly suggested that she probably doesn't

because she was always telling him to—here, Fred interjected “calm down,” and then added revving sound effects. Victoria continued, “And she’s like telling him to calm down, like to do stuff like the other students.”

The students continued to place Joey in the school’s social scene as when Rosa wondered if the whole school likes Joey. This was an interesting leap, from a teacher to the entire school, but it spoke to the types of communities present in schools in which gossip and personal knowledge of other students prevail. It was also part of a three-pronged discussion that considered Joey’s social status. First, does the teacher like Joey. Second, does the whole school like Joey. Finally, how does Maria, a student with established social status, feel about Joey.

Fred and Denny responded to Rosa’s question first, drawing on their personal knowledge that students like other students who behave and who exhibit what they considered normal school behavior. Denny hesitantly suggested that the school does not like Joey because he can be crazy, and Fred, again, added sound effects: cuckoo, cuckoo. Denny said Joey can be really crazy and annoying and “his class would be able to see Ms. Maxey sending him down to the office.”

Deciding that Mrs. Maxey, and even the whole school, does not like Joey places him as an outsider and also a potential bad influence who would disrupt their learning environment. As this discussion continued, it appeared the participants thought of Joey as an underdog. His poor behavior, though disruptive, was not his fault. This viewpoint made it possible for the next text constructed by the participants to portray Joey as a victim.

After determining Joey's status in the classroom, the participants moved on to consider the relationship between Joey and Maria. This discussion is initially prompted by the scene in the book in which Joey decided he was the class pet because Mrs. Maxey gave him the busy-work task of sharpening pencils. After he caused a disturbance, he saw that Maria had written down his name in her behavior log for the teacher, and he decided that Maria was jealous of his rising status.

As the students began this investigation into their relationship, they established the text that I determined became a link for future discussions. As Hartman (1992) reminded us, "Textual utterance does not have meaning in itself but from the interplay of utterances before and after" (p. 302).

Rosa: Why does Maria get mad at Joey

Rosa: Ooh! Ooh!

Denny: Rosa

Rosa: Because he, he the teacher's Ms. Maxey is making him class pet and she likes being the class pet helping around

Fred: No, no, she's the class president

Rosa: Oh!

Fred: But she thinks...But what Joey says in the book, she thinks...he think Maria is getting jealous because he is helping the teacher and that is pretty much her job because she's class president.

Researcher: Why do you think she's jealous? What made you think that?

Fred: She wants to help the teacher and she's class president, but Joey came along and he's being the class PET, and helping the teacher.

Victoria: And she likes doing it.

In this dialogic exchange, the participants built on Joey's statement that Maria is jealous rather than considered she is annoyed that a disruptive student might be taking time from their recess. This construction was instrumental to the later discussions that revolved around what the students considered "the action" in the story.

It was significant that Rosa first picked up on the negative dynamic, at least from our protagonists' perspective, between Joey and Maria. It became clear as the book club meetings continued that Rosa was a quintessential mean girl. She drew on her experience as a student who felt the need to be popular at the expense of others to form her questions and responses each Friday morning. Throughout our meetings, I overheard her make several quiet comments such as, "I wish Victoria wasn't joining us," though of course those remarks were loud enough to hear. One morning, after I scolded Alexa for being rude to another student and we then broke into two smaller groups, Rosa commandeered the camera focused on her group and proceeded to narrate the scene before her. She called the Window Group I was with *ratchet* and made derogatory comments about most of the book club participants. In the following book club, she was the leader of the game *who do you hate and why* in which the small group of participants had to talk about each of the students in their class and say something negative about them.

During our fourth book club meeting, Joey injured Maria in what became the climax of the novel. Joey was wearing bunny slippers because he hurt his ankle on a field trip. While rushing to the back of the classroom with scissors that he was not supposed to have, he tripped. Maria Dombrowski "walked sideways across [Joey's] path like a safety patrol guard and said, 'slow down'" just as Joey tripped over the slipper's rabbit ear and

cuts the tip of Maria's nose off "with the open scissors stretched all the way out in front of me like some evil Big Bird's beak" (Gantos, 1998, p. 74). The intertextual process of understanding by linking to a previous text was owned by the participants; these fourth graders were not so much making meaning about the text as constructing meaning about their own world.

At the end of the fourth book club meeting, I mentioned Padlet as a resource for the participants to talk about the book while we were not in book club and at the beginning of the following week, I emailed Mr. Leopoldo the link to our Padlet site to share with the participants. On the morning of our fifth book club, I set up the cameras and audio recorders and put bookmarks on both sides of the combined tables. Because there were still non-participant students in the classroom, I refrained from turning on the recording devices until these students left. This particular morning, as the students enrolled in Read 180 or in an ESOL ELT filed out, the book club participants simultaneously sat down at the oval tables and started talking. I had to rush to turn on the recorders in order not to miss their animated discussion. As soon as the participants sat down, they immediately opened their computers and read the different comments posted on the Padlet website.

Figure 4.7. Padlet



Figure 4.7 Marisa = Maria's, Janice = chance, mouth= month

Over the forty-eight hours the students posted on Padlet, the participants discussed whether Joey should get suspended, get another chance, get his medicine adjusted, and whether this was really Joey's fault. It was Fred who said that he wasn't judging Joey because he should be getting a lot more help than he gets. Denny suggested that Joey has had several chances at school and should be suspended, and Little D. suggested he should go to juvenile (juvenile). Another student suggested Joey should be home-schooled

In class, Rosa asked for clarification about whether Maria is one angry at Joey; Alexa confirmed this when she stated that "Maria did not like Joey because he was the class helper." This question and response linked to texts created in the second book club meeting and provided a platform for the Joey vs. Maria phenomenon. In fact, without this link, the following comments would not make sense. It is in the combination with other

texts that create context for textual encounters to have social significance (Hartman, 1992; Pappas et al., 2003).

After Rosa established who Maria was, the following comments created a new narrative placing Maria as the instigator rather than the victim. Joey, the underdog, was now a victim. While other students whispered to each other about their Padlet posts, Alexa, Rosa and Terrell had a louder discussion.

Rosa: She probably cut off her own nose. She was like, oh, wait, Joey is right there. Let me cut off my own nose.

Alexa: She didn't let me say that first

Terrell: Joey had the scissors. Joey had the scissors the whole time

Rosa: She probably did/she probably planned it the whole time and ran into him so he

Alexa: I think she's CRAZY cause she knows= Joey was the class helper

Rosa: = she knows that Joey's =

Alexa: She cut off her own nose.

Rosa: She's suicidal

Alexa: What if Terrell cut off Ally's nose?

Victoria: He didn't cut all of the nose, he just cut the tip.

Rosa: Yea, because the girl wanted it to happen

Alexa: Wasn't it Maria?

Rosa: No, No, because she's the one who hates Joey so she probably bumped into him so he could cut off her nose.

Alexa: What if she had scissors in her pocket and cut off her nose and just threw it?

Rosa: It didn't say that

Alexa: Well, she could have

Throughout the remainder of our fifth book club, the participants continued to build on the narrative that Maria somehow set up Joey. Of the 425 exchanges in this book club meeting, 180 were specifically about Joey and Maria. My own analysis of this ongoing dialogue in which the students engaged in meaning making was that it was less about how Joey hurt Maria and more about why it occurred. In investigating the “why,” the participants constructed scenarios that fit their changing narrative. If a participant suggested that Joey cut off Maria’s nose, it was Maria’s fault for stepping in front of him when she knows what type of child he is. If the students noted that Joey had the scissors, it was Maria that bumped into him so that she could get back at him for being the class pet. If Maria wanted to be class pet, she just might have hidden the scissors in her pocket and cut off her own nose-tip and blamed Joey. As book club meetings continued, so did the construction of Maria as a villain who would not hesitate to hurt herself if it meant maintaining her status as class president.

In our 7th book club meeting, Ally called on Alexa who seemed to really enjoy this conversation and said, “I know we’re done with the Maria stuff, but why did Maria have to step in front of Joey?” Victoria raised her hand and said she knew why, and Ally called on her. “Because she wanted the attention from everybody and she wanted Joey to get in trouble.” According to the students’ book club discourse, it seemed much more likely that the participants would decide that Joey would trip on his slipper and hurt

someone than Maria would sabotage Joey and hurt herself. As they spoke, it reminded me of a traditional classroom discussion in which a teacher, in this case Alexa, would pose a question with a singular answer, and a student, Victoria, would knowingly supply the correct answer. And in this situation, the correct answer was one constructed by the participants.

Obviously there were several reasons for this construction, one of which was that it made the story more exciting. It also gave the students something to get caught up in; the drama in the book allowed them to (re)create drama in the book club. During later conversations, both when talking about what kind of book they wanted to read for their second book club book and then in reference to why they weren't engaged in discussion at the end of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) or *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012), the participants regularly repeated that they liked action in their stories.

As the conversation continued, Rosa claimed, "Most of the whole class, most of the class choose Maria because it was all her fault." She was also passively stating that most of the book club participants agreed with her. Alexa suggested, "Wait, we should do a vote. Who thinks it was Joey's fault?" Terrell said he didn't think it was either one. Rosa ignored him and asked who thought it was Maria's fault. I broke into the conversation and said that I was interested in hearing why Terrell thought it wasn't anybody's fault.

Terrell: Well, first, Joey's crazy and he's going to run

Fred: Well, Maria got

Rosa: Maria was already...

Fred: But Maria was

Terrell: You don't know that. You don't know that for sure.

Rosa: And you don't know that

Terrell: So we're both now

Alexa: She's a smart kid

Terrell: Maybe she didn't see him

?: Maybe she was planning

Denny: She saw Joey with the scissors and...she wanted to cut her nose off so she could just get attention from everyone.

Denny was typically concerned about the Alexa-Rosa frenemy situation and was frequently being pushed by the two, according to their teacher, to align herself with one of them. Her comment allowed her to continue her allegiance with both of them.

Victoria joined the Terrell bandwagon and stated that Terrell was correct. The students accepted that momentarily and wished the author wrote another book about Maria. This desire for resolution was later returned to and connected to Little D. Terrell said, "Yea, we will never know until the future and then we probably won't know." It is unclear whether Terrell was suggesting that they might get insight later in the book or if he was referring to some unknown instance. Little D added "And make a future book. Denny added, "And it will say Little D [last name] said that it was all Maria's fault. And then it's going to say: is it true or false. And then we'll tell you." Little D: "True!"

As I reflected on these collaborative discussions, I gained new insight into the concept of classroom reading. The book was merely a catalyst for ideas. The participants used the characters and conflicts to explore their own world. Their talk was less about the book and more about constructing the texts of their own lives, collectively and

independently. While this was not a new concept, it was one that suddenly made sense, as if I was thinking about it for the first time.

I also reflected on who spoke often, contributing thoughts to the discussion, and on who rarely offered up an opinion.

Participants as Readers

I have been interested in understanding how students think of themselves as readers since my time teaching in middle school classrooms and supporting students' learning. My thesis for my Educational Specialist's degree was dedicated to understanding how to support students' motivation with specific attention to reading. As a doctoral student, I engaged in research to help me understand how students identified with or formed subjectivities about being readers.

As I conducted this research, I learned that in order to identify as a particular type of person, there must be a Discourse (Gee, 1999, 2001) that allows one to see oneself as a member of this group as well as to be recognized by members of the Discourse. This is problematic with regards to reading because of the limited ways readers are discussed in school. Educators rely on the terms *good readers* or *struggling readers*, making the identifiers skill based. Other identifiers are consumption based such as *reads a lot* or *never reads*. These labels and qualifiers do not support the nuances that allow one to recognize others as similar in order to form a membership in a Discourse group.

As someone who considers herself a reader, I thought it would be easy to describe why I consider myself to have a reader identity. The only words I could think to use, however, were avid, embodied, and passionate. I decided that it was not that my identity as a reader is something I can describe using adjectives. Being a reader is a core

component of how I think of myself; is is an integral component of my sense of self built on decades of experience.

During this study, I hoped that my fourth-grade participants would share, through behaviors and discussions, how they thought of themselves as readers. The broadness of my third question, what do students share about themselves as readers, allowed me to look for themes throughout our time together. The study's design provided opportunities to collect data through observation, interviews, and artifacts collected or photographed. While observations during book club provided glimpses into how the participants interacted with the books and with each other, it was the pre-and post-interviews that provided the greatest insight. It was also from data collected from a series of occurrences not planned in the study's design, but within the bound case (Merriam, 1988), that provided me with additional significant information related to this question.

The following section of Chapter Four presents an analysis of what students shared about themselves as readers and their understandings of what it means to be a *Real Reader* (Knapp, 1998) from student interviews and from book choices. I first present themes that were present in multiple participant interviews I used to interpret how my participants thought of being a real reader and of reading and provide brief examples of each. I also discuss how the participants chose books they wanted to add to their home library, how this information was interpreted, and why this is of value.

Construction of Real Readers

Over twenty weeks and two semi structured interviews, eleven student-participants shared aspects of themselves as readers. As they listened to the books being read aloud or divided in their groups to read by themselves, I watched them read along,

fill in for me if I stopped reading for a moment, ask a question that had been asked just seconds before, and have discussions that lasted from two turns to over twenty. I saw students draw scenes from the book as I read or as they talked, a student add sound effects to the story, and students bring in classroom knowledge by constructing a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the two books we read. While I had initially had difficulty determining which student was speaking on the audio recordings, by the end of the study, I could determine who spoke based on their choice of words.

My analysis did not include the drawings the students occasionally created in their notebooks because I often did not have time as the students transitioned from book club to their class to ask if I could photograph them. Thus I did not feel that I could conduct this analysis with validity.

Fred was the student who added sound effects when I read aloud or someone commented. Cuckoo, Cuckoo was uttered when someone said that Joey Pigza was crazy. Red Walker, despite information from Mr. Leopoldo that he was reading two grade levels behind his fourth-grade enrollment, often followed along with me in the book we sometimes shared and would start reading a sentence aloud if I stopped to answer another student's question. James liked to stand more than sit, often hovering behind me or walking a few feet away to adjust the camera in order to be helpful. Ally kept her book open and followed along word for word, correcting me if I made a mistake, and Denny pulled up pictures on her computer from *Coraline: The Graphic Novel* (Gaiman, 2009) or the movie that related to a scene we were discussing at that time. When we wondered what it looked like when Coraline's other father was hiding in a basement losing his

shape, Denny already had the picture from the graphic novel pulled up on her computer screen, ready to share with us.

Although there were many opportunities to see students' active involvement in reading and discussing our books, there were also occasions to see students' lack of participation. Rosa and Alexa were two students who did not read the book once we split into small groups; they huddled together on the floor with their backs to the camera or held the books in front of their mouths while talking about alternate topics (sometimes the students forgot that there were both an audio and video recorder in the room). Terrell often joined them or left the room entirely to visit with Mr. Leopoldo when the teacher was supervising the students on Read 180. Victoria and Denny joined these three in the beginning of their split, but after four book club sessions, returned to the group with whom I worked to support several readers who needed more assistance.

James and Red Walker had an ongoing feud that, I feel, was often started by Red Walker in order to give him an opportunity to either express his frustrations or to show that he was tough. Red Walker, along with Fred and Aaron, was short for his age and because he was new to the school, did not have the established social relationships that the other participants had with each other. His comments were often reflections of what others students said or were meant to shock either me or the other students. For example, he mentioned that the father in Joey Pigza might take him to a strip club and that the mom might drink moonshine. Because James was pulled for reading support and the participants had mentioned earlier that special education was a punishment, Red Walker may have felt that by creating an argument with James would heighten his social status.

These arguments also interfered with our discussions, although when James joined the book club, they seemed to lessen.

As noted in Table 4.3, transcribed data sets, and then excerpts, from interview transcripts and from the list of books requested by the participants were used during the analytic process to respond to question three. I conducted the pre-book club interviews in the last week of September and the first week of October, 2015; school began in early August. Post book club interviews were held the first two weeks of April. During the pre-interviews, students provided similar answers about *whom* they felt was a real reader in the class. Their follow-up answer, *why* they named that particular students, however, gave room for broader consideration. Transcripts from the post-interview indicated that the participants altered whom they considered a real reader, however, the themes remained the same. Figure 4.8 provides a snapshot of the pre-and post-interview data.

Figure 4.8. Example of transcription from Pre- and Post- Interviews

Pre & Post	Is there someone in your class, besides you, who you'd say is a real reader? a. Why did you pick him/her? b. How do you think that person became a good/real reader? Post: When we met at the beginning of the year, you said that ____ was a real reader. Do you still think that? a. How come b. Are there other students who you would say are real readers?	
Aaron		Alexa. H: Alexa is a good reader? Why would you say that? A: because she's smart. She basically gets all math problems right. H: ok, what does math problems have to do with reading? A: well, uh, some books have math in them. H: (laughs) ok. very good answer Aaron. Are there other kids in the class who you would say are real readers? A: mmm, some of Alexa's friends...like Rosa, Denny and her other friends. H: what about you? A: mm, I'm pretty good. I'm smart.
Alexa	I'd have to say Ally and Rosa Because they always like to read. Are you...do you think you're a real reader? Kind of. Because I tell my dad to leave me math (pause)things because I love math more than reading. Ok. Do you think that you can be both? That you can like math and reading? Nods Ok. So, would a real reader like reading the best? Shakes head = =is that what? No. So they just have to like it. No, they, uh Ally reads good and she loves reading. Rosa loves reading too and she's really good.	H: ok., um, so when we met at the beginning of the year, you said that Ally and Rosa were real readers. so now, I was wondering if you still think that they are real readers. A: I think I'm a real reader know. I read a lot. I know how to read that well. A: and I would say that Ally and Terrell are the real readers right now. H: the real readers? and what makes you decide who is a real reader or who is not? A: well...I'm guessing Terrell because he always reads so well, I've seen him read before, Ally I've seen her read before, a lot of times, but sometimes when they read books together, they get all crazy. H: that happens. What, when you say they read well, what does that mean to you? A: It means that they read well because they're always, I'm not saying they're always on task, but they, when they tell them to read, sometimes they read Terrell doesn't do that very well, but Ally does. H: so they follow directions, it sounds like

It would not be possible to attribute changes in participants' description of who is a real reader and why to the book club meeting alone. These students continued to build relationships with each other and had an additional year of school, including library visits and book fairs as reading experiences. However, the purpose of this question was not to determine how book club changed their conception of who was a real reader, but what these conceptions were. Within the theoretical construct of social constructionism, all discourse becomes part of both the social and personal understandings of how we conceive the world (Burr, 1995). In fact, when asking the participants about who and why someone was a real reader, not one student referenced the book club.

As I repeatedly read the interview transcripts, I considered what would be in the identity kit of a Reader Discourse (Gee, 1999, 2001). I thought of a college sports-fan and decided that I would recognize members of that particular Discourse by apparel, accessories, vernacular used, knowledge of the topic, enthusiasm as witnessed by facial expressions and talk, enjoyment as specifically stated ("I love baseball!"), and attendance (as verbally mentioned) at games or television broadcasts. I was intrigued to see if there was a similar way that students recognized each other as being real readers. The three themes noted about how students described real readers, including themselves, were: visibility, academics, and affinity. Table 4.6 notes which codes were used to determine themes.

Table 4.6

Coding for Real Readers

Codes	Themes
Sees reading Sees book Always reading	Visibility
Scores Teacher praise Class participation Understands book Uses Comprehension Strategies Ability (good at it) Smart	Academics
Self-reported Interviewee reported (loves it, likes it) Quantity	Affinity

I think it is important to state, however, that these themes overlapped significantly, which is what I would expect. There is not one trait that allows you to see yourself as a particular type of person; we see ourselves as a conglomerate of qualities that allow us to slip in and out of Discourses when necessary or desired. Therefore, while I provide descriptions for each of the themes listed in Table 4.6, these descriptions are amorphous and intersecting.

Visibility. Participants discussed real readers as visible both explicitly and implicitly. For example, Denny said that Ally was a real reader because “she always reads books. She stays focused on them.” While Denny did not state that she saw Ally reading, my assumption was that she must have seen her read to state that she was always reading. Ally, when asked why she thought Terrell was a real reader said that, “I see him reading a lot.”

Only one student, Fred, offered the name of a student during the pre-interview who was not in book club as a real reader. This particular student read two grade levels below her enrolled grade and received extra support in the classroom for all of her subjects. Fred, however, decided she was a real reader because he saw her with a book whenever they went somewhere as a class and they did not have anything to do.

In Alexa's post- interview, she initially described Ally and Terrell as real readers because they read a lot, however after explaining that she has seen them both read over the course of the year, she decided to exclude Terrell and add Aaron instead. She was not limited to two students, but she stated that Terrell was more often off-task than he used to be while Aaron stayed on task until someone asked him a question. Aaron's reading was not seen in book club meetings; during our hour together he often drew in his journal. This behavior must have been witnessed elsewhere, such as in the classroom. Ally agreed with Alexa in no longer considering Terrell a real reader. Fred was a real reader because she saw him reading frequently, as was Rosa, however Terrell was not a real reader anymore because he now "likes to be on his computer."

Academics. Reasons that supported why these students were real readers also referenced being good at reading or at academics in general. Alexa, Ally, Denny, Little D, Rosa, and Victoria all implied that real readers are "good" at reading. While Alexa simply said that they are good at reading, Ally specifically mentioned Terrell was a real reader because he had a high Lexile score, Denny mentioned that the students she mentioned as real readers took notes "to know about the book," Little D said real readers were smart and the teacher complimented their reading, and Rosa said that they know what is going on in the book when they read. Victoria was said that she chose "maybe all

of them” because she could understand them when they read aloud and that they learned the words.

The theme of a real reader as having academic qualities also included class participation. As Victoria mentioned, real readers read aloud in class. They also raised their hands, (said Denny about Ally, Alexa and Fred) in order to participate in reading activities. Red Walker mentioned Alexa, Rosa, Denny, Victoria, Terrell and three other students who were not in book club tried hard when they read; they were ‘trying to read’. Aaron explained that Alexa was a good reader because she was smart; Fred noted that their one of their teachers told him and Ally that they were the two students who read the most.

Affinity. Participants also considered how someone felt about reading. This was often explained using the words like and love. Denny suggested that Ally liked reading because she did it a lot. Fred said that one of his classmates thought reading was fun. Alexa said that Rosa and Ally were real readers because they read well and loved doing it. Alexa also suggested that you have to enjoy reading more than you enjoy other subjects. She explained, in our introductory interview, that she was not a real reader because she liked math more than reading. At the end of our time together, however, she mentioned that she was a real reader now because she did it a lot as well as mentioning that she did it well.

Self-reflections. Because our book club was a membership of sorts, a group of students from Mr. Leopoldo’s class who participated in a communal activity while others were not allowed to participate, I expected to see the rules of this Discourse to be emulated by the participants. I also wondered if the terms of membership into this

Discourse would change when we revisited the topic at the end of the book club meetings. I was interested, as well, to see if they considered themselves members of this Discourse. This might reflect their participation in the weekly meetings or their participation might reflect their revisited understanding of the boundaries of membership. In retrospect, because the participants were observed during a reading activity, it would have been difficult to distinguish behaviors or speech as membership to a Discourse

I was curious whether the students each thought of themselves as a real reader, and I added this question to the post semi-structured interview. Interestingly, four students introduced themselves into the conversation before they were asked the question. Victoria did this in a contradictory way. When asked who a real reader in her class was, she initially said she wasn't sure but that she, Terrell and Alexa often read passages aloud in class. However, when asked *specifically* if that made her a real reader, she replied that she did not know. Victoria wavered. She was a real reader by her definition of reading aloud, but would not consider herself a real reader when pressed.

Alexa, Red Walker, and Terrell introduced themselves as real readers before they were asked. Red Walker did so in a manner similar to Victoria; he listed ten real readers and his name was included in the list. Alexa mentioned herself before she mentioned anyone else. "I think I'm a real reader now. I read a lot. I know how to read that well." Terrell, on the other hand, noted that he used to be a real reader but once he finished the Percy Jackson series and the other Rick Riordan books, he did not read anymore and was no longer a real reader. When I disagreed with him and pointed out that he read *Dragonball Z* and other Manga, he explained that those were for research so he could better enjoy the shows. Also interesting to note was that I often saw him reading in class

when he was supposed to doing classwork, and Mr. Leopoldo confiscated the book I purchased for him because he was reading instead of working. For Terrell, it seemed being a real reader meant reading a specific type of book and possibly only including the goal of pleasure reading.

Rosa's response was similar to Victoria's; she also explained that she wasn't sure about her own concept of herself as a real reader. She often drew instead of reading when given a choice by the teacher, she noted. She went on to explain, however, that she often shared books with other people. Aaron said he was a real reader because he was smart. Ally said she was a reader because she was always read a lot at home and at school. Fred echoed her response. He was a real reader because he read a lot at home at at school. James said he was a reader because he read 20 minutes a day with his grandmother.

Table 4.7

Book Club Members Mentioned as Real Readers

Name	Pre-Interview	Post-Interview	Post-Interview: Self
Aaron		1	Yes-I'm pretty smart
Alexa	1	5	Yes-I read a lot, I know how to read that well
Ally	5	5	Yes-I read a lot at home, in class
Denny		1	No response
Fred		4	Yes, read at home, in school
James	N/a		Yes, read 20 minutes daily
Little D		N/a	N/A
Red	N/a		Yes-I try hard
Rosa	1	3	Sometimes-but sometimes I draw

Terrell	3	3	No-there are no more books I like
Victoria		1	I don't know
Non-participants	1	3	N/a
Total	10 Book Club 1 Non B.C.	23 Book Club 3 Non B.C.	6 of 10, 1 sometimes

Note. Column one provides the pseudonym of the members of the book club. Non-participants are those who were mentioned as real readers but were not in book club. Columns two and three indicate how many times a participant was called a real reader in the pre and post interviews, respectively. For example, Alexa was called a real reader by one person in the pre-interviews and five people in the post- interviews. Column four notes if the participant called themselves a real reader and adds supporting comments.

Table 4.7 demonstrates that more than twice the number of students were noted as real readers in the post book club interview than in the pre book club interviews. While there were two more post-interviews conducted than pre-interviews, the numbers are still noteworthy. In the pre book club interview only four book club participants were noted by their peers to be real readers. The mode was one student per participant. During the post interviews, eight of the ten students chose two real readers (the mode), one student chose three, and Red chose eight.

While there are multiple reasons that could result in this increase, I considered the possibility that book club drew awareness to this Discourse. Because most of the students, six out of ten (and one “sometimes”), noted that they were real readers, they considered themselves members of this Discourse. Their reasons for inclusion aligned with their reasons given as to why other classmates were also considered real readers.

Based on the participants’ responses, to be recognized as a member of a Reader Discourse, or conversely, to attempt to join this Discourse, you visibly read and paid attention to what you were reading. You understood what you read and you read aloud

fluently. You were also smart and had been recognized as a ‘good’ reader by a teacher or a score. You also enjoyed reading.

Book Choices

An unexpected series of events occurred from the eighth book club until we ended our time together. The book group read *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) for eight weeks with a party of muffins and juice in the ninth book club when they were finished. During book club six, I asked the participants what they wanted to read for their second book. I had made it known at the beginning of the book club that they would get to choose the second book. As the students started to call out a few books, the very first being *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012) suggested by Denny, I reminded them that the book needed to be something the whole group would enjoy. *SuperFudge* (Blume, 1980) was the second book and I began to realize I should have handled this differently. I mentioned that the students could suggest a book they had not read before. Fred and another student mentioned three additional books; *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (Rowling, 1999), *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief* (Riordan, 2010), *Dragonball Z* (Toriyama, 2003), and “something by Roald Dahl” were also mentioned. I told them that I would leave the titles up during book group and that we would discuss them before we left.

As the students discussed *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998), I came to the conclusion that the students would benefit from additional choices, that it was possible they did not have the ability to call books to mind that the group would enjoy instead of a book they alone liked. I also considered the idea that the students may not have known how to choose books they wanted to read without a selection in front of them. The latter consideration was not correct as I later learned. I told the participants

that we would hold off from voting until a future book club. I purchased the books the students mentioned, *Matilda* (1988) being the book by Roald Dahl, and also got suggestions from booksellers at Barnes and Noble and the local independent bookstore. I purchased six additional books for the students to consider: *Zarf: The Trouble with Weasels* (Harrell, 2014), *Long Walk to Water* (Park, 2010), *Amulet Book 1* (Kibuishi, 2008), *The Unwanteds* (McMann, 2012), *Land of Stories: The Wishing Spell* (Colfer, 2012), and *Gregor the Overlander* (Collins, 2004).

In the ninth book club, I presented book talks on each of the books and after, I passed the books around and the students began noting which books they wanted. I reminded them that we were going to choose a book for book club first. Students voted on the book for book club and before I even was able to count the votes, Little D said, “We’re probably doing *Coraline*.” *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012) got seven of ten votes. What I did not know at the time was that many of the students chose the book, in part, because they knew the story. Additionally, while Denny was not a student with high social status, her choice was one of the shortest books, and it was also a book that had a movie. This showed me that not only were students willing to reread books, but that positive associations with books, such as seeing the movie, can drive their choices.

Analyzing the participants’ choices of the books they would like to own provided a wealth of information. Once I opened the door to saying I would allow them to keep these books, and purchase duplicates if more than one student wanted one, I was able to purchase more books for the participants’ home libraries, and at the same time learn how these fourth graders decided what books they wanted to own. I will here note that I also

purchased books for students who were not in our book club, but who were in Mr. Leopoldo's inclusion classroom.

Williams (2008) reminded us that a significant number of students, especially those from low socioeconomic households, use classroom and school libraries as their access to books. It is, therefore, important that teachers determine what types of reading materials students are interested in. Research investigating the book selections of students is important in order to provide insight into which texts students would select when choice is available.

Because this data set was very small, it was not necessary to engage in all the steps of thematic analysis. In other words, I did not need to dissect and reconstruct the data to see if the codes remained applicable, and then determine if there were themes that joined the codes together. I was able to look at what books they requested, the notes I made in my field journal after the participants shared why they chose the book, and at other connections that might be present. I examined each title and asked myself the following questions: did the student explicitly mention why they wanted this book, did other students in the book club have the book, and where might the participants have learned about the book?

Table 4.8

Book Request Themes


Theme	Explanation	Number
Book Talk	Books that were shared with the participants through book talks; books were suggested by students or chosen by researcher.	18 books
Multi-Student Requests	More than one participant requested this book either	15 books

	at the same time or after seeing a copy of the book.	
Pop-Culture Connections	Books could be connected to a television show, game, movie, YouTube or had another pop-culture connection.	23 books
Previous Connections	Participants mentioned they liked an author or series, book had been recommended by someone, participant knew the topic.	22 books

Note: Books could fall under more than one theme

I purchased 53 books for the participants in addition to *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998) and *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012). Some of these books were part of a series, such as *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008) or *League of Seven* (Gratz, 2015). Some were bound as one book but contained multiple volumes, such as *Pokemon Adventures* (Kusaka, 2009). I determined that four primary themes, as seen in Table 4.8, provided information about why the participants may have chosen the books they did. For instance, I noted Suzanne Collins, author of *The Hunger Games*, wrote one of the books, and that *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988) was also a movie. Based on the students' comments and my answers used to categorize the books, I created a simple table with several themes. The table in its entirety can be found as Appendix E; a snapshot of this table can be seen as figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9. Snapshot of Appendix E



Participant	Book	Description for Request	Codes
Aaron	<u>Pokemon 1-3</u>	Terrell reading it, Manga becoming popular in class, television show, game	Book Talk Pop Culture Multi-Student
Aaron	Amulet Series	Terrell, Ally, Fred, and Denny reading it	Book Talk Multi-Student
Alexa	Any Dan <u>Guttman</u> Book	Likes the author	Previous Connection
Alexa	Jungle Book	Requested because of movie; did not purchase	Pop Culture
Alexa	Long Walk To Water	Book Talk; pre-interview comment that she liked to read about African Americans & when slavery stopped	Book Talk Previous Connection
Alexa	Life of Zarf	Book Talk	Book Talk
Alexa	Nerdy <u>Nummies</u>	<u>Youtube</u> Series, cooks with family/Rosa got it also	Pop Culture Multi-Student
Alexa	Self Help by Miranda Sings	<u>Youtube</u> Series/ Rosa got it also	Pop Culture Multi-Student

While the initial round of books students requested were chosen because they were discussed during book club, *Gregor* and *the Land of Stories* also had multi-media connections that were mentioned during book club. *Gregor* was written by Suzanne Collins. *The Land of Stories* was partially written by Chris Colfer, an actor on the television show *Glee*. This trend of the participants requesting books connected to different types of media and popular culture was notable. It spoke to the influence different forms of media have on children and children's desire to further engage with popular culture. Upon close examination of each student's titles, I also noted many asked for the same books requested by other members of book club and asked for books whose authors they knew either because of a series (i.e., Lemony Snickett) or because the author had written several books (i.e., Roald Dahl).

I asked some, but not all, students why they wanted a particular book. This query was not part of my original research design. Not until I began asking what books they wanted did I consider the implications of their requests. Many students mentioned why they wanted a book while they were requesting it; I also asked several students for their reasons, and in the case of some students I made assumptions based on what I knew of the student and the context. For example, a student who was not a participant wanted a book on John Cena. When he received that book, a friend of his asked for a book on Drake. I could make the assumption that because the Drake book was on the back of the John Cena book, the first student had shown him his new book and the student saw a book he was interested in.

One such assumption was that the participants requested books because other students requested them or spoke highly of them. For example, Aaron requested a Pokemon book although he said he had not read Manga before. Terrell, a social leader in the class, had referenced them repeatedly during book club. Rosa, Terrell's friend, requested a Pokemon book "like the one you got the guys," so I can assume that she saw other students reading them and possibly looked at one herself. By the end of book club, I had purchased five Manga books for the book club participants and donated 20 other Manga books to Mr. Leopoldo's classroom.

Amulet (Kibuishi, 2008) had similar connections. I originally talked about this graphic novel in book club, and two students, Ally and Terrell, requested a copy. Because it is part of a series, I bought the first two and gave one to Ally and one to Terrell and asked them to share. While Ally was not high on the social ladder, she was "dating"

Terrell and was considered to be a real reader by five students. By the end of our book club, four students were reading through the series.

It is not necessarily the case that additional students chose to read the *Amulet* series because Ally and Terrell wanted to read them. However, it is within the realm of possibility that the two students who were considered real readers influenced others by talking about the books, reading the books in class, and passing them around.

A similar theme, and not an unexpected one, was that students requested books because they were already familiar with the author. Alexa said she liked Dan Guttman books during our initial interview; it was not surprising that she would request a book by this author. A student was also familiar with R.L. Stine and requested *Goosebumps* books. The *Magic Tree House* (Osborne) books as well as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney) books, both books with multiple connected texts, were also requested.

The most interesting and unexpected theme was the number and diversity of books requested with a connection to another form of popular culture. Rosa and Alexa were the first to request books after I distributed the original set of book talk books. Both students wanted a copy of *Nerdy Nummies* (Pasino, 2015) and *Self Help* by Miranda Sings (2015). While I recognize that I am not familiar with all the titles of elementary and middle grades books, I had just spent several hours in bookstores looking for books for the book club. I had never heard of either of these books, and yet the two participants were excitedly asking me for copies. Of course, I needed to learn more about the books these participants were so excited about. I learned that both of the books were developed from YouTube shows. When I went to Barnes and Noble to look at the *Miranda Sings* book, I learned that this was an extremely popular book among girls in this age group.

The bookseller's daughter had just gotten a copy. Upon further investigation, I learned that *Miranda Sings* is a fictional character who hosts a YouTube show and had written a book (and just received her own Netflix series). Her channel has over seven million YouTube subscribers and over a billion views. *Nerdy Nummies*, a cooking show that brings in science when talking about the recipes, was created from a YouTube series that had over 248 videos with just under 30,000,000 views. The creator, Rosanna Pansino, has over 7 million subscribers.

Other books were also requested because they were part of a media franchise, a considerably larger one. Whereas *Self Help* and *Nerdy Nummies* were based on short YouTube shows that grew into pop culture phenomenons, Dragonball Z and Pokemon were international franchises that included video games, collectibles, and television shows, in addition to the *Manga* series. These books have been part of the culture of student reading for the eight years I taught; their popularity seems to continue to grow and feed off the many other *Manga* series populating bookstore shelves.

Students also requested books connected to movies and current television shows. *Paper Towns* (Green, 2008), *Jungle Book* (Kipling, 1894) (which I did not purchase), *Goosebumps: Slappy's Revenge* (Stine, 2015), a *Star Wars The Force Awakens* (Logge, 2016) chapter book, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Double Down* (Kinney, 2016) *The Big Book of Paw Patrol* (n.a., 2014) (for a younger brother) and *Life of Pi* (Martel, 2003) (which I refused to purchase) were all requested books related to popular movies and television shows. While *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Goosebumps* may have been asked for even without the multi-media connections, it is unlikely that fourth graders would have

requested *Paper Towns*, *Jungle Book* and *Life of Pi* without the student's knowledge of movies.

This type of intertextuality between different modes of communication and entertainment is notable. Although this is not a new occurrence—I remember purchasing the *Cat from Outer Space* (Key, 1978) in the 1970s because it was a movie—this does seem to be a more significant path now than formerly for individuals to learn about what they might want to read. When I take young children to the bookstore, the books they immediately want to purchase are related to media franchises (e.g., Dori, Ninja Turtle, Lego, Batman, etc.). While these young children are engaging in a different book-choice process, it is creating a pattern that may continue to influence them in years to come. Alexa, in her pre-interview, even mentioned that she and her parents chose books because they had seen the movie.

These findings were echoed those by Williams (2008) who worked with 293 participants between the ages of eight and twelve. Her participants were school identified as Black and qualified for the free and reduced school lunch program. Williams noted that “multicultural education theorists” (p. 60) often suggest that marginalized students should have access to mirror books, books that reflect the students racially, ethnically and/or culturally. Williams found, however, that her participants choose books that provided further access to their interests and experiences. She suggested, therefore, that teachers should provide “access to books that are representative of everyday culture interests” (p. 60). This includes books that reflect students' involvement with popular culture and to books with which students already have an emotional connection. My

results build on Williams's and suggest that students additionally seek out books that their peers are reading.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Researcher: Ok, um, do you think your reading has changed from the beginning of the year or that book club has changed anything about your reading?

Ally: It make me want to read more

Researcher: Ok, how come?

Ally: Because now I noticed that book club wasn't just a fun experiment for us, it was also something to make us want to read.

I began this study with selfish excitement. I conceived and designed it to gain insight into what could occur when a group of fourth graders were allowed to engage in student-driven discussions around books. *Allowed* is a charged word, but one important for this study. Based on *a posteriori* knowledge, I knew that it is the rare public-school classroom that provides opportunities for students to engage in dialogic inquiry about the books they read.

If students benefit from experiential learning, shouldn't educators also benefit? If teachers want to learn, as I did, about how students make meaning about the texts they read, and how they think about being *a reader*, shouldn't they participate in the activity? While there is scholarly research on the meaning-making process (Zittoun & Brinkman, 2012), observing and participating in this process with the students gave me the context necessary for my own meaning making and learning.

I grew up surrounded by books. I was read to, I had bookshelves in my room, I observed my parents and grandparents reading, and I spent quite a bit of time walking up and down the shelves of public libraries. I cannot remember a time when I couldn't read. I am sure there was a process involved, but I remember reading what are now called chapter books when I was in the first grade. I worked in four different bookstores before I became a teacher. My favorite days were when the new books arrived.

I share this information to stress that although I had a strong passion for reading and sharing books, I didn't understand how children interacted with books and reading when they weren't being taught. Brevig (2006) stated that talk is vital in "developing a working knowledge of stories" and the perceptions children "construct of a text evolve over time as they transact with the text and one another" (p. 522). As a teacher I did not have the opportunity to witness children talking about their perceptions of books. Over the course of this study I wondered how such transactions would translate into meaning making about the books we read.

As I said in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to investigate what could occur when a group of fourth-grade students were given the space to discuss the books they read during an in-school book club. More specifically, I wanted to examine students' discussions to determine how and why they collectively engaged in a meaning making process as well as to determine if they shared aspects of themselves as readers during our time together. Using data from group discussions, observational notes, and interviews, I was able to better understand how students used intertextuality in understand the books we read. The intertextual links provided a bridge from previous texts and textualized experiences to the current discussions, adding new information to

how they view their world. These links were omni-directional. That is, they came from many students' experiences to build connections and understand different themes important to the readers.

Based on the findings discussed in Chapter Four, I offer suggestions for the classroom as well as for future research. I also note the significance these findings have for me and my future work. I share the challenges encountered during this study and how they affected components of the study's design and data collection.

It is valuable to note the specific findings of this case study are not meant to be generalized across different settings or groups. A tenet of qualitative research and social constructionism is that context cannot be repeated. If the participants in this study were to discuss these books again, their discussions or their reasons for choosing various books would not be repeated. Regardless, the implications discussed in this chapter can provide educators, who are working in the classroom and engaged in research, with insights for their own practice.

Classroom Implications

Implications for teachers and teacher educators are discussed with regards to instructional practices and considering students as readers. My research focused on students, their dialogic interactions, what they chose to talk about and their stated beliefs about readers. I hesitate to focus on the implications this study has for the classroom by alluding to teachers' planning and instruction; I would prefer to speak to the implications for the students in the classroom. I address this hesitation by noting that while a dynamic is inherent in classrooms, those who hold more power are charged with disseminating it. I

found educators can facilitate students' opportunities to be involved in their own meaning making, and doing so have powerful repercussions for students as well as teachers.

Space for Dialogue

Political influences weave their tarnished threads throughout our educational system. Teacher bias, language, funding, school choice, banning teaching materials, and even bathroom use—all are topics that indicate the ties between federal and state influences and the classrooms. There, children are learning both subject matter and how to be citizens of their local and extended communities.

As I write this, the federal government is poised for the possibility of even greater political involvement in our educational system. The agenda of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos suggests further industrialization of American education. She has been an aggressive advocate for funding charter schools at the expense of public schools, and has shown a resistance to educational reform (Strauss, 2016).

van Manen (2008) noted current tactics for teaching are apt to be “based on models and agendas that do not necessarily reflect the experiential priorities of the classroom” (p. 5). These agendas are based on current results-driven perspectives that are accountability based (van Manen, 2008). If competition increases for the same pot of funds and if this competition includes measurable performance by students and teachers, one can foresee that qualified educators will continue to face pressure to standardize their curriculum and teaching methods. The insights from this study, therefore, come at an opportune time.

A recent study by Stufft, Abrams, and Gerber (2016) shows adolescents involved in a young adults' literature (YAL) book club frequently referenced the texts of their

video games when talking about their books. The authors suggested student-led book groups “serve as a catalyst” for layering different literacies from their lives as part of their learning. This supports critical understandings of the books they read as well as additional topics or situations in their lives. The authors noted that as the participants engaged in discussion about books, they participated in learning that was relevant personally and that they moved “above and beyond the content of a particular book” (p. 97).

Findings from this study suggest that when students engage in student-driven talk about the books they read, they collaboratively discuss topics that are relevant to their lives. “In responding to literature or in constructing literary texts, students are constructing text worlds based on their read world social experiences” noted Beach and Phinney (1998, p. 159). When students are given space to wonder about, question, contemplate, and connect to texts, they draw on their own textualized experiences to move beyond the book itself and toward interpreting and constructing the world around them. This “learning as meaning making” suggests that learning involves establishing “a meaningful relation to the subject matter so that it makes sense to the learner” (Zittoun & Brinkman, 2012, p. 1809). In turn, the dialogue that supports understanding of those subjects is also constructing how the group will later reference these topics.

This suggests that student-driven discussion about books can result in a meaningful investigation of ideas. It also implies that as students collaboratively build these understandings, they are determining how they view the world. This is essential for new ideologies and ideas to enter our sociocultural interactions.

I have suggested that student-driven discussion can support students' exploration into topics that reflect their personal experiences. Such discussion can also move beyond the domain of the language arts classroom and support the learning of content specific information. Varelas, Pieper, Arsenault, Pappas, and Keblawe-Shamah (2014) recently studied third-grade Latinx students who were given opportunities to listen to science texts and engage in "related hands-on explorations" (p. 1246). Their findings showed children "dialogically shared read-alouds of children's literature science books" as tools for meaning making through questioning, reasoning, and narratives (p. 1246). Findings from my study also suggest that as students participated in discussion about books, they also interacted with the Georgia Standards of Excellence and did so in personally relevant ways. For example, participants created Venn Diagrams comparing and contrasting characters. They drew interpretations of scenes in the story, especially *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2012), and they used data from the books to support their comments. Student-driven discussions provide students with the potential to practice and understand the concepts behind the standards during authentic exploration of texts.

Additional classroom implications include how educators can, or should, become involved in student discussions. As Maloch (2002) suggested, both teachers and students need to recognize that their roles will require a transition from normative classroom discourse patterns. During student-led discussions, teachers become more facilitators than leaders and students need to learn how to build sustainable conversations.

My research supported Maloch's (2002) findings. As seen in several of the transcribed discussions in Chapter Four, I found it helpful to either suggest the facilitator ask if other students wanted to contribute after one participant had spoken. Participants

relied on a normative classroom pattern of asking and answering questions in which a question is asked, typically by the teacher, one student answers, and that ends the discussion. While classroom teachers provide an evaluation or feedback to the student answering the question to complete the IRE/IRF model, my participants primarily skipped this last step and asked another question or called on another participant to do so.

Maloch (2002) pointed out that students need to learn how to build sustainable conversations. This was taken into consideration when I observed my participants' discussions. When pauses in discussions seemed to suggest the participants were not building on previous comments, I occasionally modeled this skill by asking a question that furthered the discussion and prompted the participants to explore the question on a more critical level. I also found it necessary to ensure that all students who wanted to speak were able to do so and were not ignored by the facilitators, either purposefully or accidentally. Additionally, I found that I could not expect students to actively participate in book club discussions if unsupervised. When students perceived they were not being observed, despite the camera recording them, they took the opportunity to play games or have long conversations not related to the book we read.

Reader Discourse

As I sat down with the participants before and after our book club meetings, I used semi-structured interviews to better understand how students thought of what it meant to be a real reader. In addition to being interviewed, students also shared aspects of themselves as readers through their book choices. Findings suggested that students use academic qualities, visibility, and statements of affinity to determine who was a real reader in their class; the same qualities were used to discuss themselves as real readers.

To choose books, students drew on pop-culture, previous knowledge about authors and books, direct exposure to books through talking about books, and information about what their peers were reading.

My curiosity about how, or if, students think about themselves as readers is longstanding. Theories on motivation suggest that if one sees oneself *as something*, such as a reader, soccer player, or video gamer, that person's motivation increases in that domain (Shahar, Henrich, Blatt, Ryan & Little, 2003). Gee's (1999, 2001) concept of Discourse reflects a similar idea; to belong to a Discourse, one must see oneself as and be seen as a particular type of person. This "being seen" does not come from training. It comes from a type of apprenticeship that arises from interacting with those who already belong to the Discourse. Maintaining membership in this Discourse requires continuously accessing and producing the identity kit of that discourse.

Complicating the concept of a Reader Discourse is the idea that language relations "of privilege and power are sustained" (Gergen, 2011, p. 112). In schools, the teachers' language is privileged over the students'. If we construct ourselves in relation to others, students will integrate teachers' concepts of being a real reader into their own. Schools are places of categorizations and labels; these come from the top down and become integrated into our socially constructed understandings of how we think of children as students. Terms such as struggling reader, disaffected reader, delayed reader, and striving reader accompany terms such as avid reader, good reader, or even *a reader* (Hall, 2005). These social constructions of students as readers make it difficult for students to consider themselves as anything but good or struggling.

This study shows that students drew on observations, peer discourse, and teacher discourse to explain why they called themselves or someone else a real reader. Academic reasons such as test scores, teacher praise, class participation, and “being smart” were referenced repeatedly when discussing why someone was a real reader. This suggests the strong role educators play in how students see themselves and others in relation to reading.

Leigh Hall noted “there is a dichotomy in how [teachers and students] understand reading in school” (personal communication, March 18, 2015, para 2). She continued by noting the way students make decisions about texts connects back to identity (her term), including a reading identity, but she cautions teachers to be wary of trying to shape students’ decisions about what a reader identity is. Thus, when one is considering the implications of the educational influence on students for how they think about themselves, as well as how others consider them, it is important to remember the role school has in this process. “Students’ reading identities are grounded in their experiences with reading in school, and it is through empowering students to determine what they value about reading and to become part of their growth as readers” (Hall, 2016, p. 77). In doing so, teachers create a space for “students to work on what they valued,” that provides new ways to think of themselves as readers (p. 76).

When my participants referenced teacher comments and actions with regards to being a real reader, they stated that the teacher called on specific students, praised students, and that teachers explicitly stated peers were good readers. This recognition produces “a positive sense of self” that occurs within relationships, in this case between teachers and students. (van Manen, 2008, p. 5). It can also result in feelings of bias or

inferiority by those not receiving recognition. This further suggests the important role that teachers can play in supporting students as they construct their ideas of who real readers are and whether they are included in this Discourse. The implication, therefore, is that educators and curriculum influence how students think of themselves and their peers in relation to what it means to be a reader. This can be disrupted, suggested Hall (2016) through involving students in deciding how they value reading in relation to themselves.

Additional implications stem from the findings indicating how students participate in choosing books. Real readers, said the participants, are seen reading and enjoy it. Gambrell (2011) wrote that access to a wide range of reading materials and choice in reading materials are powerful ways to promote reading engagement. Therefore, the findings of this study imply that when students are given the opportunity to choose books, in my case for ownership, they draw from a multitude of aspects from their lives. My participants drew from pop-culture, personal connections to books (one participant chose *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein because he used to own it and lost it) and what they see their peers reading. Student interests, therefore, should be considered broadly to include how a student involves themselves in their communities and cultures.

Implication for Future Research

As I engaged in data collection and the process of thematic analysis, I found myself developing more questions. Additionally, there were several challenges that occurred prior to and during data collection that altered the original design and, subsequently, influenced both how data were collected and my level of participation in each book club meeting. With this in mind, I suggest two implications for future research.

I believe that two different study designs would provide additional information on student meaning making in group discussions about books. Wells (2015) stated that “learning involves an active engagement with the world outside the self” and individuals “learn mainly through actively engaging in situation-related dialogue with other[s]” (p. 65). Wells worked with a group of teachers in the Developing Inquiring Communities in Education Project (DICEP) who determined that there were several circumstances necessary for this dialogue to occur in classrooms. The first condition was that “the topic under discussion must already be, or progressively become, of interest to the participants” (Wells, 2015, p. 84). The second condition was that individual students must be able to share what they feel is important or applicable to the topic. With this in mind, I suggest that research on multiple book clubs occurring simultaneously in a classroom or across classrooms in different grades would provide insight into what students found interesting and important to discuss. This could lead to a better understanding of how students are interacting with the world and how they bring their understandings of the world into the classroom. Such understandings can have implications for how teachers make instructional choices, how they support students’ knowledge they bring to the classroom community, and how they can support students’ connection building as they construct new ways to understand their communities.

Secondly, I suggest adding a component to the study’s design that moves beyond the walls of the classroom and into the homes of the students. In Childress and Friedkins’ 2012 study investigating the social construction of meaning in book clubs, they noted that “readers are nested in local communities in which they collectively work to evaluate and makes sense of texts” (p. 51). Texts, as defined by Bloome and Egan-

Robertson (1993) are both physical texts as found in books and the texts created through discussions and experiences. Observing students discussing the books and book club meetings with their parents or guardians and family members could provide insight into the intersection between home and school in reference to constructed understandings and shaping of local communities. This suggests implications for strengthening the relationship between schools and communities as well as understanding the knowledge constructed in each influence the other. Our best learning is done in communities and these communities are strongest when the community members negotiate understanding and work together to answer questions (Brevig, 2006).

While I did not intend to learn about book ownership as I designed this study, I cannot ignore the impact that offering to purchase books had on the participants as well as on the students who were not participants but were in Mr. Leopoldo's class. Additional research into the relationship between owning books and feeling like a real reader (Knapp, 1998) would be of value; current research on book ownership primarily examines future success and ongoing education.

Evans, Kelley, Sikora, and Treiman, (2010) conducted a comprehensive study in 27 nations and with over 73,000 individuals. These authors analyzed data from the World Inequality Study that combines data from large international projects. The authors only analyzed the surveys that included a question about the size of home libraries. The findings suggested that "home library size has a very substantial effect on educational attainment" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 197). For example, children in homes with a library of 500 books are likely to have 3.2 more years in an educational institution than a child growing up in a home with few or no books. Because of the large and diverse sample

size of the study, Evans et al. (2010) were able to take into account other variables that may also have influenced their findings.

Clark and Poulton (2011) published findings from their study of 18,000 individuals between the ages of eight and 17 years old. The online survey in their study included a question about owning books. A summary of their findings indicated that, when compared to peers who did not own books, those who did read longer and more frequently. They read other materials in addition to physical books and they had more positive attitudes toward reading. The authors admitted that they did not investigate the causality of this relationship; children who enjoy reading may own books because they enjoy reading, or children may enjoy reading because they own books. However, they did state that “young people who don’t have their own books were three times more likely than those who do have book of their own to say that they don’t enjoy reading at all” (Clark & Poulton, 2011, p. 8).

I feel, therefore, that additional research on book choice as a means to book ownership would be valuable. Current research generally examines discrepancies in book ownership of households of varying socioeconomic status. Clarke, Woodley, Lewis, and the National Literacy Trust (2011) used information from an expansive survey to determine that there is a correlation between book ownership and educational, work, and economic “success.” Tadesse and Washington (2013) explained that book ownership led to increased reading enjoyment and improved classroom learning. These are important concepts that strengthen one’s argument for children to have ongoing access to reading materials, possibly on an E-reader or a physical book, to be more accomplished. Williams

(2008) also found specific patterns that demonstrated why students chose books and where they learned about them.

What seems to be missing in the research are studies that examine whether owning books allowed or encouraged children to feel like they belonged to a Reader Discourse or community of readers. Studies that looked for differences and similarities between owning paper books versus E-books would also be interesting. Finally, a phenomenological study examining the lived experience of owning reading material might provide insight into how book ownership impacts individuals.

For Myself and Future Work

I began my doctoral program stating that my goal was to become an expert in reading education while working with primary and secondary school students. I appreciate now the restraint my advisors showed when explaining that this was much too broad a topic to become an expert in and that a more reasonable goal was to feel confident in the knowledge I gained through the doctoral process. At that time, I was also a full time middle school teacher who primarily worked with special education students as well as other students who, for a multitude of reasons, needed extra support in the language arts classroom. If this were still the case, the implications of this study would be very different from what they are for me today.

As a public school educator, the information I have learned from this study would lead me to creating more opportunities for student led discussion in the classroom and for learning more about what qualities my students thought of when they thought of being a real reader. I would create opportunities for sharing this information through

professional development and attempt to gain permission to hold an after school book club.

Currently, however, my future path suggests that I will be working with members of the community and potentially working educators and future educators in the field of reading and language arts. Based on what I have learned, my goal will therefore be to work with smaller community groups to host clubs that read and discuss multimodal texts. This study used books as the texts because of my firm belief that owning books supports a feeling of membership in the Discourse of Reader. However, all texts can provide a base for collaborative and cooperative discussion that leads to strengthening communities and engaging in meaning making about their worlds.

If the opportunity to work with educators or future educators presents itself, the findings of this study would be used in two distinct ways. First, I would use group discussions to allow students to learn from each other and this information would be then discussed as a class. This mirrors the Book Club format put forth by the Teachers Learning Collaborative. This would model ways of supporting learning in their own classrooms as well as empower the students with their own learning. I would also discuss the concepts of Discourse groups and that learning how students think of readers could suggest how to support a student's self-concept of being a reader.

Challenges

I hesitate to use the traditional dissertation term *limitations* because I cannot be sure that many of the challenges I faced during this study limited it. As the study's design was changed or I found myself wearing more hats than expected, I navigated the new challenge and moved onward. This is what teachers do; this is what researchers do.

These challenges changed my study; I do not know if my findings would have been different without them. However, I recognize that there were challenges that I had to face and that if future researchers can learn from my experiences, they can plan for these situations as they design their study.

The challenges most salient to this study were those that altered the study's initial design. The original design was planned with the fourth-grade teacher, Mr. Leopoldo, once we had obtained permission from his principal. We based our plans the teacher's prior teaching experience at Benton Elementary, however during the span of time from the study's design to its implementation, Mr. Leopoldo's responsibilities and schedule changed. These changes, in turn, influenced how the teacher interacted with the book club. In the original design, book club meetings were to be held during his Friday language arts classes with all of his students participating. It would be a class activity; groups would be created that reflected who had turned in signed permission slips and were allowed to be participants. After the school year began, the principal asked that we use ELT time and only invite the students in Mr. Leopoldo's ELT class. This limited the heterogeneous mix of the book club to primarily members who were at the independent level for fourth-grade texts, with the exception of the one student who was removed and the two students who joined after the study began. Additionally, the original design called for participants to be placed into groups of approximately eight members. Each group would be supervised by an adult: me, Mr. Leopoldo, and the special education teacher. Due to the previously mentioned changes, Mr. Leopoldo and I decided to work with the group of ten students as one group with both of us present. The special education teacher

was required to supervise students who participated in the Read 180 program. This added two challenges to the study. The first was in setting, the second in supervision.

While the study began in the larger general education classroom with both Mr. Leopoldo and myself present, the teacher began spending less time with the book club in order to support the special education teacher. As the only adult in the room, I had to assume the role of classroom manager in addition to that of researcher role of participant observer. As a result, participants were either poorly supervised or I missed nuances in the discussions that I had to later observe on video recordings. This also had the potential to change how the students saw my role in the classroom because I took on a more hierarchical role in the classroom.

An additional challenge occurred when the book club was required to move into the smaller special education classroom. The special education teacher preferred that the set-up of her room remain the same, thus we did not combine the two smaller sets of desks into a design better suited for whole group discussion. I believe this change in combination with Mr. Leopoldo's lack of presence contributed to this growing division in the book club's structure.

A final challenge was that the school changed how fourth-grade was structured and students began to switch classes for some of their different content areas. While the original school schedule called for language arts to follow ELT, the new schedule had science and math directly after ELT. Mr. Leopoldo's ELT students left his classroom to go to another teacher's room. After this course, the students had "specials" (i.e., music, art, physical education) and then lunch. In the original study design, I was able to remain in the classroom and supervise the class during their language arts class; when the

students had to switch classes, this was no longer possible. The teacher felt my presence for an extended period of time would be a distraction to the students and thus I was only able to observe three language arts classes prior to the book club's first meeting in which all students were present and Mr. Leopoldo led the class.

I also posed a significant challenge to my study. I struggled to straddle the line between participant and observer, when to be a less visible presence and when to be a teacher figure and interrupt poor classroom behavior. I struggled with determining when to remain true to my primary research question, what happens when a group of fourth-grade students are given space to discuss books, and when to stop off task behavior. The deciding factor for this issue fell to what I understood to be the expectations of the administration and teacher; Mr. Leopoldo and I had to hold a meeting with the students to discuss inappropriate behavior. My time, or lack thereof, also posed a problem halfway through the study, the same time the off task behavior was especially problematic. During this time, I chaired a conference. The transcription of each book club meeting, or two if we divided into groups, often took six to eight hours. During the month of the conference, I was unable to do all transcriptions and therefore did not notice the extreme nature of the off-task behavior. Thus the off-task behavior Rosa led as she commandeered the camera and talked the others in her group to play games went on for three weeks before we addressed the situation that should have been halted immediately.

Conclusion

I conclude this dissertation with appreciation to the scholars I have encountered in person and through all the research that has been completed on book clubs, meaning making and Discourses, as well as those that used social constructionism, thematic

analysis and intertextuality. The articles and books published in these areas afforded me the knowledge to weave these threads into my own study. As previously stated, book club research has typically used a social constructivist lens in order to focus on the growth of individual learners or a critical lens to examine how students explore their own subjectivities through discussion of books they've read. This study looks at book clubs and how student run discussion groups contribute to ways students make meaning about topics that are relevant to them. It also looks at how this knowledge, seen through intertextuality, contributes to a group's social construction of these topics.

In turn, I hope that my own work will add to how similar group discussions of elementary aged readers can add to how we understand students' meaning making processes, the topics that they find worthy enough to explore in relation to their own lives, and new ways to consider how students think of themselves and others in relation to books and reading.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Record of Data Collection

Date	BC	Recording Times	Participants	notes	
10/09/15	1	31.04 (recorder 1) 31.04 (recorder 2)		Primarily audio	No video Time: 31.04
10/16/15	2	55.58 (R1) 55.58 (R2)		audio	Video: 14.17 Time: 55.58
10/23/15	3	55.30 (R1) 55.31 (R2)		audio	Video: 12 min Time: 55.31
10/28/15	4	33.27 (4a)Video 11.56 (4b) V 56.57 (R1) 56.57 (R2)	Fred, Denny, Victoria, Little D, Terrell, Aaron, Alexa, Ally, Rosa	audio	Time: 56.57
11/06/15	5	1.05 (R1) 1.05.12 (R2) 29.22 V 1.26 V	Little D, Denny, Alexa, Ally, Victoria, Fred, Aaron, Terrell, Rosa	audio	1.05
11/13/15	6	59.50 V 20.14 V	Denny, Ally, Victoria, Terrell, Little D, Aaron, Rosa, Red, Alexa	New room	79.64 min
12/04/15	7	33.27 (7a)V 20.15 (7b)V 54.03 (7c)V 56.35 A1 52.51 A2	Ally, Victoria, Alexa, Terrell, Aaron (door group) Little D, Fred, Rosa, Denny, Fred	Split into groups	54.03+ 16.02 (when groups split)= 70.05

			(window)		
12/11/15	8	44.17 (gr1) A 44.02 (gr2) A			44.17
12/16/15	9	23.45 (V1) 23.46 (V2) 12.31 (V3) 1.02.48 A1 52.30 A2	Whole group	Last one with <i>Joey Pigza</i> .	Time: 60.
01/08/16	10	33.27 (1a)V 22.47 (1b)V 33.26 (2a)V 27.29 (2b)V 1.05.13 A1 1.04.58 A2		Whole group	Time: 55.71
01/15/16	11	33.27 (a)V 33.26 (b)V 1.25 (c)V 33.25 (d)V 30.31 (e)V 1.21.06 A1 1.16.31 A2	(Red, Denny, Victoria, Fred, Alexa (facilitator), James) (Absent: Aaron)	Chapters 2, 3 Breaks into small groups with 30 min. left, but other group little disc. ASSIGN NAMES	Spelling Bee: Rosa, Terrell, Ally 1.16.00 min
01/22/16	12	23.45 (105)V 23.46 (106)V 17.00 (107)V 23.45 (286)V 23.45 (287)V 18.58 (288)V 1.00.24 A1 1.05.00 A2	Terrell, Rosa, Alexa, Denny (door group) Aaron, Victoria, James, Red, Ally (window group)	Chapter 4 Split after 9.04 ASSIGN NAMES	60. + 50 = 111.00 min
01/29/16	13	23.45 (13a)V 23.45 (13b)V 4.38 (13c)V 23.46(13d)V 23.46 (13e)V 9.56 (13f)V 56.44 A1 31.34 A2	Rosa, Alexa, Terrell, Denny, Victoria (door group) James, Red, Aaron, Ally, (window group) Fred Abent	Breaks into group at 10.38 Ratchet, going rogue	56.44 + 46.02 = 102.46 min
02/05/16	14	23.46 (14a)V	Victoria, Rosa,	Split at 8	120

		23.46 (14b)V 23.46 (14c)V 3.19 (14.d)V 23.46 (14e)V 23.47 (14.f)V 23.28 (14g)V 39.45 A1a 11.11 A1b A2	Alexa, Denny, Terrell (Door) Fred, James, Ally, Aaron, Red (Door)	min Who do we hate?	minutes
02/12/16	15	23. 46 (15a)V 23.46 (15b)V 23.46 (15c)V 23.47 (15d)V .54 (15e)V 1.13.41 A1 54.22 A2a 14.30 A2b	Terrell, Victoria, Alexa, Rosa (door) Denny, James, Fred, Ally, Aaron, Red (Window)	Looking at books Split at 8.48 NOTE: the recorder was turned off door group. Not all transcribed	54 + 45 = 109 minutes
02/19/16	16	23.46 (128)V 23.45 (129)V 22.34 (130)V 23.46 (305)V 23.46 (306)V 23.46 (307)V 6.10 (308)V 1.07.39 A1 1.13.49 A2	Terrell, Rosa, Alexa, Victoria (Door) Ally, Denny, Fred, Aaron, Red, James	Terrell gets audio book; girls talk; break off after 11 minutes	59 + 1.07= 119. minutes
02/26/16	17	23.46 (131)V 23.46 (132)V 23.46 (133)V 3.32 (134)V 23.46 (309)V 23.46 (310)V 22.01 (311) 1.10.36 A1 1.08.17 A2	Rosa, Victoria, Terrell in and out (Door) Alexa, Aaron, James, Ally, Denny, Fred, Red	Whole group (except for 2 girls)	1.08.17
03/04/16	18	33.27 (431)V 22.58 (432)V 23.46 (315)V 23.46 (316)V 5.48 (317)V 55.83 A1 44.15 A2	James, Aaron, Denny, Red, Rosa, Alexa, Victoria (absent: Fred, Terrell part time)	Back to whole group	55.83

3/18/16	19	33.27 (171)V 28.47 (172)V 59.51 (95)V 1.52 (96)V 1.01.22 A1 1.01.09 A2	James, Red, Ally, Rosa, Alexa, Victoria, Terrell, Denny, Fred) (no Aaron	Whole group, gen ed room	Count half of time: 61.03 minutes total
3/22/16	20	59.51 (97)V 4.49 (98)V 32.49 (183)V 33.27 (184)V 1.03.39 A1 1.03.05 A2	Rosa, Alexa, Denny, Victoria, Terrell, Aaron, Ally, James, Red (no Fred)	Whole Group	Count half of time: 64 minutes
		Bookmarks/post-its			
		Cards to Gantos			
		Books ordered for students			
		Pictures of board, journals			
		Screen pics			
		Padlet & excel padlet			
		Intro interviews			
		Final interviews			

Appendix B

Observation and Data Collection Protocol

There will be two types of observations conducted as part of this study: small group observations and whole class observations.

Small Group Observation: These observations will include only the members of my book club group participants while they are meeting in the book club. I will be a participant observer during this time because I will provide contributions to the discussion and will assist students' group facilitation. This group will be audio-recorded on two devices: a MP3 audio recorder and a Live Scribe Pen. Notes will be taken with the Live Scribe Pen or, if necessary, a pen and paper. These note will be later used for unstructured debriefing interviews and for detailed notes of the book club meetings.

Whole Class Observation: **This observation will occur during whole group** discussion of the book. No audio-recording will occur during this time. While I will be observing the whole class, I will only be taking notes on behaviors and discussion from my book club members. If my book club members respond to another student, I will write the general comment without identifying the student.

Example: *Male student* noted that he liked the mother (in the book) because she came back to take care of her son.

Sonia (pseudonym of student in my group): replied that father left for a month but now he was back. She crossed her arms when she said this and her face tightened.

Potential analysis: Sonia responded to a male student in the class when he brought up the main character's mother. Sonia does not initiate comments, but frequently responds to others through a connecting comment. She has mentioned her father repeatedly and crosses her arms when doing so.

Data Collection: While incidental data such as non-identifiable comments may be included in observation notes, it will not be analyzed nor linked to a specific student. In addition, I will conduct unstructured interviews with educators to assess how the study affects their classroom. These notes will not be analyzed, but because participant permission will have been granted, the notes may be used in descriptions of the study.

For example, the special education teacher may note that some of his or her students are not able to finish the allocated book and spoke to her about it. If these special education students were in my book group, I would include this data as part of the description of my group, but this information would not be analyzed to answer the research question.

The following data will be collected and used for data analysis:

1. Small group observation notes
 2. Whole Class observation notes
 3. Small group recordings for transcription
 4. Bookmarks with student pseudonym
 5. Notes from unstructured interviews with students
 6. Copies of journal entries from the journals of my book club group participants
 7. Screen Shots or Cut-and-Paste retrieval of data posted on book club website.
- Incidental data may be included from non book club group members. Names from this website will be blacked over using a word document software and only student participants from my book group will have their names replaced by

pseudonyms. The other blacked-out names will remain hidden. These original files will be deleted from the computer (if screen-shot; cut-and-paste documents will be saved under the same name so that the original file is replaced).

Appendix C

Research Matrix

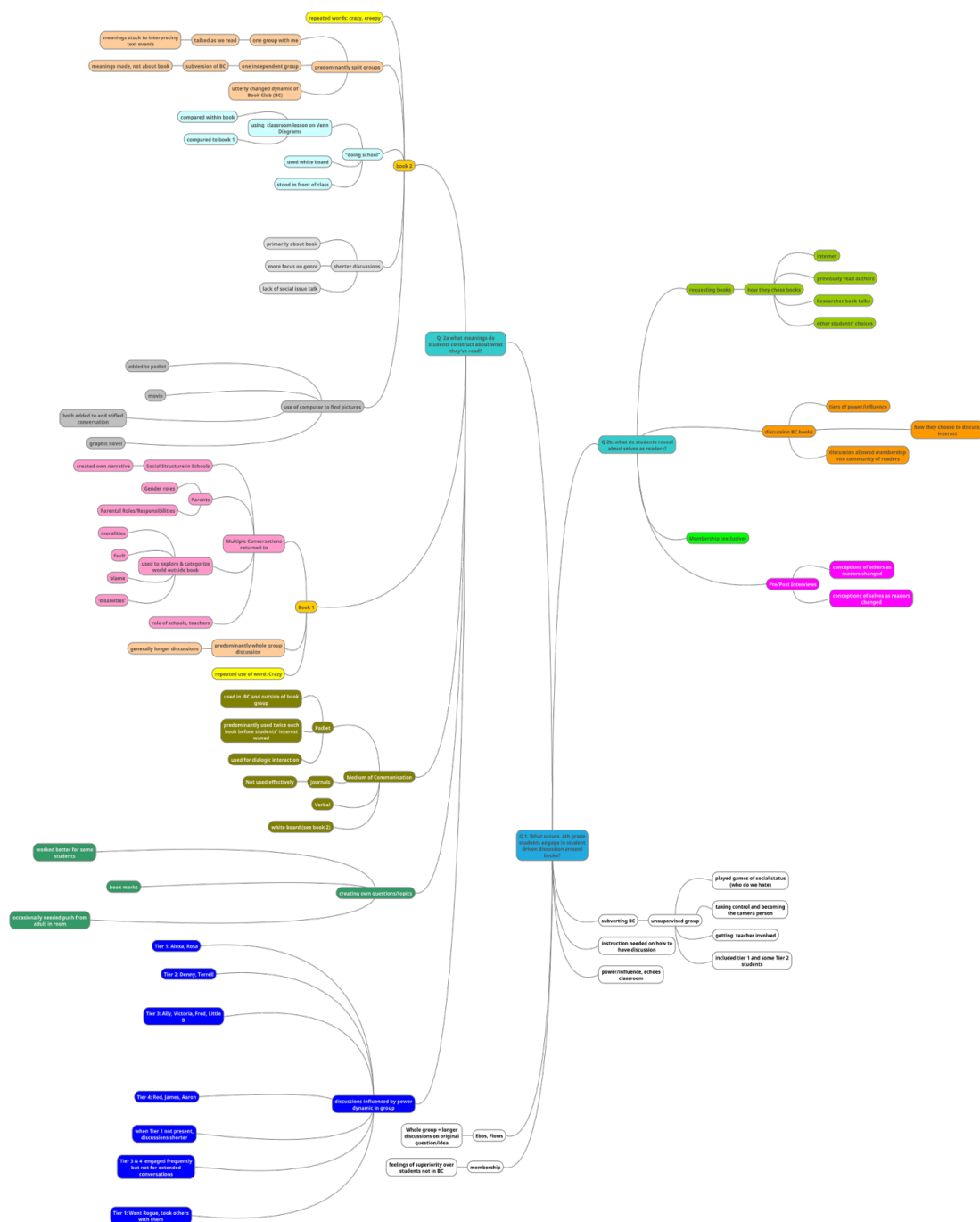
Research Question	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis Method
Primary Question What happens as a group of 4 th grade students in a small southeastern county engage in student driven discussion around books?	1. Field notes from book club meetings 2. Pre and Post interviews (transcribed) 3. Audio and video recordings (transcribed) 4. Bookmarks and other participant created artifacts 5. Padlet screen shots and exported excel files	<p><i>As this is the primary question, the findings will include, but not be limited to, the findings from the Secondary Questions</i></p> <p><i>Inductive & interpretive</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) with coding of book club transcriptions-use Microsoft Word and ATLAS Ti 2. Memos and written narratives or expository text to develop holistic understanding from secondary questions
Secondary Question (1) What meanings do students construct about what they have read?	1. Field notes from book club meetings 2. Pre and Post interviews (transcribed) 3. Audio and Video Recordings (transcribed and returning to actual audio and videos) 4. Participant artifacts 5. Padlet screen shots and exported excel files	<p><i>Inductive & interpretive</i></p> <p>Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) with coding and theme development stages (Word, ATLAS Ti)</p> <p><u>First Order</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coding in Microsoft Word: transcriptions of book club meetings, padlet data in spreadsheet, pre and post interviews 2. Written interpretation of field notes in order to note occurrences chronologically <p><u>Second Order</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Code in ATLAS Ti 2. Examine coded data and identify themes 3. Engage in cognitive mapping to

		<p>expand or narrow themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Look for what isn't being seen Develop hypothesis Return to data to test hypothesis (repeat and refine) Potential: Discourse Analysis (Gee, 1999, 2001) and/or MASS and Building Tasks(Gee & Green, 1998). MASS = Material, activity, semiotic, & sociocultural aspects) once themes have been decided) <p><u>Ongoing</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Examine thematic data with eye to symbolic interactionism Written interpretation of field notes with specificity to meaning construction, Develop written narrative for reliability & return to thematic analysis (iterative)
<p>Secondary Research Question (2) What do students share about themselves as readers?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Field notes from book club meetings 2. Pre and Post interviews (transcribed) 3. Audio and Video recordings (transcribed) 4. Participant artifacts 5. Padlet screen shots and exported excel files 6. List of books students requested and received 	<p><i>Inductive & interpretive</i></p> <p>Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) with coding and theme development stages (Word, ATLAS Ti)</p> <p><u>First Order</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Coding in Microsoft Word: transcriptions of book club meetings, padlet data in spreadsheet, pre and post interviews Written interpretation of field notes in order to note occurrences chronologically <p><u>Second Order</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Code in ATLAS Ti Examine coded data and identify themes Engage in cognitive mapping to expand or narrow themes Look for what isn't being seen Develop hypothesis Return to data to test hypothesis (repeat and refine) Potential: Discourse Analysis (Gee, 1999, 2001) and/or MASS and Building Tasks(Gee & Green, 1998). MASS = Material, activity, semiotic, & sociocultural aspects) once themes have been decided) <p><u>Ongoing</u></p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Examine thematic data with eye to symbolic interactionism, positioning and performance (see Gee's Discourse)2. Potential: Discourse Analysis (Gee, 1999, 2001)3. Written interpretation of field notes with specificity to subjectivity4. Develop written narrative for reliability & return to thematic analysis (iterative)5. Create narrative descriptions of participants
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Appendix D

Tree Map Analysis



Appendix E

Book Requests Coded

Participant	Book	Description for Request	Codes/Themes
Aaron	Pokemon 1-3	Terrell reading it, Manga becoming popular in class, television show, game	Book Talk Pop Culture Multi-Student
Aaron	Amulet Series	Terrell, Ally, Fred, and Denny reading it	Book Talk Multi-Student
Alexa	Any Dan Guttman Book	Likes the author	Previous Connection
Alexa	Jungle Book	Requested because of movie; did not purchase	Pop Culture
Alexa	Long Walk To Water	Book Talk; pre-interview comment that she liked to read about African Americans & when slavery stopped	Book Talk Previous Connection
Alexa	Life of Zarf	Book Talk	Book Talk
Alexa	Nerdy Nummies	Youtube Series, cooks with family/Rosa got it also	Pop Culture Multi-Student
Alexa	Self Help by Miranda Sings	Youtube Series/ Rosa got it also	Pop Culture Multi-Student
Alexa	Gregor the Overlander	Book Talk; by Suzanne Collins (Hunger Games Connection)	Book Talk Pop Culture
Ally	Amulet Series	Book Talk; Terrell also wanted it at the same time	Book Talk Multi-Student
Ally	Anything by R.L Stine	Likes author	Previous Connection
Denny	Graveyard Book	Likes author (student who suggested <i>Coraline</i>)	Previous Connection
Denny	Matilda	Book Talk	Book Talk
Denny	Dork Diaries	Likes series	Previous Connection
Denny	Land of Stories	Book Talk; author is Chris Colfer of Glee	Book Talk Pop Culture Multi-Student

Denny	Amulet	Book Talk, Terrell, Alexa, Aaron, Fred reading it	Book Talk Multi-Student
Denny	Self Help by Miranda Sings	Youtube Series; Alexa and Rosa got it	Pop Culture Multi-Student
Denny	Diary of a Wimpy Kid (latest)	For brother; series; movies	Pop Culture
Fred	Science Book	Likes subject	Previous Connection
Fred	Amulet 4	Book Talk, Terrell, Alexa reading it	Book Talk Multi-Student
Fred	League of Seven 1-3	Gave him one copy, he requested the 2 nd and 3 rd	Book Talk Previous Connection
Fred	I am not Joey Pigza	Series	Previous Connection
Fred	Unwants	Book Talk	Book Talk
James	The Giving Tree	Previously owned; connection to family	Previous Connection
James	Magic Tree House #3, #5	Series	Previous Connection
James	Diary of a Wimpy Kid	Series, Movies	Pop Culture Previous Connection Multi-Student
Little D	Double Fudge	Book Talk; liked author	Book Talk Previous Connection
Red	Diary of a Wimpy Kid	Series; movie	Pop Culture Previous Connection Multi-Student
Red	"Basketball Book"	Liked Topic	Previous Connection
Rosa	Goosebumps (with Slappy)	Series, Movie	Pop Culture Previous Connection
Rosa	Pokemon 1-3	book Talk, Terrell had it; television show, games	Book Talk Pop Culture Multi-Student
Rosa	Self Help by Miranda Sings	Youtube Series/Alexa got it also	Pop Culture Multi-Student
Rosa	Nerdy Nummies	Youtube Series/Alexa got it also	Pop Culture Multi-Student

Rosa	Key that Swallowed Joey Pigza	Series	Previous Connection
Rosa	Paper Town	Movie; recommended by aunt	Pop Culture Previous Connection
Rosa	Force Awakens (chapter book)	Movie	Pop Culture
Rosa	Land of Stories	Book Talk; author was on Glee	Book Talk Pop Culture Multi-Student
Rosa	Life of Pi	Movie; would not purchase	Pop Culture Previous Connection
Terrell	Pokemon 1-3, 4-6	Series, shows, games	Book Talk Pop Culture Multi-Student Previous Connection
Terrell	Dragon Ball Z	Series, shows, games	Pop Culture Previous Connection
Victoria	Paw Patrol	For brother, television	Pop Culture
Victoria	Paper Town	Friend owns it; movie	Pop Culture Previous Connection
Victoria	Book on Horses (For Horse Crazy Girls)	Likes topic	Previous Connection
Victoria	Book on girls (Express Yourself)	Likes topic	Previous Connection

Appendix F

Protocol for Establishing and Maintaining Student Confidentiality

Informing Students of the Study: Once IRB permission is granted, the researcher will explain the details of the study to the students. This process is detailed in Appendix H. At this time they will also receive two permission forms in Spanish or English to take home to their parents or guardians. Students will be asked to return one copy of the form to their general education teacher within three days.

Informing Parents and Guardians of the Study: Parents and guardians will receive two copies of the letter that explains the study and has a place for a signature. Parents will be asked to sign both copies and return one with the student if they grant permission for their child to participate in the study. After three days, parents and guardians who have not returned the slip will be contacted by phone. If phone contact is not possible, an email will be sent or a note will be sent home with the student. The phone call will serve to check in with parents and guardians to see if there are any questions about the study. The researcher will also whether the parent needs another permission form and will offer to mail it with a return, stamped envelope.

Student Assent: Students whose parents or guardians sign and return the permission form will be asked if they are willing to participate in the study. They will be given a student assent form to sign if they agree.

Confidentiality: All students, regardless of participation, will be asked to come up with their own pseudonym (a term that will be explained to the students). This will be done so that students do not know who is participating and who is not. Students will be given a note-card on the first day literacy event and will be asked to write their name and a pseudonym on the notecard. The researcher will collect the notecards and enter the information into table before shredding the notecards. The table will note who is able to be a participant, determined by the signed permission and assent forms. This sheet will be printed and saved in a locked file cabinet. The table be saved onto a portable flash drive and then deleted from the researcher's hard drive. The portable flash drive will be kept in the locked file cabinet.

Groups: Groups will be formed with input from the classroom teachers. They will be created after permission forms and assent forms have been signed and returned. Only students who have permission to participate in the study will be placed in the researcher's group. If this group needs to change, only students who have permission to participate will be added to the researcher's group.

Observational Notes: Observational notes will be taken during the literacy events. Specifically, the researcher will take notes during her book group meeting and during whole class discussion. It is during whole class discussion that the maintaining confidentiality could become problematic because not all students may have permission to participate in the study. For this reason, only pseudonyms of students who are in the researcher's groups will be recorded during class discussion. Comments from other students will note gender and the comment. For example: a female student mentioned that her brother gets in trouble at school like Joey. Marcus (pseudonym) added that he used to get in trouble a lot also.

Recording: Audio recordings will be created using two devices. An audio recorder that generates mp3 recordings will be used to generate transcriptions. A Live Scribe Pen will also be used to take notes during book club meetings. In order to maintain confidentiality, audio will not be recorded during whole group discussions or during unstructured interviews.

Photographs: The researcher will only take photographs of the students in her group. These photographs will be used to generate rich descriptions of her participants and book group discussions.

Appendix G

Protocol for Conducting Literacy Events

Definition: Literacy events include all of the events on a specific day that are connected through reading, writing, and discussion of text. Components of a literacy event include:

- The researcher reading aloud pages of the story predetermined for that day.
- Students and educators participating in a book club meeting.
- Students and educators writing in their journals at the end of a book club meeting.
- Students and educators deciding what to contribute to a whole-class discussion.
- The whole-class discussion.
- Unstructured debriefing interviews with participants.

Time and Location: Literacy events will be held on Fridays, and the time will be coordinated with the classroom teachers once public school classes begin. The book club portion of the literacy events will be held in the general education classroom and, potentially, a resource classroom. A resource classroom may be used in order to reduce the noise level in the general education classroom.

Rescheduling: Public schools often have school-wide events, periods of testing, or holidays that occur on Fridays. Literacy events will be rescheduled in coordination with the classroom teachers on a case-by-case basis prior to the original date. When advanced notice is provided, rescheduling will occur prior to the date of the original literacy event.

Explaining Literacy Events to Students: Once IRB approval has been granted, the researcher will share that the class will be participating in a book club. The researcher will share the following information with the student-participants:

- The class will be participating in book club meetings.
- The teachers will divide the students into groups that will remain the same for the year. Each group will have a teacher or the researcher join them.
- The title of the first book we are reading together and that they can help choose the second book.
- That they have time during the week to read their book, which will stay in the classroom, and that they will write the questions and thoughts about the book on a bookmark. They will be asked to read “to a certain spot” in the book each week.
- That the researcher will also read the book to them on Fridays.
- After the first meeting, the students will facilitate the groups. The term facilitate will be explained.
- The students will also get a journal to write in after the meetings.
- The students can share their ideas about the book on Google Classroom (or the program chosen).
- That each group will share something about the book to the whole class.

- That each student gets to pick a pseudonym (the term will be explained).
- That only students who return the forms will be in the study, but that all the students will be in the book club meetings.
- That even if their parents agree that they can be in the study, they can change their minds later. I will also explain that the students do not have to participate in the study even if their parents say they are allowed to.

In addition, the teachers participate in a mock book club meeting to model what students can expect.

Schedule:

2 minutes: Students gather into their assigned reading area (i.e., rug, floor, desks).

1 minute: Students are reminded of behavioral expectations. These expectations include classroom expectations as well as: raising your hand before speaking, staying seated, and writing ideas and questions onto bookmarks.

25 minutes: Researcher reads aloud designated pages. Students will have already independently read the story to this point.

2 minutes: Students gather into their discussion groups.

1 minute: The student facilitator will collect bookmarks in a basket.

20 minutes: The student facilitator will lead discussion about the book.

3 minutes: The students in each group will decide one thing about the book they discussed that they want to share with the class. This will be written down on a notecard. The facilitator will share with the class.

10 minutes: The students will write in their journals before they return to the whole class discussion.

2 minutes: Students receive their new bookmarks as they transition back to whole class seating.

10 minutes: The student facilitators share what their groups discussed and the class may add to conversation.

Total Time: Approximately 76-80 minutes per literacy event, not including unstructured interviews.

Data Collection: Observational notes will be taken using a Live Scribe Pen on the discourse during researcher's book group meeting. These notes will be used for detailed notes to be constructed after literacy events as well as for unstructured debriefing interviews with students and educators. Observational notes will also be taken during the whole class discussion. The researchers will only take notes on what the members of her group say, except when noting a comment made in response to another student. In this case, the notes would include the gender of a student and the topic of the original comment. For example: male student discussed liking that Joey's grandmother took care of him while his mother was gone. Sophia (pseudonym) replied that her grandmother also took care of her when her mother was in the hospital.

Artifacts: Examples of student work will be kept by the researcher. These artifacts include bookmarks, journal entries (from researcher's group), screen shots or copy-and-paste comments from online comments (from researcher's group).

Appendix H
 Assent Script/Form for Participation in Research
 Fourth Graders' Subjectivities as Readers in a Book Club

I am doing a research study to understand how children like you think about yourselves as readers. I am asking you to be part of this study because you are in a class that will have a book club meeting on Fridays. When you read and talk about books, you share information about what you think about reading and what you think about the books we are reading.

This will be helpful for teachers because when they plan, they can think about their students' ideas about reading. This will make them better teachers and might help students who don't like to read change their minds and enjoy reading.

You do not have to say "yes" if you don't want to. No one, including your parents, will be mad at you if you say "no" now or if you change your mind later. We have also asked your parent's permission to do this. Even if your parent says "yes," you can still say "no." Remember, you can ask us to stop at any time. Your grades in school will not be affected whether you say "yes" or "no."

If you do say yes, the information I learn will be part of a study called a dissertation. This study will be shared with your teachers and with my professors. However, we will use pseudonyms (which are fake names) so no one will know the information you share is yours.

You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can email Helene Halstead at heleneh@uga.edu

Name of Child: _____ **Parental Permission on File:** ☐
 Yes ☐ No

(For Written Assent) Signing here means that you have read this paper or had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign.

Signature of Child: _____ **Date:** _____

(For Verbal Assent) Indicate Child's Voluntary Response to Participation: ☐ Yes
☐ No

Signature of Researcher: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix I
Parent Study Description



August 28, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

My name is Helene Halstead and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia. I also taught language arts at Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School in Clarke County for six years and at Jefferson City Middle School for two years.

This year I will be volunteering in Mr. Ravenell's class on most Fridays. On Fridays, Mr. Ravenell's class will hold book club meetings. I would like to work with approximately 6 to 8 students during book club meetings to learn how fourth grade students work together to develop an understanding of what they read and of themselves as readers.

While all students in Mr. Ravenell's class will read the books I give to the class and talk about what they've read in small book club groups, I will collect information only on the students in my group. These six to eight students will be chosen from those who return signed permission forms to the class. These students will not have any extra work, but they will be in my book club group.

The following information will be collected from members of my book club group only:

- I will record on an MP3 player what the students in my group say during our Friday meetings. This information will then be typed and stored on my computer.

- I will take notes about what the students in my group say about the book in book group meetings.
- I will take notes about what the students from my group say about the book during whole class discussions about the book. These discussions will follow the book club group meetings.
- I will make copies of the book club journals of my book club group members.
- I will take screen shots of online posts about the book on the website Mr. Ravenell and I create for the students.
- I will keep the bookmarks that the students from my book club group use in order to write questions and ideas about the book.
- I will take pictures of my book club group to remind me about the events during this time.

All the students' information will be kept confidential and private. Students will be allowed to choose a "fake" name that I will use to identify them. The information linking them to this pseudonym (fake name) will be kept locked in a file cabinet at my home.

Even if you do not wish your child to participate in my study, they will be allowed to keep the books they read. Of course it will not hurt their grade or class standing if they do not participate.

Please take time to read the permission slips I am sending home with your child. One is the Clarke County Photo Consent Form. There will be two copies of the second form. This form gives you more information about the study and a place for you to sign. If you agree to let your child participate, please sign both copies and return one with your child (and the photo consent form)—return the ones with the happy faces on them. Please return them by _____. You can change your mind at any time and remove them from my book club group if you would like.

You may also contact me at 706-372-8455 or heleneh@uga.edu if you have questions.

Helene Halstead, Ed.S.

Appendix J

IRB Approval



Phone 706-542-3199

Office of the Vice President for Research
Institutional Review Board

Fax 706-542-3660

APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

September 15, 2015

Dear Donna Alvermann:

On 9/15/2015, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	What do Fourth-Grade Students Reveal About Themselves through Participation in an In-Class Book Club?
Investigator:	Donna Alvermann
IRB ID:	STUDY00002372
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

The IRB approved the protocol from 9/15/2015 to 9/14/2016 inclusive. Before 9/14/2016 or within 30 days of study closure, whichever is earlier, you are to submit a continuing review with required explanations. You can submit a continuing review by navigating to the active study and clicking Create Modification / CR.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 9/14/2016, approval of this study expires on that date.

To document consent, use the consent documents that were approved and stamped by the IRB. Go to the Documents tab to download them.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Larry Nackerud, Ph.D.
University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board Chairperson