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Teacher Perceptions of Junior High Student Reading Motivation When Using Authentic Audiences

Cynthia Wise Jones
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education

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Cynthia Wise Jones

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Teacher Perceptions of Junior High Student Reading Motivation When Using
Authentic Audiences

by

Cynthia Wise Jones

MA Ed, University of Phoenix, 2009

BA, University of Texas Pan American, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Education

Walden University

May 2021

APA 7th Edition

Abstract

Reading achievement at the junior high level continues to be a concern in the United States and research has indicated that decreased reading motivation is one possible reason. Researchers have established that the use of authentic audiences leads to increased motivation and achievement at the elementary, high school, and college levels but have yet to demonstrate the same findings at the junior high level. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness of junior high students. The conceptual framework for this study included Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory and Siemens's theory of connectivism. The research questions asked how teachers described authentic audiences and what influence teachers perceived authentic audiences had on student motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness. The purposeful sample included 12 junior high reading teachers with more than 2 years of experience at the junior high school level. Qualitative data were collected from semi structured interviews. Content analysis was used to analyze the data for codes, categories, and themes. Key results indicate that teachers perceive authentic audiences are an innovative teaching strategy and have a positive influence on junior high students' motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness. One teacher reported no change in student motivation. The implications for positive social change include an improvement in the declining state of reading achievement and motivation at the junior high level by sharing strategies for using an authentic audience such as FlipGrid, YouTube, blogs, and connections with professionals in related fields.

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Dedication

To my father, Jim Wise, whose faith in me made this journey successful. To him I was Oscar, Heifer, Suki, his change-of-life-baby, his pride and joy. In his eyes, I could do no wrong, and in mine he was perfect. I would never have taken on this challenge were it not for a pivotal moment in 1980. I was in first grade and struggling in school. After multiple tests, I was diagnosed with “severe” dyslexia. At the meeting where my first-grade teacher informed my parents of this, she added, “It is so sad. Cindy will never be able to go to college, but she is sweet and pretty, and a man will marry her and take care of her.” I was sitting in the back of the room, and I remember being sad, because I wanted to be smart and go to college. Daddy, on the other hand, was not sad. He ended that meeting immediately by standing up, grabbing my mama’s hand and mine, and emphatically telling that teacher, “My Suki can do ANYTHING that she puts her mind to.” In the car on the way home he told me not to listen to that and to never let anyone tell me I can’t do something.

He was almost 50 when I was born, so the fear of not seeing me grow up was a constant in his life. He often talked to me about what he prayed for every night. The first prayer I remember him telling me about was that he’d live long enough to see me turn 16. After that, the prayer changed to see me graduate from high school. Next, he prayed to see me graduate from college. The next prayer was to see me graduate with my master’s degree, but God called him home before he could see that. I believe that if he had lived, his next prayer would have been to see me get this Ph.D. I hope you’re looking down, Daddy, and I pray you see that you were right.

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To the amazing professors and students at Walden who joined me on this journey and to my friends and family, thank you for your encouragement, celebrations, and love.

To my Peanut, Morgan, thank you for supporting, encouraging, and believing in me even when it took time away from what should have been our time together. Your hard work, perseverance, and never-give-up attitude inspires me. I hope you see that our learning disabilities don't hold us down. Those differences make us even better at our reaching our goals. Don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something. You show them you can do anything you put your mind to. Your PawPaw told me that once, and now I'm passing that lesson on to you. I am so proud of. I love you more than anything.

Finally, to my husband, Tim, who encouraged me to start this journey and who stood by me through all the tears, temper tantrums, moments of weakness, and struggles. I can never thank you enough for all the times you told me you were proud of me, made dinner, cleaned the house, and expressed your support and love in more ways than I can list. You never doubted me, even when I doubted myself. You had enough faith for both of us. I love you. I could never have done this without you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Reading achievement at the junior high level has been and continues to be a concern in the United States. Recent findings from the Nation's Report Card show that 36% of eighth graders read at or above the proficient level (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2020). Much of the focus on increasing achievement levels has centered around reading interventions. However, some believe that another way to increase reading achievement may be to focus on increasing motivation (Louick et al., 2016; Thomas, 2015; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). Reading motivation has been shown to be a predictor of reading achievement (Parsons et al., 2018; Whitney & Bergin, 2018), and increased reading motivation has been shown to increase achievement (Malanchini et al., 2017; Whitney & Bergin, 2018). One strategy that has been shown to have an influence on motivation in adolescents is the use of authentic audiences.

In this study, I explored teacher perceptions of the use of authentic audiences and the influence on junior high students' reading motivation. The 21st century has brought about evolving learning opportunities and challenges for students (Anagün, 2018; Howlett & Waemusa, 2019). Students today have grown up with technology and instant access to ever changing information. Today's learners have the means and desire to connect with a wide and varied audience around the world (Couros, 2015; Howlett & Waemusa, 2019). Already, adolescents spend a large portion of their day connecting with others through social media sites and other internet platforms (Howlett & Waemusa, 2019). Anagün (2018) stated that students today are digital participants in society with instant access to knowledge, and they have an expectation for rapid responses and

feedback. This has brought to light the possibility that 21st century learners may have unique needs (Couros, 2015; Greenstein, 2012; Marlatt, 2019). Learners today are already connected in their personal lives, and many posit that adolescents need these same connections in their educational lives to see learning as relevant and where they can engage with others in spaces where they can share ideas in order to increase motivation (Couros, 2015; Howlett & Waemusa, 2019; Magnifico et al., 2015; Marlatt, 2019).

Lack of reading motivation is a problem faced by many junior high teachers. The need to improve students' reading motivation at the junior high level has been widely discussed in the literature (Garwood et al., 2017; Lau, 2016; Louick et al., 2016; Thomas, 2015; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). Much of this research is based on the belief that students are motivated by having autonomous learning experiences, feeling competent in their reading activities, seeing that the reading task is related to their lives, and being socially connected to others (Howlett & Waemusa, 2019; Miyamoto et al., 2018; Rosenzweig, et al., 2018). Several researchers have suggested that teachers' instructional practices can positively impact reading motivation (see Anagün, 2018; Howlett & Waemusa, 2019; Kiefer & Pennington, 2017; Troyer, 2017). One instructional practice that has been shown to meet these needs is to provide an authentic audience for student work (Howlett & Waemusa, 2019; Kaldor & Flacks, 2015; Spanke & Paul, 2015; Yearta et al., 2015). Though there is much in the literature about how students perceive authentic audiences, most of these studies have been conducted at the elementary, high school, and undergraduate level. Further, there exist very few studies on the perceptions of teachers at the junior high level with regards to authentic audiences and the potential impact on

junior high students' reading motivation. Increasing reading motivation and achievement at this level has been shown to increase rates of high school completion and better preparing students for college or post-secondary studies (Cantrell et al., 2018). It is important, therefore, to focus more studies at the junior high level to better prepare teachers who work with this population.

This study has important social change implications. Reading motivation is one factor that has been shown to improve reading comprehension and, thereby, academic achievement (Kayalar, 2016; Malanchini et al., 2017; Whitney & Bergin, 2018). Teacher perceptions of successful instructional strategies can potentially lead to increased use of more effective teaching methods. The results of this study have the potential to support educational stakeholders in providing quality instruction that improves the declining state of junior high reading motivation.

Chapter 1 continues with background information about this study, a discussion of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework underlying this research, and an explanation of the nature of the study. Definitions important to this research are defined along with the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the potential significance of this basic qualitative study.

Background

Authenticity in education has been widely discussed. In much of the literature, researchers discuss a need for authenticity with regards to student tasks, student learning opportunities, and student assessment (see Greenstein, 2012; Schmier et al., 2018;

Villarroel, et al., 2018). This study's focus is narrower in scope, exploring the use of authentic audiences as a component of the aforementioned authenticity in education.

Multiple studies have indicated that reading motivation drops when students enter the junior high level, and this waning motivation in adolescents has been a concern for educational stakeholders for decades (see Lau, 2016; Locher et al., 2019; Neugebauer & Blair, 2020; Olifant et al., 2019; Sofiana & Mubarak, 2020). Lau (2016) found that not only did motivation drop when students entered junior high, but analysis from 695 student questionnaires also indicated that reading motivation is related to student perception of the effectiveness of reading instruction. In a mixed methods study, Cantrell et al. (2014) surveyed and observed 831 junior high students in both experimental and control groups, one receiving supplemental reading and instruction intended to increase engagement and found that higher motivation is significantly related to better comprehension and higher achievement. The literature is clear that instructional practices can have a direct impact on the motivation levels of learners (Anagün, 2018; Howlett & Waemusa, 2019; Kayalar, 2016; Miyamoto et al., 2018; Rosenzweig et al., 2018; Villarroel et al., 2018). It is important, then, that a study of effective instructional practices be conducted to begin to address motivation.

Recent studies have shown that authentic audiences can increase student motivation at the high school level. In a qualitative phenomenological study, Anderson et al. (2017) interviewed students, teachers, and principals from 19 secondary schools who participated in an entrepreneurial learning study to determine if, among other things, learning engagement and motivation were increased with an opportunity to participate in

authentic tasks for an authentic audience. Results indicated that students were more motivated to achieve because their work was being reviewed and commented on by peers and adults in other schools. In a different qualitative exploratory case study, Puttick et al. (2015) conducted 8 days of classroom observation in two high school science classrooms, interviewed four teachers and three students, and reviewed teacher implementation logs to determine teacher perceptions of digital curriculum use that utilized authentic audiences. Results indicated that both students' learning motivation increased.

Recent studies have also shown the use of authentic audiences at the college level is effective in increasing student motivation. In one qualitative study, Kaldor and Flacks (2015) coded reflective learning essays from 24 undergraduate studies to determine if using blogs to give students an authentic audience increased writing motivation. Results of the study showed that students were more motivated to write well when writing for an authentic audience. In an exploratory mixed methods study, Magnifico et al., (2015) used observation, linguistic analysis of online interactions, and surveys on two writing sharing websites to determine if college writing students who published on these sites were more motivated to achieve than students in more traditionally taught classrooms. Findings indicated that students were significantly more engaged and motivated by having an authentic audience.

At the time of this study, there were few studies in the current literature about authentic audience use at the junior high level. Guthrie et al., (2013) conducted a study using a quasi-experimental design during which they conducted pre and post questionnaires and interviews to measure the reading motivation levels of 1,159 seventh

graders in four public schools in a mid-Atlantic state to determine if certain instructional practices, including authentic audiences, increased reading motivation. Findings indicated that, indeed, student motivation increased. More studies are needed in the junior high school setting to determine the effectiveness of authentic audience use with this age group.

A gap in the literature was found with regards to studies conducted at the junior high school level with teachers as the participants. It is not known how junior high school teachers perceive authentic audience use impacts on junior high students' reading motivation. Considering the decline in reading motivation observed as students enter junior high as well as the indication of study results that instructional practices can have a direct impact on reading motivation, more studies are needed that explore instructional practices at the junior high school level that can increase student reading motivation. Authentic audience use has been shown to be an effective instructional practice at the elementary, high school, and college level. This study explored the use of authentic audience use at the junior high school level. Junior high teachers' perceptions of the use of authentic audiences as an instructional strategy that can potentially increase student reading motivation is missing from the literature. This study can begin to address this gap by providing qualitative data that can help educational stakeholders make better informed decisions about instructional practices in the junior high school classroom. It is posited that an increase in junior high student reading motivation has the potential to lead to positive social change by better preparing students for the challenges they will face when they leave their secondary settings.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of reading motivation as a possible contributor to low achievement in junior high students. Reading achievement scores show a need to improve achievement nationwide. The most recent results reveal that 36% of junior high students read at or above proficiency (NAEP Reading: National Average Scores, 2020).

Table 1

Eighth Grade NAEP Reading Achievement-Level Results (percentages)

Year	Below basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
2017	24	40	32	4
2015	24	42*	31*	4*
2013	22*	42*	32	4
2011	24	42*	30*	3*
2009	25	43*	30*	3*
2007	26*	43*	28*	3*
2005	27*	42*	28*	3*
2003	26*	42*	29*	3*
2002	25	43*	30*	3*
1998	27*	41	30*	3*

Note: Adapted from *Trends in eight-grade reading achievement-level results*, by NAEP. Retrieved from: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2017/nation/achievement?grade=8 Copyright 2020 by NAEP.

*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2017

Table 1 also shows that in 2017 64% of eighth grade students scored below basic or basic on reading assessments. In addition, as evidenced by teacher interviews and surveys, motivating the adolescent reader is a struggle faced by reading teachers at the junior high level (Lau, 2016; Thomas, 2015; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). This problem with reading motivation, if addressed at the junior high level, could possibly improve student achievement as they transition to high school (Cantrell et al., 2018). At the

secondary level, reading motivation is strongly related to success (Cantrell et al., 2018). Research has indicated secondary students are less motivated in reading classes once they reach the secondary level and changes in instructional practice are needed to motivate junior high readers (Lau, 2016). Results from recent studies have indicated that when students have an authentic audience for their work, they are more motivated (see Howlett & Waemusa, 2019; Kaldor & Flacks, 2015; Klauda & Guthrie, 2015; Magnifico, et al., 2015; Spanke & Paul, 2015; Yearta et al., 2015). For the purposes of this study, authentic audience is defined as an audience broader than the teacher and peers inside the classroom walls that better represents a “real” audience made up of engaged peers, community members, families, and experts that can provide feedback which may better reflect the interactive and collaborative environments students will face in their postsecondary endeavors (see Andenoro et al., 2017; Carrillo 2017; Langer de Ramirez 2013; Reynolds, 2009). Studies have shown that students take more ownership and have greater authority over their learning when authentic audiences are used (Puttick et al., 2015). Of the numerous challenges facing teachers, motivation is a critical one, as it has a direct effect on student achievement (Lau, 2016; Miyamoto et al., 2018; Troyer, 2017).

There are currently insufficient research studies on how teachers perceive using authentic audiences impacts on the reading motivation, intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and sense of relatedness of junior high students in reading classes, and this study addressed this gap. An abundance of studies exist that show the positive effects of authentic audiences on learner motivation, autonomy, and relatedness at different levels and in different subjects. Puttick et al. (2015) conducted studies in high school classes,

concluding that the use of authentic audiences had a positive impact on student motivation. Magnifico et al. (2015) showed that authentic audiences increased intrinsic motivation in college-writing classes. Newhouse (2015) found that high school students preferred more authentic tasks and audiences in their reading and writing classes. Kaldor and Flacks (2015) found that students in undergraduate writing classes were more motivated to succeed when authentic audiences were used. This study will begin to fill the gap in current literature by focusing on junior high teacher perceptions of how reading motivation may be influenced by authentic audiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness of junior high students. I conducted interviews conducted and analyzed the data with open coding to identify rich themes and patterns. The results of this study provide a better understanding of teacher perceptions of the use of authentic audiences in reading motivation, autonomy, and relatedness of students at the junior high level.

Research Questions

The research questions underlying this basic qualitative study were:

RQ 1: How do teachers describe an authentic audience?

RQ 2: What are teacher perceptions of the influence of authentic audiences on student motivation, student autonomy, and student relatedness?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study included Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory and Siemens's (2005a) theory of connectivism. Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory (SDT) provided a lens through which students' motivation is supported by the basic human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Intrinsically motivated students, according to SDT, value learning, seek knowledge to develop skills, and engage in deeper processing and understanding than extrinsically motivated students who meet external requirements to gain recognition or avoid negative consequences (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Siemens's (2005b) theory of connectivism puts forth the belief that the ability to know more is more important than knowledge already obtained. Furthermore, learning is constructed by considering various opinions through multiple connections (Siemens, 2005a). Connectivism also specifies that instructors and learners recognize reality is continuously shifting since what is understood as truth today may not be true tomorrow due to continuously changing sources of information and the speed at which information can now be obtained (Siemens, 2005a). These theories, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, served as a guide to identify and analyze teachers' perceptions of the influence of authentic audience use on students' reading motivation by exploring if teachers perceive today's students are intrinsically motivated by opportunities for autonomy and relatedness within the junior high, reading class setting. This framework relates to the study approach and research questions in that both theories discuss motivational strategies, and interviews

allowed an exploration of teacher perceptions into these theories as they relate to the participants' students.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative study. A basic qualitative study is consistent with the exploration of teacher perceptions about the use of authentic audiences in junior high reading classes and how this influences student reading motivation, with a focus on intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and relatedness. Exploring, describing, and interpreting teacher perceptions is consistent with the goals of qualitative research and the epistemological assumption that knowledge is derived from the lived experiences of subjects in their field (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A basic qualitative study was appropriate for this research as its purpose is to “reflect *on* and *in* practice” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 15). The purpose of the study was to explore teacher perceptions of authentic audience use and how it influences junior high school students reading motivation; this purpose is well suited to a basic qualitative study. Interview data was collected from 12 junior high teachers and analyzed using open coding to discover themes.

Definitions

Authentic audience: An audience for student work that goes beyond the classroom and includes a public platform via internet applications to which students can publish their work or thoughts and receive feedback from a broader public (Andenoro et al., 2017; Carrillo, 2017; Langer de Ramirez, 2013; Reynolds, 2009).

Autonomy: The need to have choice and determine one's behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Competence: The need to feel successful and accomplished (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Extrinsic motivation: Actions taken to earn a reward (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Intrinsic motivation: Actions taken in a self-determined manner because of personal interest and pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Motivation: Motivation is defined as "what 'moves' people to action" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 13). For the purposes of this study, motivation is what moves a junior high student to want to read both in school and for pleasure.

Relatedness: Feeling as if part of a group and having a sense of belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Assumptions

Multiple assumptions grounded this basic qualitative study. The first assumption was that the participants would answer honestly and openly without reservation. I assumed this because the participants volunteered to take part after being fully informed that their responses would remain confidential. Another assumption was that teachers were able to objectively report on their students' reading motivation, since they had known their students for a while when the interviews are conducted.

In the context of this study, these assumptions were necessary. Qualitative research depends on certain assumptions, such as the truthfulness of participant perceptions, that cannot be demonstrated to be true (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Houghton et al., 2010). By the very nature of qualitative research, the assumption that participants

will answer honestly and knowledgeably is necessary to gain additional perspectives about a topic (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this research was limited to teachers who use authentic audiences and teach reading in a public junior high school setting. Due to the specific nature of the study, this narrow scope was necessary to answer the research questions. Because this study's focus was on teacher perceptions only, other stakeholders such as parents, students, or administrators were not included.

It was my intention to acquire rich, descriptive data that would allow stakeholders to understand the teacher perceptions of the impact of authentic audience use which will enable them to consider the possibilities of authentic audience use in their own settings, as Shenton (2004) suggested to facilitate transferability. It is very difficult to infer transferability with a basic qualitative study, however, as suggested by Shenton (2004), I offered ideas for further research and provide the effective description of the current research on the phenomenon of study.

Limitations

As with all qualitative research, this study faced certain limitations. The nature of qualitative research assumes that the results of the study will be subjective in nature and bound by the interpretation of the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It should be stated that I am a strong believer in the effectiveness and necessity of authentic audiences in public education, therefore these biases may present themselves in my study. To address this concern, however, I used in vivo coding initially when coding my data to ensure

objectivity when conducting my data analysis. Ravitch and Carl (2016) also pointed out that “qualitative researchers do not believe or claim that there are universal, static ‘truths’ but rather assert that there are multiple situated truths and perspectives” (p. 5). In my conclusions of the dissertation, then, I make that clear when discussing the limitations of the study.

Another limitation was the narrow focus of the participant pool. I only interviewed junior high school teachers in a public-school setting. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that the purpose of qualitative research is “not to produce findings that can be directly applied to other settings and contexts” (p. 189). It is, then, up to the reader of the audience of this research to determine how applicable the results are within their contexts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). With regards to transferability, it was my responsibility as the researcher to provide the richest most descriptive data possible so that readers may determine how much of the findings of this study can apply in their contexts.

Significance

This research can begin to fill a gap in literature about the perception of teachers of the use of authentic audiences and the perceived influence on reading motivation at the junior high school level in the content area of reading. Much research has been done at the higher education and high school levels regarding the impact of authentic audiences on learners’ levels of motivation and feelings of autonomy and relatedness. This study was unique because it addresses a grade level in education that is under researched and a topic that has been shown to improve the motivation of students in other contents and grade levels (see Anderson et al., 2017; Keefe, 2020; Magnifico et al., 2015; Puttick et

al., 2015; Rosenzweig et al., 2018; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). This study provided insights into junior high school teacher perceptions of the influence that authentic audience use has on junior high students' reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness. Insights from this study have the potential to help teachers, principals, literacy coaches, curriculum writers, educational consultants, and other stakeholders develop and implement instructional practices that may help increase the declining levels of reading motivation currently evident at the junior high level (Sofiana & Mubarok, 2020; Türkben, 2019). Because motivation to read is one factor that has been shown to improve reading comprehension (Miyamoto et al., 2018; Rosenzweig et al., 2018), exploring ways to increase motivation that may improve achievement has the potential to support educational stakeholders in providing quality instruction and learning opportunities to junior high school students.

Summary

Declining academic motivation in students is a struggle faced by many junior high school reading teachers. Today's students enter the classroom with a vast network of peers and a wide audience for their social media contributions and participation. Based on current and past literature, it is posited that there is a need to change instructional practices in the junior high reading classroom to better meet the needs and increase reading achievement of today's adolescent students. These needs for motivation include autonomy, competence, and relatedness. One instructional practice that has been studied and shown to positively influence learner motivation is the use of authentic audiences for student work and idea sharing. A gap in the literature was identified. It is not known how

junior high school teachers perceive authentic audiences' impact on student motivation, and further research is needed.

The research questions were determined based on the background, problem statement and purpose of the proposed study. The conceptual framework was outlined, underpinned by Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT and Siemens's theory of connectivism. The nature of the study was a basic qualitative study with junior high public-school reading teachers. In addition, the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the proposed study were explained as well as the implications for positive social change.

Chapter 2 begins with an introduction and continue with the literature search strategy and conceptual framework. Following that is a concise review of the history of the studies surrounding junior high school students' reading motivation as well as some historical studies on authenticity in education. Chapter 2 continues with a review of the literature related to the key concepts of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem I addressed in this study is the decline in reading achievement and motivation to read as students transition to the secondary level. Research has shown that reading motivation decreases as students move to junior high, and motivating the junior high student is a challenge faced by junior high teachers (Lau, 2016; Olifant et al., 2019; Sofiana & Mubarak, 2020; Thomas, 2015; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). The research on the causes of this decrease in reading motivation is extensive. This review focuses on the themes related to reading motivation as framed by the conceptual framework. These themes include intrinsic motivation influenced by autonomy, relatedness, and connectedness. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness of junior high students.

Research has revealed a decline in junior high students' reading motivation due to multiple factors. Some of the notable factors include the need for autonomy, a lack of relatedness, and a lack of real-world applications in secondary reading classes (Cantrell et al., 2018; Lau, 2016; Türkben, 2019). In addition, Thomas (2015) pointed out that once students are in junior high, the rigor increases and students begin to feel less competent, resulting in avoidance behaviors. Since much reading at the junior high level happens independent of the teacher and often outside of the classroom, motivation to read becomes a much-needed trait for junior high students (Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). Educational stakeholders who work with adolescents, including parents, librarians, and teachers, expend much effort to motivate junior high students to read more (Locher et al.,

2019; Olifant et al., 2019; Rosenzweig et al., 2018; Sofiana & Mubarak, 2020).

Motivating students once they enter junior high becomes even more critical when educators consider that motivation has been shown to positively affect achievement (Locher et al., 2019; Neugebauer & Blair, 2020; Olifant et al., 2019). Junior high serves as a transition to high school and postsecondary studies, and a focus on motivation at this level is important to increasing achievement at all levels.

Recent studies have shown that authentic audiences can lead to increased motivation (Magnifico et al., 2015; Puttick et al., 2015). For the purpose of this study, authentic audience was defined as an audience for student work that goes beyond the classroom and includes a public platform via internet applications to which students can publish their work or thoughts and receive feedback from a broader public (Andenoro et al., 2017; Carrillo, 2017; Keefe, 2020; Langer de Ramirez, 2013; Reynolds, 2009). SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017) as well as connectivism (Siemens, 2005a) served as the lens through which student motivation was explored. The tenets of SDT put forth that student motivation is encouraged by autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In other words, intrinsic motivation is dependent upon students seeing the value of learning and skill acquisition as it relates to them by having real-world applications (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ryan and Deci (2017) go on further to posit that intrinsically motivated students who have their needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence met, then, engage more effectively in learning by processing and understanding new learning and skills more successfully. Siemens' (2005a) theory of connectivism suggests that knowledge and skills are constructed by interacting with various viewpoints through

connections and that the ability to learn more is more valuable than knowledge and skills previously mastered.

Much research has been done to study the effect of authentic audience on the motivation of students at the elementary, higher education, and high school levels. Currently, a gap exists in the current literature with regards to junior high teacher perceptions on the impact of authentic audiences on the intrinsic motivation of junior high students with regards to autonomy and relatedness. Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences impacts the reading motivation of junior high students.

Chapter 2 includes a detailed overview of both Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT and Siemens's (2005a) connectivism theory as the conceptual framework for this study. This overview will discuss the key principals of each theory, prior research done using these theories, and a rationale for inclusion. Chapter 2 will present review of the literature about reading motivation and authentic audiences. The term authentic audiences will be operationalized, and the history of general ideas surrounding current studies will be included. Current findings with regards to motivation and authentic audiences at the higher education and high school levels will be discussed through the lens of the stated conceptual framework. The literature review will conclude with a synthesis of the presented theories and studies and a rationale for use in this study.

Literature Search Strategy

A selection of scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles and books was reviewed for this literature review. Most of the articles selected were written within the last 5 years.

When older articles were used, they were needed to provide historical context for this study and the topics discussed. I used the following research databases used to locate articles and studies relevant to this study: ProQuest, Walden's Dissertation Database, Google Scholar, ERIC, Education Research Complete, Thoreau Multi-Database, and ESBSCO ebooks. The key word search terms were entered into each database as show in Table 2.

Certain key word searches resulted in too many results to review, so additional key words were added to narrow down the results. Articles found in the search were reviewed to determine if the articles were applicable.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study will include Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT as well as Siemens's (2005a) theory of connectivism. Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of secondary students will be viewed through the lenses of these theories. In their theory, Ryan and Deci suggested that humans are inherently inquisitive, active, and social and that to promote motivation, the psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness must be met. Likewise, Siemens, in the theory of connectivism, stated that today's students need a connected and engaging learning environment to encourage engagement and motivation. These theories provided the framework upon which I built my study.

Table 2*Key Search Terms*

Topic	Key Word Search Terms
Authentic Audience	authentic audience authentic AND audience authentic AND qualitative authentic AND audience AND quantitative authentic audience AND teacher perceptions authentic AND audience AND mixed authentic audience AND junior high
Motivation	authentic audience AND motivation authentic audience AND motivation AND study reading motivation AND teacher perceptions reading motivation AND teacher perceptions AND blog reading motivation AND blog reading motivation AND 21st century learning reading motivation AND teacher perception AND adolescents reading motivation AND junior high
Self-Determination Theory	reading motivation AND teacher perception AND Self-Determination Theory Self-Determination Theory AND Deci
Connectivism	reading motivation AND teacher perceptions AND connectivism motivation AND connectivism instruction AND connectivism connectivism AND junior high connectivism AND middle school connectivism AND adolescents

Self-Determination Theory

When applied to education, the focus of SDT is how students are intrinsically motivated to acquire and internalize new learning while creating new understandings that are meaningful and individually relevant (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). SDT is also centered around the idea that students are social beings in need of certain social conditions for development (Ryan & Deci, 2017). One assumption of SDT is that not only are students acutely social but the environment in which students are taught must provide opportunities for the social nature of students to be used (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Yet another assumption of SDT is that student motivation is largely dependent upon the social experiences in which students participate. The opportunities these social experiences provide can either encourage or undermine motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Theorists of SDT, then, examine what fosters motivation in students as well as what diminishes motivation.

Motivation is defined as forces that move students to act with direction and persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Ryan and Deci (2000) pointed out that motivation has been long studied, particularly in education, because “motivation produces” (p. 69). Two types of motivation are examined and analyzed within the framework of SDT. Extrinsic motivation is defined as being moved to accomplish something for a consequence or reward (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Theorists put forth that there are four types of extrinsic motivation, each resulting in differing degrees of self-determination. First, *external regulation* is the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation because the sole purpose for compliance is

external stimuli, such as a student completing homework to avoid a failing grade or detention (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Second, *introjected regulation* refers to a student performing a task to avoid guilt or shame. Though this behavior is more internally motivated, it is still considered extrinsic motivation, and thereby not self-determining, because the control remains outside of the person (Deci, et al., 1991). Third, *identified regulation* is defined as a behavior that ensues because a student puts value on it, such as a student doing extra practice on their musical instrument because he/she knows it will improve performance (Deci et al., 1991). This type of extrinsic motivation is more self-determined than the previous two since the student has chosen to act in this manner for personal reasons (. Finally, *integrated regulation* is the most self-determined type of extrinsic motivation because students are moved to act a certain way based on their own values and identities. For example, a student may identify as a musician; therefore, they act in a way that reflects their idea of how a musician acts (Deci et al., 1991).

In contrast, intrinsic motivation is defined as being moved to pursue challenges because of interest, enjoyment, and without the need for external rewards or consequences (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). The reward for an intrinsically motivated act is a feeling of efficacy and pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Because the authors of SDT believe that humans are inherently born with intrinsic motivation to explore and learn, SDT concerns itself more with what experiences and constructs diminishes or enhance intrinsic motivation, rather than what causes it (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Though controversial, Ryan and Deci (2000) suggested that the more

teachers focus on external rewards such as grades, threats, forced goals, and deadlines, to enhance extrinsic motivation, the more intrinsic motivation is diminished. According to Deci et al. (1991), students have two basic psychological, human needs that must be met for engagement and intrinsic motivation to flourish. These needs are autonomy and relatedness.

Autonomy is defined as the “need to self-regulate one’s experiences and actions” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10). With regards to students, this definition translates to an educational context in which teachers allow students some choices and offer students opportunities to have some control over their learning (Deci et al., 1991, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ryan and Deci (2017) provided the following list to summarize teacher behaviors that support and enhance autonomy and motivation:

- Listening to students
- Making time for students’ independent work
- Giving students an opportunity to talk
- Acknowledging signs of improvement and mastery
- Encouraging students’ effort
- Offering progress-enabling hints when students seem stuck
- Being responsive to students’ comments and questions
- Acknowledging students’ experiences and perspectives (p. 368)

Within the framework of SDT, autonomy is one of the three basic human needs that supports intrinsic motivation and learning (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Another basic human need required to support intrinsic motivation is competence. Competence is defined as the “need to feel able to operate effectively within [the] important life contexts” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 11). Within the classroom, competence is fostered by appropriate challenges and effective feedback (Deci et al., 1991). Feedback in schools most often occurs with grades. Ryan and Deci (2017) identified two types of grading systems: *competence-relevant feedback* and *gatekeeping* (p. 371). Gatekeeping refers to an assigned numerical label that where a student’s performance ranks among other students (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This type of feedback does not promote competence and has even been shown to hinder it (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Competence-relevant feedback, however, is feedback given to students with the intention of fostering growth and has been shown to encourage a feeling of competence. (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2017). One notable assertion of SDT is that meeting the need of competence alone is not enough to foster intrinsic motivation; support for autonomy must also be present (Deci et al., 1991, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2017). In other words, getting good grades and feeling competent at something is not enough; students need to also feel that they have some control and choice.

The third basic human need within the framework of SDT is relatedness. Ryan and Deci (2017) defined relatedness as a feeling of being cared for by others, feeling significant among their peers and social networks and feeling socially connected by contributing to a social destination beyond oneself or the classroom setting (p. 11). Since students spend a large portion of their day in schools, schools need to provide a social context which meets this need (Deci et al., 1991). Deci et al., (1991) stated that when

students are denied the opportunity to foster these social connections in school, intrinsic motivation is thwarted. Again, the need for relatedness is intertwined with and dependent on the need for autonomy and meeting the need for relatedness in isolation is not enough to foster intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This framework, then, supports the idea that all three tenets of SDT are needed to increase motivation.

SDT supports the idea that schools are no longer institutions with the sole purpose of transferring knowledge from the teacher to the student. To encourage intrinsic motivation, the school is a social context that has the potential to either promote or diminish intrinsically motivating behaviors (Deci et al., 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2017). To foster intrinsic motivation, all three basic human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness should be supported synchronously (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Vast amounts of prior research exist regarding SDT as a learning theory that can help foster motivation in learners of all ages. However, little research has been conducted at the time of this review on how, specifically, the SDT framework can address the problem of reading motivation at the junior high level. A literature search for research on SDT as it applies to the reading motivation of junior high students resulted in Pennington's (2017) and De Naeghel et al. (2014) studies. Pennington (2017) conducted a quantitative study of junior high students ($N = 210$) in a rural school district in the United States. The purpose of the study was to develop and validate the Language Arts Reading Practices Survey (LARPS) and assess how certain instructional practices suggested in Language Arts textbooks supported the students' self-determined motivation

to read. Results indicated a positive relationship in student perceptions between certain instructional practices, namely peer discussion groups and peer collaborative work, with intrinsic motivation to read (Pennington, 2017). The researcher pointed out the limitations of the study, which included the small sample size as well as the possibility of peer influence and/or lack of comprehension of the specific vocabulary utilized in the survey. In addition, Pennington reminded readers that the Likert scale utilized in the measure has been questioned with regards to validity due to the belief that it tends to favor a positive result. Pennington went on to suggest that further research was needed that included participant interviews and classroom observations (p. 15). Though quantitative in nature, this study has implications for the proposed qualitative study in that a qualitative study can help to support or refute the findings by diving deeper into perceptions explored through interviews as suggested by the researcher.

In a different quantitative study, De Naeghel et al. (2014) conducted a secondary analysis of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data to determine if a relationship existed between teacher behavior and student reading motivation within the framework of SDT. The study sample included 4,269 Flemish adolescents. Results of the analysis suggested a positive relationship between the teacher behavior of supporting autonomous learning with student intrinsic reading motivation. The researchers pointed out the limitations of this study were many, including the use of PISA data which defined reading only in terms of books, excluding all other types of reading adolescents do. In addition, SDT posits the need for all three elements, autonomy, relatedness, and

competence, to be utilized in classroom practices, and this study focused mainly on autonomy.

These two studies support the need for additional research with regards to junior high students and the instructional practices that motivate them to read. Instructional practices have the potential to influence the reading motivation of students (De Naeghel et al., 2014; Pennington, 2017). However, little research has been done at the junior high level with respect to, specifically, how educational stakeholders' understanding and use of the tenets of SDT can support the intrinsic reading motivation of students. The reviewed studies were both quantitative and utilized student responses. The study for this dissertation will add to the body of literature by adding qualitative data exploring the perceptions of teachers who work with junior high students on a different instructional practice – the use of authentic audiences.

Connectivism

Multiple learning theories have been considered when studying the effectiveness of teaching strategies on motivation. However, as Siemens (2005a) pointed out, these theories were created when technology was not as integral and available in education as it is now. Siemens also suggested the field of education is lagging in the needed applications of a learning theory that takes into account the available technology and connections students already utilize in their social endeavors (Siemens, 2005a; Siemens, 2008). With social media, students now make social connections daily. As a result, today's learners have vastly different needs and capabilities in the classroom (see Hackney, 2020; Spanke & Paul, 2015).

The main tenet of connectivism is that learning is not an individual endeavor, and learners attain knowledge and competence by making connections (Siemens, 2005a). The principles of connectivism are:

- Learning and knowledge rest in a diversity of opinions.
- Learning is process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known.
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
- Decision-making is itself a process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision (Siemens, 2005a, p.4).

In connectivism, learning and autonomy is fostered by networks and the connections made within those networks (Goldie, 2016). Students in classes today have access to vast networks of information, experts in the subject matters they are learning,

and students outside the classroom walls in which they sit (Siemens, 2008). Connectivism suggests that learning is no longer solely a transfer of knowledge from the instructor to the student, but a synthesis of meaning made from classroom guided instruction along with knowledge and understanding created through external networks (AlDahduoh et al., 2015; Siemens, 2005a).

No studies could be located that investigated the use of connectivism as a learning theory to impact the reading motivation at the junior high level. To place the proposed study within a connectivist framework, other studies at the college level were located that support the idea that connectivism is a lens through which educators can consider the importance of varied instructional strategies. Garcia, et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative case study with 33 participants in an undergraduate program. The students were required to participate in a research project during which they had to read others' research and ideas, comment, and work collaboratively to produce a final product. Data analyses indicated that users found the use of a blog helpful in creating in connected community of learners, and that participants felt these connections helped them improve their learning and product. Students did express some concern that not all students participated effectively. The researchers concluded with the idea that connectivist teaching practices change the roll of the teacher from the leader of learning to a facilitator of learning.

Similarly, Aksal et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative action research study that analyzed the responses of 35 post-secondary internship students. From the analyses, researchers concluded that online platforms, such as Facebook, can foster new learning and construction of new knowledge based on connections with others. Thirty out of the

35 participants stated that connecting with others increased their understanding of content as well as broadened their personal perspectives. These findings appear to be significant when considering connectivism as a learning theory to guide instructional practices.

In conclusion, the tenets of connectivism can help address the basic human needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence as proposed by SDT. For the purposes of this dissertation, the two afore mentioned learning theories are coupled and create the lens through which teacher perceptions of the impact of authentic audience use on student motivation will be explored, analyzed, and discussed.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

For this study, the review of the literature includes a comprehensive overview of recent studies related to the use of authentic audience and the effect on student motivation influenced by relatedness and autonomy. The review is set up by these common themes that researchers have found to influence motivation. In addition, the level of learner is addressed and includes studies conducted at the post-secondary, high school, junior high, and elementary levels. Authentic audience is a relatively new term, and, as such, a limited number of studies were located which were specifically utilized the term. However, current research reflects multiple studies that can be considered appropriate to this proposed study. Despite the number of studies found and reviewed, a significant gap was found in the current body of knowledge on teacher perceptions at the junior high school level with regards to how authentic audiences may influence reading motivation.

Authentic Audience

The term “authentic” has been used in education to describe student tasks, student experiences, student learning, and more. This study will explore the term “authentic” as it relates to audiences for student work at the junior high level. Considering the audience for student work has become more significant in the 21st century since students now have been raised in time when connecting and networking are an everyday occurrence.

Today’s students need to know that more than just a teacher is interested in their thoughts and that they will have an opportunity to receive feedback from others with differing viewpoints (Hackney, 2020; Pittman, 2016; Thibodeaux et al., 2019; Zwahlen, 2018).

Thibodeaux et al. (2019) surveyed 85 graduate students who participated in learning opportunities that offered choice, ownership, voice, and authenticity (COVA) and came to this conclusion from open ended narratives. Hackney (2020) discussed how his students researched self-selected topics and wrote their thoughts and opinions about controversial issues for an online magazine. For this activity, Hackney wanted the students to focus on writing to develop their own opinions and share their ideas with a broader audience. Hackney perceived that his students were more motivated for two reasons. First, they got to create a piece of writing collaboratively. Second, his students considered the writing “real,” and this motivated the students to write and revise more so they could share their ideas and receive feedback. Zwahlen (2018) summed up similar findings with a literature review outlining types of authentic learning experiences and the resulting findings on motivation and achievement.

Hoch et al. (2019) conducted a study that spanned grade levels 3-11 in both urban and suburban tutoring centers in the Midwest of the United States that served multiple socio-economic groups and demographics. Researchers collected data from 50 students and 60 teachers. Data included pre- and post- study surveys, field notes, instructional materials, teaching reflections and student work samples. In this study, students were asked to choose a topic to research and report on in an online blog. Utilizing a mixed method approach, Hoch et al. (2019) reports that 80% of students felt writing for an online audience was more helpful to them as a learner than traditional writing methods in school.

With the advent of recent technologies, numerous opportunities have risen for students to connect with audiences outside of the classroom walls (see George, 2020; Hoch et al., 2019; Jorgensen, 2020; Spanke & Paul, 2015; Zwahlen, 2018). Though the term “authentic audience” is a more recent construct, there are some historically valuable studies that show, since its inception, providing students a more authentic audience can positively impact student motivation. In previous studies, researchers and educators have highlighted opportunities that provide students an authentic audience for reading response discussions and academic writing collaborations. These opportunities included e-mail exchanges, online discussion boards, wikis, blogs, online video publishing sites, and social networking sites (Hoch et al., 2019; Yeara et al., 2015; Yeara, 2019).

Elementary

At the elementary level, various studies resulted in findings that suggest authentic audiences can increase student motivation. Yeara et al., (2015) conducted a qualitative

study with 21 fifth grade students from a suburban area. In the study, the fifth graders were paired up with a student teacher at a local university, and the pair blogged weekly for 11 weeks about their assigned novel. Concept coding of interview data resulted in the conclusions that the students were more motivated to read and discuss their reading because they had a pen pal outside of their own classroom. Students reported that they became better readers and writers because they had a college student to talk about their book with and not “just the teacher” (p. 41). Likewise, in a similar study with third graders and preservice teachers, Stover, et al. (2016), found that third graders were much more motivated and engaged with their reading assignments because they got to share their thoughts and responses with college students. The students looked forward to the college students’ responses and felt these responses were more valuable than the feedback they received from their teacher.

Multiple studies have been conducted at the elementary level with results that posit the effectiveness of authentic audience use on younger learners’ motivation (Liu et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2016; Hermann-Wilmarth et al., 2017; Yearta et al., 2015). These studies vary in age range, subject matter, student work expectations, and types of authentic audience utilized. However, the studies found in the literature search all support the notion that authentic audiences have a positive impact on student motivation.

Liu et al., (2018) conducted a year-long study with elementary level 26 third grade students in which students created a multimedia story with peers that was then produced for an authentic audience of their peers on the social networking site, Story and Painting House. Results of *t*-tests indicated a significantly higher level of intrinsic

motivation ($t = 13.08, p < 0.01$) when students completed a multimedia assignment for an authentic audience. However, the researchers pointed out the lack of a control group in this study as a weakness that prevents a comparison of motivation levels without an authentic audience. In a similar study conducted by Liu et al. (2016), 24 third grade students were observed over a 19-week period during which data including surveys, students' digital stories, and English tests were collected to determine how student motivational levels changed during participation in Web 2.0 activities that included authentic audiences of peers in other locations. Results of a dependent t -test showed that motivation increased significantly from the beginning of the study to week 19 of the study ($F = 3.82, p < 0.05$; $F = 3.9, p < 0.05$ respectively). These studies are examples of how sharing work with peers beyond those in the classroom can help increase motivation.

A qualitative case study conducted by Hermann-Wilmarth et al. (2017) resulted in similar findings. In this study, teachers who provided students an opportunity to write letters to the author of a book they were reading as well as create Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for the teacher's college-level students perceived an increase in student motivation. Teachers reported that the audience mattered to their students and that their students put forth a greater level of effort into their work meant for the outside audience (Hermann-Wilmarth et al., 2017). Students were noted to have replied with "These are grown up? In college?" with excitement when they were told who their audience would be for their work (Hermann-Wilmarth et al., 2017, p. 21). In addition, one student reported a feeling of responsibility to convey his true meaning in his work, and the teacher reported a perceived increase in intentionality in his writing (p. 24).

West and Roberts (2016) conducted observations in a kindergarten classroom that was taking part in Genius Hour with teachers providing opportunities for students to take part in guided inquiry. Genius Hour was utilized in this school as a time for students to research, read, and write about a topic of choice and present findings in any way they wanted. One student wanted to research rocket shoes, and he interviewed a Boeing engineer to get ideas information. At the end of the 5-week units, students presented their projects to in person and to virtual audiences that consisted of parents, professionals, and other students. West and Roberts (2016) noted that intrinsic motivation seemed to increase significantly. The researchers indicated that students were passionate and engaged with the project and stated the reasons for increased motivation were due to the autonomy the students were given as well as the authentic audiences with which they were engaged (West & Roberts, 2016).

Older studies have also shown that authentic audiences can positively influence motivation. In a study involving elementary students, teachers worked with students to create Wiki pages for all their writing projects (Andes & Claggett, 2011). Those Wiki pages were then shared with undergraduate education majors who provided feedback to the younger students. At the end of the project, parents reported a marked increase in their children's enthusiasm about school and motivation to complete their writing assignments (Andes & Claggett, 2011). One participant response from a study done at the elementary level effectively synthesizes the perceptions of students regarding having an authentic audience for their work. This student stated, "The best think about having a pen pal is we get to read the books and share our feelings with other people. And they're not

just kids, they're adults that we get to share our thoughts with!" (Gambrell et al., 2011). Sharing thoughts and collaborating with a wider audience than those in the classroom has been shown to be a factor that can increase elementary students' motivations.

High School

Results from past studies at the high school level have also indicated positive change in motivation. In a project conducted by Putnam (2001), high school students were required to choose their best pieces of writing to include in an anthology that would be independently published and sold at local businesses. At the end of the project, students reported higher levels of motivation to do well on the project because they had a "...real reason to write" (Putnam, 2001, p. 105). Another student in the same study stated, "I think it is pretty cool to actually have our work to into a book rather than just in the teacher's drawer to get a grade and be handed back" (Putnam, 2001, p. 105). In a different study, a high school teacher implemented reading and conversation logs that had to be conducted outside of the classroom. Students read and held conversations with adults about their reading (Vorhies, 2012). Students reported feeling more motivated to read due to the outside audience for their thinking, and the teacher reported increased reading activity among all her students (Vorhies, 2012).

College

Past studies conducted at the university level have also indicated that authentic audiences have the potential to increase student motivation. In a qualitative case study conducted by Chen and Brown (2012), researchers interviewed second language learners in a writing class to explore the impact of authentic audiences on writing motivation. In

the interviews, students reported that the audience for their work was an integral factor in an increase in writing motivation due to increased feelings of competence, autonomy, and challenge (Chen & Brown, 2012). Undergraduate participants in a different study that utilized authentic audiences to create a final product in a second language that would be shown to outside, more authentic audiences reported increased motivation to participate in genuine conversation (Hartwell & Zou, 2013). Student motivations increase at the college level as well when authentic audiences are utilized.

Current research contains multiple definitions and examples of authentic audience. Andenoro et al. (2017) defined an authentic audience as "...the presence and engagement of industry professionals and policy-makers..." (p. 5). Zawilinski (2016) described an authentic audience as a destination to share learning that is "beyond the classroom" (p. 83). In another study, authentic audience is described as an assembly of large and powerful audiences that can help motivate learners and help them grow as writers (Kaldor & Flacks, 2015). Spanke and Paul (2015), stated that an authentic audience provides more meaningful experiences that "extend beyond the school walls" and foster student identities. Andenoro et al. (2017) defined an authentic audience as a "community of corporate based stakeholders external to the university system who hold decision-making capacity with respect to a given problem" (p. 13), which meets the definition in this current study as an audience of experts outside the classroom walls. In synthesizing these varied definitions and for the purposes of this study, authentic audience is defined as an audience broader than the teacher and peers inside the classroom walls that better represents a "real" audience made up of engaged peers,

community members, families, and experts that can provide feedback which may better reflect the interactive and collaborative environments students will face in their post-secondary endeavors (Andenoro et al., 2017; Carrillo, 2017).

Traditionally, students attend class, receive knowledge from teachers, and prove their mastery of that knowledge on tests, quizzes or writing assignments that only the teacher, or possibly other students in the classroom, assess and evaluate. Similarly, reading instruction at the secondary level traditionally involves an instructor facilitating a discussion about a text with participation from students in the classroom (Stover et al., 2016). Andenoro et al. (2017) point out that even in the case of adult learners, students are taught by an instructor disseminating knowledge and students completing activities that show mastery of that knowledge. However, studies have shown a decrease in student motivation at the secondary level due, in part, to the evaluative and passive nature of some of today's classrooms (Lau, 2016). In their personal lives, students share original videos, photos, stories, artwork, and music in online forums (Magnifico et al., 2015). Adolescents create networks of audiences for their work in their personal lives. It is not surprising, then, that motivation for learning declines when students attend schools in which their learning and evidence of learning is trapped within classroom walls, and the only audience for their work is the teacher. The connectivity available in this digital era can allow for a wide range of audiences for student collaboration and publication of work (Chen & Brown, 2012). The studies described below detail the recent literature on the effect of authentic audience on motivation within an SDT and connectivism framework.

Motivation

Recent literature indicates that authentic audiences can have a positive influence on student motivation at the high school level (see Anderson et al., 2017; Kaldor & Flacks, 2015; Spanke, & Paul, 2015; Yearta et al., 2015). Several studies have resulted in conclusions that indicate students of all ages show increased motivation when their work is shared with an audience other than the teacher or fellow classmates within the confines of the classroom walls (see Kaldor & Flacks, 2015; Puttick et al., 2015; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). Many studies were found to support the positive influence of authentic audiences at the high school, elementary, and higher education levels.

High School

It is important to review the studies conducted at the high school level regarding the use of authentic audiences and the influence those audiences have on student motivation since students at the junior high level are preparing for the move to high school and, eventually, post-secondary endeavors. Also, considering how similar the age and developmental growth are to junior high students, it is possible these studies can provide some insight into strategies that may help to increase junior high students' motivations. Multiple studies indicated that high school learners showed increased motivation with the implementation of authentic audiences. Anderson et al., (2017) conducted a qualitative case study during which they interviewed students, teachers, and principals from 19 high schools to determine if, among other things, learning engagement and motivation increased when authentic audiences were utilized. Results suggested that students were more motivated to engage and achieve because their work was being

reviewed and commented on by peers and teachers in other schools and countries (Anderson et al., 2017). Students reported waking up in the morning excited about attending school as opposed to their previous feelings for dreading school (Anderson et al., 2017). Teacher interview answers indicated the perception that student motivation is affected negatively by the evaluative culture schools can create with traditional practices, but the authentic audiences and connected opportunities in this study resulted in increased student motivation and engagement. However, the researchers pointed out that, since the participants were selectively chosen as opposed to randomly selected, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all schools and levels (Anderson et al., 2017).

In yet another qualitative exploratory case study, Puttick et al. (2015) conducted eight days of classroom observation in two high school science classrooms, interviewed four teachers and three students, and reviewed teacher implementation logs to determine teacher perceptions of digital curriculum use. Results from the study showed increased motivation in both students and teachers with the use of digital curriculum that utilized more authentic audiences such as online collaboration with other teams and problem based learning opportunities in which they presented their findings and solutions to stakeholders outside of the school (Puttick et al., 2015). An observer studying one classroom in the study noted, “Motivation and engagement of the students is impressive...” (Puttick et al., 2015, p. 18).

Higher Education

It is also worth considering the studies on authentic audiences and the effects on student motivations conducted at the higher education level, since all learners at all ages

require some type of motivating influence. Andenoro et al. (2017) conducted a five-year mixed methods study with adult leadership learners in which results indicated increased learner motivation due to, among other variables, authentic audiences. The course studied included a culminating project to which participants presented to policy makers and industry leaders (Andenoro et al., 2017). Qualitative findings included responses from participants indicating they were more motivated to complete work of high quality because of the audience. One respondent reported, "...we got to show real people, important people what we are capable of doing" (Andenoro et al., 2017, p. 13). These qualitative findings show the importance students placed on having their work seen and evaluated by those outside the classroom walls.

A study with adult learners in a writing class where authentic audiences were utilized was conducted by Kaldor and Flacks (2015). In this study, college students in a writing class were required to utilize an online blogging platform to publish their writing and incorporate feedback from an online audience. Data included reflective essays in which students described their perceptions of the authentic audience use on their writing motivation and learning. Kaldor and Flacks reported that 68% of undergraduate students surveyed reported they cared more about writing and 58% reported that they were more excited about writing because they had an authentic audience for their writing as opposed to writing a paper for their professor.

In a case study conducted by Yearata et al., (2015), researchers conducted a study in a teacher preparation program in which nine preservice teachers blogged with fifth grade students about a fifth-grade text. After collecting data which consisted of pre- and

post-interviews, blog exchanges, and reflective responses, the researchers found that the participants' perceptions changed regarding the use of technology to provide more opportunities for students to interact with an authentic audience to increase student motivation (Yearta et al., 2015). The participants, prior to the study, felt that teaching reading strategies to students was enough. However, after the study, the teachers, in summary, responded that the use of an authentic audience through blogging increased student motivation and engagement with the text. One teacher reflected her excitement that the students were excited to read and write about their reading was significant (Yearta et al., 2015).

In yet another study, Pratesi et al. (2019) collected survey results from four faculty members and multiple undergraduate students at a mid-sized Midwestern regional university who were participating in a project during which they wrote content for Wikipedia boards. Student responses indicated that they were more motivated to research and write about their topic because their work would be published on Wikipedia pages (Pratesi et al., 2019). One student wrote, "It felt great knowing that the hard work I was putting into writing a paper was going to be read by many more people, not just myself, a few classmates, and you, my professor" (Pratesi et al., 2019, p. 25). Another student stated the work was gratifying because others would read and learn from all his research.

Older studies have also shown the benefits of authentic audiences. Hartwell and Zou (2013) conducted a qualitative study with 65 adult English language learners to determine if authentic audiences via digital resources such as Wikispaces, Animoto, and Skype impacted motivation. Qualitative data were collected from student work, self-

reflective responses, and three open-ended questions (Hartwell & Zou, 2013). Results from data analysis indicated that having an authentic audience increased student motivation. Students reported that they were motivated to work harder and share the best products possible because of students in other countries and schools were going to read their work and listen to their English (Hartwell & Zou, 2013).

Junior High

A recent study in Sweden demonstrated that having a sense of audience can have a positive influence on student motivation. Henry (2019) conducted a case study in 16 English language, 7th grade classrooms. The research question that guided the study was how motivation arises when students create online media. The project students took part in was an online blogging project in which they wrote travel blogs in English. Data sources for the study included field notes from classroom observations, student blog posts, and one focus group sessions with the students. During the focus group, Henry (2019) asked students how writing this blog online was different than writing the same information in an essay. One of the students responded, “It feels like you are writing to somebody. That it is not just ... it feels as if there really is someone who is listening” (Henry, 2019, p. 382). Students also stated that they were more motivated during the blogging project because they got to connect with others, collaborate, and share information about themselves. Henry (2019) concluded that the blogging project increased student motivation. Students’ desire for connecting with others and the recognition and feedback from audiences that validated the work they did led to increased motivation for the students in these classrooms (Henry, 2019).

Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as a student's need to have some control and decision-making control over one's learning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to SDT, intrinsic motivation stems from autonomy and the level of autonomy available to learners has a direct effect on intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) posit that students who engage in autonomous learning they become more engaged and motivated to succeed. Other supporters of autonomous learning posit that when learners have autonomy, they perceive they have control over their own learning (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). This is in stark contrast to learners who feel they have no autonomy in their learning or perceive that their achievement is dependent on conditions over which they have no control (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Therefore, Lee and Hannafin (2016) propose a student centered learning environment in which students have opportunities to "...develop ownership over the process and achieve personally meaningful learning goals; learn autonomously through metacognitive, procedural, conceptual, and strategic scaffolding; and generate artifacts aimed at authentic audiences beyond the classroom assessment" (p. 707). Fischer (2017) pointed out that autonomy in school can improve motivation in learners. Fischer (2017) suggests project-based learning opportunities in which students complete projects requiring research over multiple weeks then presenting a final product such as a skit, video, or museum exhibit for an outside audience. Providing autonomy in the junior high classroom, then, has the potential to shift from the traditional view of learning environments from places where students passively receive knowledge to places where students are actively engaged in their learning.

Kiefer and Pennington (2017) conducted a study utilizing SDT as part of the framework to examine, in part, if autonomy support in the middle school classroom promoted student motivation. The researchers pointed out that creating an environment that fosters autonomy is vital during the middle school years since motivation declines in these years and learners of this age group are trying to figure out their identity and want to be independent (Kiefer & Pennington, 2017). The results of the hierarchical regressions indicated that student intrinsic motivation increased when students were supported in an autonomous environment. In this study, teachers gave students multiple opportunities for choice in their learning, including how to prove mastery of learning and how to acquire new knowledge. In addition, teachers made a point to explain how the learning was relevant to students' lives. When gathering the data on student perceptions of the influence these strategies had on motivation, researchers found a statistically significant positive relation between choice and intrinsic value ($\beta = .91, t = 3.70, p < .001$) (p. 39).

Williams et al. (2016) conducted descriptive and interpretive analyses of classroom videos and focus group data from six middle school teachers and their 114 middle school students. In this study, teacher provided students choice in strategy, pace, topic, format and mobility. Students had choice in what strategy they used to complete a task, what order they progressed through assignments, what format they used to turn in their work, what topic they wanted to work on from a given list, and whether they worked alone, with a partner or in a group. Results of survey analyses supported the conclusion that providing autonomy in the middle school classroom can have a positive impact on

middle school student motivation. Similarly, a study conducted by Patall (2013) concluded with results that autonomy can motivate students when the task asked of students is perceived as “boring,” fostering motivation where none existed. However, the researcher pointed out that choice must be offered strategically, considering other factors in the learner. Other factors to consider when providing choice can include current interest in the learning and efficacy of the learner. Interestingly, Patall (2013) found that providing autonomy in the form of choice to students who were already interested in the learning activity decreased motivation.

Autonomy proved to be a significant component of motivation in the study conducted by Anderson et al. (2017). Student responses to interviews included phrases such as “give us choice” and “Don’t make everyone do the same thing” (p. 28). Teacher perceptions in this study also indicated an increase in student motivation due to, in part, the autonomous nature of the project. All teachers involved reported increased engagement and motivation of the students (Anderson et al., 2017). Parents, as well, reported their child’s increase in motivation due to the autonomy provided to students and the authentic audience for which the project artifact was being created. One parent stated the project in this study had “really given him an interest and focus in school and willingness to participate in things beyond the classroom” (p. 43).

In contrast, Flowerday and Shell (2015) found results suggested that choice alone may not have a statistically significant influence student motivation. Participants in this study were undergraduates at a university, and results of a path analysis indicated that choice alone did not increase feelings of autonomy. Though participants had a more

positive attitude toward their tasks because of choice, results could not be used to conclude an increase in motivation. The researchers suggested, instead, that choice is one component of autonomy, and that further research is needed to determine if choice alone can influence autonomy and, thereby, motivation (Flowerday & Shell, 2015). Likewise, Maulana et al. (2016) found that autonomy had less of an impact on student intrinsic motivation compared to other tenets of SDT.

A common theme emerged in this literature review with regards to autonomy in the classroom. Autonomy is often viewed by educators as simply providing choice in the classroom. However, providing choice is not enough to have a significant impact on motivation. Teachers must be supported in their instructional practices to foster autonomy in students in multiple ways (Flowerday & Shell, 2015; Garn et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2016). In addition to choice, teachers can provide autonomous learning opportunities by considering student perspectives, soliciting student feedback, providing opportunities to interact with others (Garn et al., 2018). Current research supports the idea that autonomy in the classroom can lead to increased student motivation (Cerasoli et al., 2016; Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Patall, 2013; Williams et al., 2016). However, few studies were found in the current literature with regards to how autonomy provided by authentic audiences in the classroom may influence student motivation.

Relatedness

Relatedness is within the SDT framework is defined as a feeling of being cared for by others, feeling significant among their peers and social networks, and feeling socially connected by contributing to a social destination beyond oneself or the classroom

setting (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 11). Teachers have the ability to support student feelings of relatedness in the classroom by promoting students' sense of belonging to something greater than just classroom activities (Maulana et al., 2016). Due to rapidly growing technologies and the accessibility they offer, students can now participate in public discussions and contribute to public understandings (Molin et al., 2018). Researchers pointed out that when students have an authentic audience with which they can share their opinions while gaining exposure to multiple perspectives, feelings of relatedness are likely to increase (Peterson & Mosley-Wetzel, 2015; Vasquez & Felderman, 2013). In addition, adolescent students often decide whether or not to engage with activities based on their perception of the activity's relatedness (Troyer, 2017). If students decide the activity or learning is not relevant to their current situation or personal interests, they can be less motivated to learn it and produce quality work. Current studies show students have a greater sense of relatedness when they have an authentic audience, and this can have an impact on intrinsic motivation.

Kaldor and Flacks (2015) collected qualitative interview data to explore undergraduate sociology students' perceptions of how blogging for an authentic audience may have influenced their motivation. Considering this study was done in a college level sociology class, it was relevant to discern student perceptions on the growth of their ability to consider wider cultural perspectives. Students stated that their global awareness and understanding of other perspectives increased after writing for an authentic audience (p.182). The results of this study indicated that students value the relatedness they perceived as part of global society.

Maulana et al., (2016) conducted a quantitative study in Indonesia to determine if, as SDT suggests, all three components of autonomy, relatedness, and competence improved student motivation in Asian students at the upper high school level. The study participants included 4,396 students and 202 teachers in various Indonesian provinces. Results indicated that all three tenets of SDT had a positive impact on student intrinsic motivation, however, relatedness had a more significant impact on the improvement of student motivation, much more so, in fact, than autonomy (Maulana et al., 2016).

An older study conducted by Curwood et al. (2013) supported the belief that relatedness is a vital motivator for high school adolescents. In this study, the researchers conducted ethnographic studies of online spaces where students had authentic audiences for their thoughts and works. These affinity spaces were focused on specific novels and games. Observations of participation in these spaces as well as interviews were included in the data. The data revealed that students felt that they related to those within these spaces and, as a result, they were self-directed in their participation and motivated to share their works (Curwood et al., 2013). Participants also reported feeling more motivated by the authentic audience provided by these spaces providing in-depth criticism and feedback (Curwood et al., 2013).

A mixed methods study conducted by Zainuddin (2018) involved high school level science students participating in a pilot study on gamified flipped classroom. Zainuddin (2018) explained that a gamified flipped classroom is one in which students play games to learn content. Some examples include ESL students playing a vocabulary game or math students playing a logic game. When participating in a flipped classroom,

students access the instructional content prior to attending class in a way of their choice (video, PowerPoint, etc.), and then the classroom time is focused on gaining understanding by working with that content in groups, online, or through other methods of choice. The gamified flip classroom provided an authentic audience for which students could converse and see others' progress. Qualitative data collected included students responding to questions about relatedness with "When I got stuck, I asked my friends to help me" and "We can learn from each other...be better prepared for class" (Zainuddin, 2018, p. 85). These data could be interpreted to indicate that relatedness is a factor in improving intrinsic motivation.

In a qualitative study conducted in a variety of K-12 classrooms, questionnaire responses were analyzed for themes with regards to the use of laptops in the classroom. Many of the responses indicated that laptop technologies in the classroom used for purposes such as blogging and discussion posts with an authentic audience increased feelings of relatedness in students (Zheng et al., 2014). One response pointed out how, in classroom discussions, only certain students talk while the rest of the class waits whereas on the blog, everyone can respond, and students can read what everyone has to say (p. 286). This suggests students' desire for a sense of relatedness by wanting their thoughts and opinions to be heard. Another student expressed her increased desire to participate in online discussions because it helps her writing to become better due to the feedback from others (Zheng et al., 2014). One final response by a student sums up how authentic audience and relatedness can improve motivation: "The pressure of knowing that the whole world is going to see everything that I write and post online, makes me want to do

my absolute best. The world is watching and I know that I only want my best work to be online” (p. 288). This statement indicates that students care what others think of their work.

Undergraduate students in a teaching program also reported increased relatedness after participating in a study where they were given the opportunity to blog with K-12 students (Stover et al., 2016). One participant shared, “I love that we got to read...and teach a book with real students verses just reading it together and try to hypothetically do it” (p. 8). Yet another participant stated, “...this project allows us as college students to learn by doing...” (p. 8). With the response, “I was finally able to put into practice the strategies we have been learning in class and in our readings” (p. 9). These responses showed the need for students to feel that what they learn is related to their personal goals. Findings from studies on relatedness and motivation indicate that educational practices play a significant role in students’ feelings of relatedness and, thereby, their intrinsic motivation (Guay et al., 2017).

Competence

Competence is defined as a student’s need to feel efficacious in school and real-world challenges or tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 11). Multiple studies have resulted in finding that support the idea that authentic audiences can increase students’ feelings of competence. Qualitative data from the Anderson et al. (2017) study supported this idea. High school students in this study reported feeling more confident in their ability to share their ideas, communicate with others, and working in a team. Teachers, too, reported observing increased feelings of competence in their students and perceived these

increases as a result of participating in a project that engaged authentic audiences (Anderson et al., 2017).

Results from the study conducted by Kaldor and Flacks (2015) indicated that the majority of undergraduate students who completed writing assignments for an authentic audience felt more confident in their writing ability. Some of the students in this study specifically commented on how writing for an authentic audience and receiving feedback from others in this forum caused an increase in confidence about publishing in a public forum for the first time. After analyzing the data, researchers found that 64% of students reported that their writing had improved as a result of this opportunity.

In the study conducted by Hartwell and Zou (2013), students reported a higher level of confidence due to increased feelings of competence over the course of the semester when they shared with an authentic audience via online video platforms. In the study conducted by Liu et al. (2016), a significant increase in competence was seen in the last week of a study utilizing authentic audiences as compared to the fifth week ($F = 8.38$, $p < 0.01$; $F = 3.3$, $p < 0.05$ respectively). Likewise, in the study conducted by Stover et al. (2016), undergraduate students in a teacher preparation program reported increased competence after blogging with actual students. One respondent stated, “I feel much more confident about responding to students’ writing and reading and capable of making observations that will improve comprehension and critical thinking skills” (p. 8).

This increase in competence is seen at the elementary level as well. Pandya and Low (2020) reported a qualitative study done with elementary level students in an urban area of California who were asked to create videos about their learning for an authentic

audience. Students reported a high level of competence regarding the knowledge they shared with this audience (Pandya & Low, 2020). Students perceived themselves as authorities on their chosen topic when reporting to an authentic audience.

Connectivism

Feelings of autonomy, relatedness, and competence have been shown to increase when students are connected with authentic audiences. Siemens's theory of connectivism posits the belief that the opportunity to learn more is more valuable than knowledge already obtained (Siemens, 2005a). In addition, because of our digitalized, connected, and ever-changing sources of knowledge, the idea of what is truth is constantly changing. Educators understand that the rapidity at which new information can be obtained necessitates the need for the students to be connected to various sources while learning the skills to evaluate those sources (Siemens, 2008). Finally, Siemens proposed that learning is constructed by considering different perspectives via connections (Siemens, 2005a). Connectivism in today's classroom is a noteworthy consideration since educators have the means to foster discussions around texts that can bring multiple and varied perspectives inside the classroom walls (Aaen & Dalsgaard, 2016; Ranieri & Fabbro, 2016).

Recent studies have shown that students value being connected with learners in other places. Zheng et al., (2014) conducted a study in which they explored the responses and posts of K-12 students who were part of a one-to-one laptop initiative. The students were asked to use blogs to post their writing in addition to receiving and providing feedback to others in multiple locations. Qualitative data analysis found that students

showed increased motivation due to the authentic audiences provided by the blog activities. One student wrote, “Having the laptops in class increases my enthusiasm to actually come to class and participate in online discussions” (Zheng et al., 2014, p. 289). Students in this study reported placing a great value on the opportunity to know perspectives of learners in other areas as well as a deeper awareness of culture resulting in more thoughtful learning. Most notably, students reported that being so connected and receiving varied comments and feedback improved their writing and creativity. Students reported that the use of laptops has helped them stay connected in ways they never had the opportunity to do before. For example, one student wrote:

The pressure of knowing that the whole world is going to see everything that I write and post online, makes me want to do my absolute best. The world is watching, and I know that only want my best work to be online. (Zheng et al., 2014, p. 288)

In the Anderson et al. (2017) study, a significant theme that emerged from student interview answers regarding their increased motivation was the opportunity to connect with students in other school, teachers in other schools, community members, and professionals. Students also reported an increased awareness of the diverse views held by varied people (Anderson et al., 2017). One study reported that elementary students felt significantly more motivated to complete a project when working within a social network (Liu et al., 2018). However, the researchers pointed out that the use of a control group would have made the results of this study stronger (Liu et al., 2018).

Likewise, the study conducted by Kaldor and Flacks (2015) showed that 72% of university undergraduates surveyed from a writing class valued the feedback received from students in other parts of the world. One student responded, “I was more excited to write for my course knowing that a wider public was reading my posts” (p. 183). Results also indicated an increase in motivation resulting from this connectedness in that 68% of the participants reported they cared more about their writing and 58% indicated they were more excited about writing.

Chen (2020) conducted an exploratory case study in which college seniors in Taiwan were required to create a YouTube educational video as a culminating activity. The YouTube video had to be three-minutes long and be effective in instructing a global audience in a topic of their choice. In addition, students had to read and respond to the comments they received. Data sources included students' reflective essays and group interview responses. Data indicated that students were engaged and felt they worked harder than in other assignments since they had such a wide audience. In addition, students appreciated the connections the assignment fostered (Chen, 2020)

Andenoro et al. (2017) found that undergraduate students were required to present their learning product to policy makers, industry leaders, and corporate sponsors (p. 2). Data collection methods for this qualitative study included focus group sessions and interviews. Adult learners reported the benefit of connecting with others leading to a more open-minded understanding of different cultures and identities. One participant responded, “This class really helped me to understand how I can use my specific skill set to help the world” (p. 9). Another participant stated, “For me to make a difference in the

world, I need to educate others about what I have learned...” (p. 9). Further analysis resulted in 73% of participants indicating a desire to collaborate and connect. These results are indicative of how connectivism can increase motivation.

The Stover et al. (2016) study also resulted in data with themes encompassing connectivism. One respondent stated, “[The blog] added a sense of community between two different age groups and overall literacy experience” (p. 9). A different participant said, “Before going through the process of engaging in a virtual book club, I never would have realized how beneficial the interactions could be” (p. 9). Other students reported the excitement experienced when another person responded to their thoughts, and yet another stated that reading became more meaningful because it would culminate in a discussion. These statements support the idea that connectivism can lead to increased student motivation.

Challenges

Despite the significant amount of research supporting the use of authentic audiences as a positive influence on motivation (see Kaldor & Flacks, 2015; Liu et al., 2018; Puttick et al., 2015) some studies and researchers have highlighted challenges, negative outcomes or contrasting points (Anderson et al., 2017; Puttick et al., 2015; Stover et al., 2014). It is worthwhile to consider these challenges when it comes to implementation of the use of authentic audiences in the junior high classroom. As has been shown in many studies, the effectiveness of teacher use of instructional strategies can have a significant impact on the success or failure of the strategies chosen (see Hoch et al., 2019; Pandya & Low, 2020; Pittman, 2016; Yearta, 2019).

One theme regarding the challenges to the effective utilization of authentic audiences relates to student work. Technology can provide significant opportunities for students of all ages to interact with an authentic audience. However, Puttick et al., (2015) found that some students in their study figured out how, with the use of technology, to falsify their work. In the same study, some students turned in work of minimal quality or turned in no work at all (Puttick et al., 2015). This indicated that these students' motivation was not positively impacted by the use of authentic audiences. Many online platforms only offer opportunities for short, informal connections (Kaldor & Flacks, 2015). Online feedback can be “aggressively negative” and have a severely detrimental effect on student motivation (Kaldor & Flacks, 2015, p. 177). This type of feedback is not beneficial to student motivation or learning.

Yet another challenge to the implementation of authentic audiences arose during this review: teacher perceptions and efficacy. The data collected by Anderson et al. (2017) indicated that teachers are challenged by authentic audiences due to the drastic variation from teacher-centered approaches to student-centered approaches. Teachers reported that some teachers are so “entrenched” in their way of doing things that encouraging a more innovative approach was challenging (Anderson et al., 2017, p. 46). This type of change in education requires a modification in pedagogy from one of dissemination and demonstration to one of engaged application (Mills & Levido, 2011). In addition, teacher perceptions were that some parents felt the opportunities and activities provided in the study were not aligned with the real purpose of school

(Anderson et al., 2017). Gosper et al. (2013) point out that the success of any reform depends on the teachers being effectively trained and supported.

The need to utilize technology to facilitate authentic audience use led to challenges as well. Hartwell and Zou (2013) reported that some students felt stress when utilizing the online platforms due to the problems encountered with the technology itself and occasional lack of technical assistance. Teachers have reported difficulties with school district servers and outdated computers (Newhouse, 2015). In addition, time differences posed a problem when students tried to connect with others in different time zones (Hartwell & Zou, 2013). Yet another challenge apparent in the current literature is the need for all stakeholders to be able to manipulate and manage the technologies required for the proposed connections. Some teachers were found to struggle with the hardware and software of the technology required (Rasheed et al., 2020). As a result, effective training and immediate, on-site support is often needed (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2020). Historically, these types of reforms require extensive planning and preparation, which educators may find as an obstacle (see Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2020; Rasheed et al., 2020). Along with the need for technology to integrate some authentic audiences comes the need for increased budgets to accommodate the cost of necessary tools (Eiland & Todd, 2019).

Another theme that emerged was negative student perceptions, particularly at the secondary level, to utilize social media platforms for learning. Learners in the study conducted by Stover et al. (2014) reported the desire for more opportunity to meet their audience face-to-face as opposed to only on a blog site would have increased their

appreciation for the learning. The learners felt the technology also presented challenges as far as those with sub-par typing skills could experience more than normal spelling errors and hinder the fluid presentation of ideas that can come with conversation (Stover, et al., 2014). Kaldor and Flacks (2015) pointed out that utilizing some online platforms, such as social media, posed challenges because students struggled to differentiate their personal life online from their student learning opportunities. In another study, student reported a lack of trust in school policy and, therefore, were reluctant to use social media, namely Facebook, in their educational endeavors in case their personal posts on these social media sites broke any school policies for which they could face negative consequences (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Weninger (2018) conducted a mixed methods study at two secondary schools in Sweden. Participants included 200 teachers and 32 students. Data sources included teacher survey responses, student focus group responses, and student journals. At the end of the study, students reported that they felt their work utilizing technology to reach an authentic audience still felt too much like “school” work and that teachers tried too hard to make the activities authentic. In other studies, some students reported frustration at having to type so much to participate in online discussions (one avenue for authentic audiences), preferring to talk in person (Aaen & Dalsgaard, 2016). This leads to yet another challenge that arose in this review: student preparedness. Researchers have pointed out that students may be underequipped to participate in a more autonomous environment due to the historically prescriptive nature of classrooms (Lee & Hannafin, 2016).

Summary and Conclusions

Motivation in the junior high reading classroom continues to be a struggle that many junior high reading teachers face (see Lau, 2016; Thomas, 2015; Turkdogan & Sivell, 2016). Research has indicated that motivation can be influenced by instructional practices (Thomas, 2015). In fact, within the SDT framework, the instructional leader in the classroom is the main catalyst in providing the types of learning opportunities discussed in this review (Maulana et al., 2016). Today's learners are ever evolving into members of the 21st century with capabilities and interests that differ from learners who once learned well with traditional classroom practices (Jorgensen, 2020; Pandya & Low, 2020; Yearata, 2019). Using authentic audiences that expose students to learning and connected interaction they will face in the real world has been shown to positively impact the motivation of elementary, secondary, and adult learners in multiple disciplines (Andenoro et al., 2017). Further, researchers have called for the need to improve educational practices in a way that will better reflect the challenges secondary learners will face in their post-secondary lives (see Andenoro et al., 2017; Jorgensen, 2020). Themes discovered in this literature review reveal the need for educational practice to evolve in an adaptive construct rather than the traditionally prescriptive body of knowledge it is perceived to be currently. The current literature indicates that students who feel a sense of connectedness with experts, learners, and the community outside the classroom walls via authentic audiences become more motivated and engaged (Molin, et al., 2018). However, researchers remind us that a practice, such as using authentic audiences, and technologies, such as laptops and connected networks, alone are not

“magic wands;” instead, they are tools and the effectiveness of the tool is dependent upon what educators and learners do with it (see Molin et al., 2018; Wood & Jocius, 2014).

Many of the studies found related to this study were focused on student perceptions and took place at elementary, high school, and in undergraduate programs. In addition, few studies were quantitative in method, however, this is reasonable considering the purpose of a qualitative study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of participants. Therefore, this study was also qualitative in nature, however, the participant group was one that has been scarcely studied and at a grade level that seems to be lacking in the current body of knowledge. This study focused on findings to teacher perceptions of the influence of authentic audiences on junior high readers’ motivations and achievement. In Chapter 3, I review the methods for conducting this study. I discuss the research design and rationale as well as the role of the researcher. Chapter 3 continues with how I addressed issues of trustworthiness with regards to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I conclude with a description of ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation of junior high school students. Data collection methods included semi structured interviews. The results of this study provide a better understanding of teacher perceptions of the influence of authentic audiences on reading motivation of students at the junior high level. Chapter 3 includes the following sections: research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions underlying this basic qualitative study were:

RQ1: How do teachers describe an authentic audience?

RQ2: What are teacher perceptions of the influence of authentic audiences on student motivation, student autonomy, and student relatedness?

The central phenomenon explored in this study was the use of authentic audiences in reading classrooms and the perceived influence those audiences have on the reading motivation of students. Research has shown that the reading motivation of students when they enter the junior high level tends to decrease for various reasons (see Lau, 2016; Miyamoto et al., 2018; Rosenzweig et al., 2018). Students in the 21st century are socially connected in their daily lives and adolescents connect with audiences on social media multiple times a day. Adolescents are accustomed to all types of feedback on their posts and provide feedback to many others through various platforms. This feedback is varied

and offers students multiple perspectives. As these students grow up in a 21st century learning environment, the expectations will differ greatly from those their 20th century learner counterparts faced (Couros, 2015; Greenstein, 2012; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Instead of simply accepting that the teacher is the final destination for all work and being motivated by grades alone, 21st century students expect immediate and varied feedback while participating in activities that are interactive and collaborative. For these reasons, it is worth exploring if teachers of students in the junior high classroom perceive an increase or changes in motivation when authentic audiences are used in the learning environment. To frame this study, the conceptual framework includes Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT and Siemens's (2005a) theory of connectivism. These concepts encompass the belief that the 21st century student is motivated by autonomy, competence, relatedness, and the ability to learn more by connecting with others who can offer varying perspectives. This belief founded upon this framework has guided the research questions, chosen methodology, and analysis.

In this study, I explored teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness of junior high students. I chose to conduct a basic qualitative study to best explore these perceptions. A basic qualitative study is rooted in philosophy, constructionism, and phenomenology (Patton, 2015). The focus of a basic qualitative study is how to explore or describe an experience of a program or context (Patton, 2015). The primary data source for this type of study is interviews (see Patton, 2015).

This study was well suited for a basic qualitative design. The research questions were well aligned with the constructionism disciplinary root and central focus of a basic qualitative inquiry (see Patton, 2015). According to Merriam (2002), “the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon. This meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive” (p. 6). Merriam explained that data collection methods in a basic qualitative study include interviews, observations, or document analysis, and these data are analyzed to identify themes and patterns. I used interviews in this study to gather teacher perceptions of motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness from my study participants. The other qualitative data collection methods suggested by Merriam, such as observations or document analysis, would not have been effective in gathering the data on perceptions of motivation. I needed to gather teachers’ thoughts with interviews and then analyzed those data to understand how teachers made meaning of the use of authentic audiences on motivation, autonomy, and relatedness.

I used interviews as my primary data collection method. Since the sample is a function of the question (Patton, 2015), my participants were public school junior high school reading teachers who use authentic audiences. By using basic qualitative inquiry, I recruited participants in various schools and states without being bound by space. The data collection came from participants in different areas working with different types of students from different demographics and with varying abilities. This approach was well aligned to my purpose – to explore perceptions of teachers.

I considered a phenomenological design instead of a basic qualitative design but rejected it due to the evolved focus of this particular study. A phenomenological study “aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (Patton, 2015, p. 115). Van Manen (2014) stated that a phenomenological design is appropriate when the researcher is seeking to understand the lived experiences of participants in depth. In addition, a research question that fuels a phenomenological inquiry asks about the lived meaning of a phenomenon and, importantly, does not ask for perceptions, views, or interpretations (Van Manen, 2014, p. 297). A phenomenological approach would focus on participants’ shared experiences such as parenthood or homelessness and would require more than one interview (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Though the focus of the current study could investigate the lived experience of the phenomenon of using authentic audiences in a classroom, the research questions for the study focus on teacher perceptions and the experience of participating with authentic audiences. Therefore, I determined that this focus does not lend itself to a phenomenological study.

Another qualitative approach that was considered was a case study. Babbie (2017) defined a case study as “the in-depth examination of a single instance of some social phenomenon, such as a village, a family, or a juvenile gang” (p. 310). The inquiry that guides a case study asks how a bounded setting operates in the context of the field (Babbie, 2017). With a case study, there are multiple sources of data which could include interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Some aspects of this approach would have been well suited to my study. For example, a case study

could focus on an innovative program, such as authentic audiences, or a group of teachers who utilize an authentic audience in their classrooms (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One defining factor of a case is that the case is bound by place and time around a phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). In this study, that phenomenon would potentially be the use of authentic audiences in one school or set of classrooms. It is this requirement for a bounded system in addition to the need for multiple data sources that led to the rejection of this qualitative approach. Since the use of authentic audiences at the junior high level is in its early stages of implementation, finding one school with a group of teachers that uses authentic audiences proved impossible. The need arose to locate teachers that used authentic audiences via global connection educational websites. These teachers were in many different locales. In addition, since the purpose of this study was to explore teacher perceptions of the use of authentic audiences and the influence of authentic audiences on student motivation, interview data was the only data source needed. Therefore, a case study was not viable for the study.

Grounded theory was another qualitative approach that I considered but ultimately rejected. Babbie (2017) defined grounded theory as “an inductive approach to the study of social life that attempts to generate a theory from the constant comparing of unfolding observations” (p. 308). As with other, more focused qualitative approaches, this approach did not fit within the purpose of the study. The purpose of the current study is not to derive a theory, nor do the research questions lend themselves to observations for comparison. Potentially, this study could have moved in that direction if I intended to observe students in classrooms using authentic audiences. However, since the focus of

my study was to explore teacher perceptions, it was not a study that could result in a theory from comparative observations (Babbie, 2017; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews were the data collection method.

Role of the Researcher

For this study, I assumed an etic role in that I had no intention of conducting the research within an organization or location in which I have any participation (see Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I did not observe my participants in their work setting. Instead, I interviewed research participants using ZOOM. I had no prior relationship with the participants other than initial recruitment communications and logistic discussions for interviews. I had no authority over potential participants. I had no prior relationship with participants with regards to a question of power or influence, and my analysis of their responses was sent to the participants for review of the themes I interpreted.

Managing Biases

Chenail (2011) suggested that one way to avoid researcher bias is to identify all preconceived notions. This method can help the researcher bring to the foreground all prior assumptions that the researcher has (Chenail, 2011). In addition, bracketing is another way to help the research avoid bias in the results of the study by making the researcher's implicit beliefs explicit within the context of the study (Wadams & Park, 2018). By bracketing my preconceived assumptions within this study with the use field notes, I moderated personal bias that might appear in the results of my study (Richards & Morse, 2013; Van den Hoonaard & Van den Hoonaard, 2013). By embracing reflexivity, I made explicit the limitations of findings that are produced with this study (Couture et

al., 2012). Finally, by creating and using open-ended questions with little or no language that assumes my expected answer or guides participants to answer in a certain way, I mitigated possible researcher bias (Patton, 2015; Richards & Morse, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In conclusion, I had a very open-minded approach to this exploration, and I had no preconceived hopes or expectations on what the results might indicate. Though it could be suggested that it is impossible to eliminate bias in qualitative study due to the nature of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), having such an open mind and desiring a true exploration of teacher perceptions of the use of authentic audiences in their classrooms on the motivation of students helped minimize researcher bias from infiltrating this study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Purposeful sampling was used for this study, since the research questions required participants to have knowledge of and experience with the use of authentic audiences in junior high classes (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By deliberately selecting participants who use authentic audiences, I gathered the data needed to answer my research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For the purposes of this study, the target group of interest was junior high teachers. The criteria for inclusion included that the participant:

- is a teacher in a public school
- works in a junior high setting or with junior high learners
- has been teaching junior high for a minimum of 2 years
- uses authentic audiences in some way

To verify that participants met these criteria, I emailed a brief questionnaire to participants with the invitation to participate to gather this information.

Mason (2010) stated that sample sizes in qualitative studies are small since qualitative researchers are seeking to make meaning in a specific context, not generalizations. Also, Guest et al. (2006) conducted an analysis to determine when saturation occurred and found that after conducting 60 interviews, no new themes emerged after the first 12. Since I conducted a basic qualitative study and used open coding to identify themes, the ideal sample size was 12 participants based on Guest et al.'s. (2006) work. After 12 interviews, I reached saturation in the themes that emerged from my interview questions that explored teacher perceptions regarding motivation, autonomy, and relatedness. I knew I had reached saturation once no new themes emerged from my data.

Junior high school typically includes students in Grades 6 through 8. Since the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of junior high school teachers, I recruited participants at all three grade levels. However, since this study explored perceptions of junior high teachers in general, it was not necessary to find teachers from all three grade levels or to find an equal number of participants that teach each grade level. I sent out my invitations and interviewed those who responded and met the inclusion criteria.

To find possible participants, I recruited via online, professional networks on global connection and collaboration. These included the Global Read Aloud and groups on Facebook and Twitter. Ripp is the founder of the Global Read Aloud. I first asked her

permission via email if I could post a request for recruits on her site, and she granted permission (P. Ripp, personal communication, December 16, 2019). I also used Twitter and Facebook to find potential participants. Once I made these connections, I sent emails to possible participants based on who I found on the websites. The first email I sent was a modified version of the invitation email provided by Walden University. In this email, I stated the purpose for the study and the need for participants. I explained the time required to complete the interviews. I provided my email and phone number in case anyone had questions. After getting responses from those who accepted the invitation, I sent out the informed consent provided by Walden via email and asked each participant to complete the form, send it back and in the email subject area to include, "I consent." Finally, once I received the consent form, I set up the interviews based on participants' convenience.

Instrumentation

Data collection instruments for this study included semi structured interviews. This data collection instrument was researcher developed. In developing the initial interview questions, I followed the guidelines provided by Rubin and Rubin (2012) which included using language the interviewees understand, wording questions in ways that do not presuppose a specific answer or suggest a bias in the question and focusing on experiences and understanding from the interviewees' perspective (Appendix A). In reviewing Patton's (2015) types of questions and reflecting on my purpose, these questions are opinion questions since I wanted to study and collect data regarding teacher perceptions of the use of authentic audiences and the possible influence on motivation.

As suggested by Patton, I tried to make the questions open ended, and I included follow up questions that might arise based on participant answers. Table 3 displays the interview questions organized by research question. Questions 1 through 3 were associated with RQ1 while interview questions 4 through 13 were associated with RQ2.

Table 3*Research Questions and Associated Interview Questions*

Research Question 1: How do teachers describe an authentic audience?

1. How would you describe an authentic audience? Can you give me an example?
 2. What led you to provide an authentic audience?
 3. How do you provide authentic audiences in your classroom?
-

Research Question 2: What are teacher perceptions of the impact of authentic audiences on student motivation?

4. What have you noticed about student motivation when utilizing these types of authentic audiences?
 5. What are your perceptions of how authentic audiences use relates to student intrinsic motivation? Can you give me an example?
 6. What have your witnessed regarding students' feelings of competence when they have this authentic audience? Can you give me more detail?
 7. How do you perceive that the authentic audiences you provide are impacting these motivations in students?
 8. Thinking about the time in your classes prior to utilizing authentic audiences to now when you are, what changes have you noticed in the differences in motivation?
 9. What have you seen with regards to student autonomy when using (insert the type of authentic audience here, i.e. blogs, twitter, etc.)? Can you give me an example?
 10. Thinking about student relatedness, what have you observed when students have an authentic audience for their work? Can you give me a specific example?
 11. What are some examples of how students connect with others outside your classroom?
 12. What impact to motivation have you witnessed with regards to these connections?
 13. Is there anything else you'd like to add to your responses on authentic audiences and motivation that I did not cover?
-

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I first sought approval from the institutional review board (IRB) from Walden University. I received IRB approval # 12-12-19-0652922 on December 12, 2019. Once approval was granted, I connected with potential participants via professional networks including Facebook, Twitter, and the Global Read Aloud site. I contacted the founder of the Global Read Aloud, Pernille Ripp, to obtain permission to post a request for participants on her site. Once permission was granted, I emailed those that respond, checked that they met the inclusion criteria by asking if they taught junior high reading and for how long, and sent the necessary invitations and consent forms. I ensured participants meet the selection criteria using a screening questionnaire. Once participants were determined, I set up times for the interviews via online video chat at their convenience.

To begin the interview, I explained that the purpose of the information gathered from the interview is to gain individual perspectives regarding the use of authentic audience and the perceived influence on student motivations. I explained that the data would be used in my doctoral dissertation and that all names and identifying information would be kept private. I emphasized that I was most interested in individual opinions, experiences, and perceptions. I asked what the participant's perceptions of "authentic audience" is. I also asked for perceptions of intrinsic motivation, relatedness, and autonomy as well. If the answers to these questions had not aligned with the definitions within the framework of this study, then I would have followed up with those definitions so that all participants had a common vocabulary and understanding of the study

concepts. All participants provided a common, acceptable response to these questions.

The complete interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

I conducted all interviews. I recorded the interviews using the ZOOM recording feature and transcribed the interviews myself. The interviews took no more than one hour in a single interview session. All interviewees were asked the same basic questions as seen in the interview guide. Because the nature of semi structured interviews is fluid and evolving, probing and/or follow up questions may have been added (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Any follow up or probing questions added were recorded in the interview transcriptions.

After each interview, the transcription of the interview was emailed to the participant for transcription verification. Participants were invited to make corrections as they saw fit. Revisions were not needed. In addition, after the data analysis, I conducted member checks by sending my codes and themes to the participants to determine if they felt I have accurately captured their perceptions (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019).

Data Analysis Plan

My analysis was exploratory since the goal of the study is to add to the current literature about authentic audience use and how teachers, specifically at the junior high level, perceive the influence of this audience on junior high students' reading motivation. I hand coded my data. I conducted three rounds of coding. In my first round of coding, I used in vivo coding and coded with words that came directly from the participants' responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña (2016) pointed out that In Vivo coding is appropriate for coding interview transcripts to gain understanding of

interviewee's perspectives (p. 73). This round of coding was conducted sentence by sentence in order to ensure each participant's perspectives were represented effectively.

In the second round of coding, I was more interpretive and followed Rubin and Rubin's (2012) strategy of "Ask yourself, what is this an example of? and the answer becomes your code" (p. 193). Thereby, pattern coding allowed my analysis to move from the line to the paragraph as well as from the word or phrase level to the concept level (Saldaña, 2016). This type of coding is much more interpretive in nature and is appropriate for interview transcript coding. I coded for concepts and answers to each question. For the last round of coding, I looked at codes that emerged across all answers to the interview question, keeping my research questions in mind, and utilized concept coding. This is where I moved from codes and categories to themes that emerged from the interview data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is critical in qualitative research due to the possibility of bias and preconceived notions that are inherent when a researcher is involved closely with the participants, as is the nature of qualitative research. Therefore, in conducting this study, I ensured as much trustworthiness as possible. This section contains the following components of trustworthiness related to a qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

As Shenton (2004) suggested, I utilized methods that have been well established in other studies. I utilized interview data and coded using in vivo coding and descriptive

coding. These methods are widely accepted and often described as the foundation of qualitative data. I also ensured what Shenton (2004) refers to as *honesty of informants* by sending out an email invitation to participate and requiring consent to the statement of informed consent before beginning (p. 66). I used iterative questioning and make sure that the informants knew I was looking for individual perceptions, not a “correct” answer to all interview questions (Shenton, 2004). I confirmed interview data with transcription verification and member checks (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Another strategy I used was frequent debriefing session with my committee chair to ensure sufficient peer scrutiny (Shenton, 2004). I ensured higher credibility by having a sufficient number of participants (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Shenton (2004) stated that in order to suggest transferability in a qualitative study, the researcher should make sure “sufficient thick description of the phenomenon under investigation is provided to allow readers to have a proper understanding of it, thereby enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their situations” (p. 70). In other words, it is very difficult to infer transferability with a qualitative study. A more appropriate suggestion is to offer ideas for further research and, as Shenton states, allow the reader to determine if the results might be applicable in their particular situation. Therefore, I offered ideas for further research and provided the effective description of the current research on the phenomenon of study in Chapter 5.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research can be described as the ability of the researcher to show that if the study were repeated in a similar context with similar methods and participants, similar results would occur (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). Shenton (2004) suggested that strategies for strengthening dependability include a thorough description of the research design and implementation, descriptive details of data gathering, and reflective appraisal of the process (pp. 71-72). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) added that dependability is increased with triangulation and audit trails. For this study, I verified my data with member checks and transcription verifications. I was reflexive when collecting and analyzed data by writing memos to keep my beliefs, assumptions, and biases about authentic audiences in check and apparent. I conducted an audit trail by documenting in clear detail the data collection methods, how the data were analyzed, and how I came to all interpretations. My audit trail will also include all reflections and decisions I made during the study. I will include the invitation letters, consent forms, and data collection instruments in the appendices of the study (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

Shenton (2004) described confirmability as, “the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (p. 72). Amankwaa (2016) further stated that study findings are not shaped by researcher bias, motivation, or interest (p.121). Confirmability in a qualitative study can be strengthened by making the researcher’s predispositions and assumptions transparent, a clear explanation why one design was chosen above others, an

explanation of the weaknesses in the study, and an audit trail including all data with reflective notes (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). To strengthen the confirmability of my study, I used transcription verification and member checks. I was reflective in all parts of the study by keeping a reflective journal exposing all assumptions and preconceived ideas. I have included an explanation why a basic qualitative study was chosen over other designs. The conclusion of this study included all weaknesses in the study. Finally, my audit trail included all data and procedures used. These included my coding process and analyses steps. This audit trail was available to my committee so that any bias can be found (Shenton, 2004). A qualitative study must be very transparent, and the researcher must be willing to see data that was not expected (Shenton, 2004). I followed these guidelines and was as transparent as possible in all analysis descriptions of processes.

Ethical Procedures

Qualitative research presents multiple ethical challenges to researchers. Houghton et al. (2010) include issues of informed consent procedures, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the ratio between risk and benefit, and confidentiality as ethical challenges inherent in qualitative research. Since the researcher is the primary data collection instrument in a qualitative study, it is the responsibility of the researcher to conduct the study in an ethical manner as possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To begin to address the issue of ethical procedures, I first obtained approval from IRB to conduct this study with the proposed participants. I received IRB approval on December 12, 2019, approval # 12-12-19-0652922. I had no prior contact or

communication with possible participants until IRB approval was attained. Once IRB approval was received, I began with the informed consent procedures. I sent possible participants a letter of invitation. Once participants agreed to be a part of the study, I sent the informed consent document. The informed consent included the interview procedures, voluntary nature of the interview, risks and benefits of being interviewed, as well as contact information in case participants had questions.

To address the issue of the relationship between the researcher and participant, I had no prior contact with participants, and I had no prior relationship with participants. This eliminated any possible exploitation or possible perceived coercion in responses since there was no perception of power imbalance (Houghton et al., 2010). With regards to the risk-benefit ratio, I did not encounter associated risks. The interview topic and questions were benign and, as such, participants did not become distressed nor did they experience feeling uncomfortable. However, if this did arise, participants had the right to stop the interview at any time and withdraw from participation. To ensure confidentiality, no names were used and information that could be used to identify individual participants was not included or was stated in general terms in the study. I transcribed all interview data myself and did not use an outside source. I kept all transcriptions on an external drive instead of a cloud location at my personal residence to avoid possible sharing of the responses. Only I have access to this data as it was kept in my personal drive under password protection. I will keep the data for five years, and then I will destroy the external drive on which the data is stored. In addition, the use of transcription

verifications and member checks ensured that the participants' intentions were honestly reflected (Houghton et al., 2010).

Summary

Chapter 3 included a description of this basic qualitative study including the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology, and issues of trustworthiness including ethical procedures. I also provided a description of the proposed data collection methods as well as the plan for data analysis. Chapter 4 continues with an introduction, the participant demographics, setting, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness of junior high students. To analyze teachers' perceptions relating to authentic audiences and the influence on motivation, the conceptual framework was based on Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT and Siemens's (2005a) theory of connectivism. Two research questions guided this study and the explorations of teacher perceptions of authentic audience use and the influence on student motivations, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness in their junior high students.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do teachers describe an authentic audience?

RQ2: What are teacher perceptions of the influence of authentic audiences on student motivation, student autonomy, and student relatedness?

Chapter 4 continues with major sections that include setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results organized by research questions, and summary of the data. The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions to allow for teachers to freely express their individual perceptions. Interview question responses were hand coded three times to uncover themes.

Setting

The interviews were conducted from my home office using ZOOM on my personal computer that is secured with a password. All 12 participants were at their

different homes during the interviews. Two of the interviews were interrupted by weak WiFi signals, and they both had to be restarted on ZOOM. The average length of the ZOOM sessions was 45 minutes. I had no influence or control over the location in which participants answered the interview questions. Data collection began shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19. As a result, the participants were all teaching virtually from home unexpectedly after their schools were shut down. The disruptions caused by COVID-19 caused many of the interviews to be rescheduled or postponed from our original appointments, as the teachers were feeling the stress brought about by these sudden changes and cited a lack of time for the interview due to a need to get prepared for virtual instruction. This trauma may have influenced the participants' responses; the teachers were under more stress than usual due to the significant change in setting and instructional practices they would have normally used in their classrooms. With regards to the interpretation of the study findings, I was not cognizant of any personal or organizational conditions that would have influenced the study results.

Demographics

A screening questionnaire via email was used to ensure all participants met the inclusion criteria. All participants were middle school teachers with more than 5 years of experience teaching at the middle school level in the United States. Each participant taught reading in their class, and each one utilized an authentic audience as defined in this study in their class. The participant group consisted of eight females and four males. One of the participants was retiring at the end of the current school year.

- Participant 1 was male and taught seventh grade English Language Arts and reading. He had 12 years of teaching experience and had taught reading for 8 years.
- Participant 2 was female and taught seventh grade English Language Arts and reading. She had 6 years of teaching experience, all in reading.
- Participant 3 was male and taught eighth grade special education reading. He had 21 years of teaching experience with 18 years of experience teaching reading.
- Participant 4 was female and taught a seventh-grade combined reading and writing English as a Second Language class. She had 26 years of teaching experience, 17 of those years teaching reading.
- Participant 5 was female and taught an eighth grade reading intervention class. She had 25 years of teaching experience with 20 of those years teaching reading.
- Participant 6 was female and taught an eighth grade combined reading and English Language Arts class. She had 30 years of teaching experience, and 28 of those years teaching reading.
- Participant 7 was female and taught sixth grade English Language Arts and reading. She had 6 years of teaching experience all in reading.
- Participant 8 was female and taught eighth grade reading. She had 11 years of experience, and 10 of those years teaching reading.

- Participant 9 was female and taught seventh grade reading. She had 16 years of experience, all in reading.
- Participant 10 was male and taught sixth grade English Language Arts and reading. He had 8 years of experience all in reading.
- Participant 11 was male and taught sixth grade reading intervention. He had 13 years of experience, and 10 of those years were in reading.
- Participant 12 was female, taught sixth grade special education reading, and retired at the end of the school year. She had 32 years of experience, all of which were in special education reading.

Table 4*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Grade Level	Subject	Years Taught
1	male	7 th grade	English/language arts	12
2	female	7 th grade	English/language arts/reading	6
3	male	8 th grade	special education reading	21
4	female	7 th grade	reading/writing, ESL	26
5	female	8 th grade	reading intervention	25
6	female	8 th grade	reading/English language arts	30
7	female	6 th grade	English/language arts/reading	6
8	female	8 th grade	reading	11
9	female	7 th grade	reading	16
10	male	6 th grade	English/language arts/reading	8
11	male	6 th grade	reading intervention	13
12	female	6 th grade	special education reading	32

Data Collection

I collected interview data from 12 participants. Following notification of IRB approval for this study, I requested permission to post an invitation for the study on two

social media group sites. These sites included the Facebook Global Read Aloud Middle School Book Group and the educator.fyi group. I received permission from both groups' administrators in December of 2019. Additionally, I posted the invitation on my personal Twitter feed. I received three responses in December of 2019, but one did not meet the inclusion criteria because she had only taught reading for 2 years. Later in December, I received 10 responses to my post, and those teachers asked to be interviewed in January due to travelling on their Christmas break. I conducted six interviews in January 2020. I reposted my social media request for interviews on the Global Read Aloud Facebook page again in February of 2020 to recruit more participants. I received nine responses, but two were first year teachers and did not fit the inclusion criteria. In March of 2020, schools were shut down due to COVID-19, and teachers were required to teach virtually from home. This caused some difficulty in scheduling and conducting my interviews. In April of 2020, the last six interviews were conducted. Collection of data began in January and ended in April of 2020.

After receiving the initial response to the social media post, I sent a letter of invitation explaining the purpose of the study and the procedures that would be followed was sent to those teachers. After receiving confirmation that the teachers wanted to participate, I emailed the informed consent to each teacher. As the responses to the consent form were returned, scheduling the interview began. With teachers working from home to provide virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, this proved difficult, as teachers reported struggling with finding time. However, using ZOOM, all interviews were finally conducted.

An interview guide (Appendix A) with open-ended and iterative questions was followed to prompt responses that reflected individual perceptions from the participants. During each interview, I journaled some reflections and wrote notes on a printed hard copy of the interview guide. Each interview was recorded using the recording feature on the ZOOM platform. Immediately after the recordings were processed and downloaded to my password protected computer, the files were moved to an encrypted, external USB hard drive. When not in use, the external hard drive and all hard copies of the interview guides with notes were kept in a fire box safe under lock and key in my home office.

Data Analysis

The data for this study consisted of 12 teacher interviews. Immediately following each interview, I transcribed the interview on my laptop. I replayed the interview, pausing the recording as I went in order to transcribe accurately. To ensure accuracy, I listened to the interview again and read along with my transcript, making corrections as needed. After each transcription, I sent the transcript via email to each participant for verification. Each participant verified the transcript within 14 days and requested no corrections.

The data were coded inductively and by hand in three rounds. In the first round of coding, I used in vivo coding and coded with words and phrases that came directly from the participants' responses (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). For RQ1, the most commonly used words and phrases included genuine, real-world, not the teacher, interacting, connecting, real, different viewpoints, actual feedback, immediate feedback, real people, real audience, professionals, peers outside the classroom, innovative, broader

perspectives, broader audience, something different, experts in the field, community, something new. For RQ2, some of the most common words and phrases were excited, motivated, more engaged, eager, want to read, more confident, connections, increased, better, choices, work harder, reason to read, critical thinking, conversations, different perspectives, discussions, share ideas, amazing, critical thinking, genuine, feedback, learning, difference, work hard, can't wait, on their own, own time, positive impact, want to participate, communication, passion, big change. As I highlighted these words and phrases, categories began to emerge and became clear.

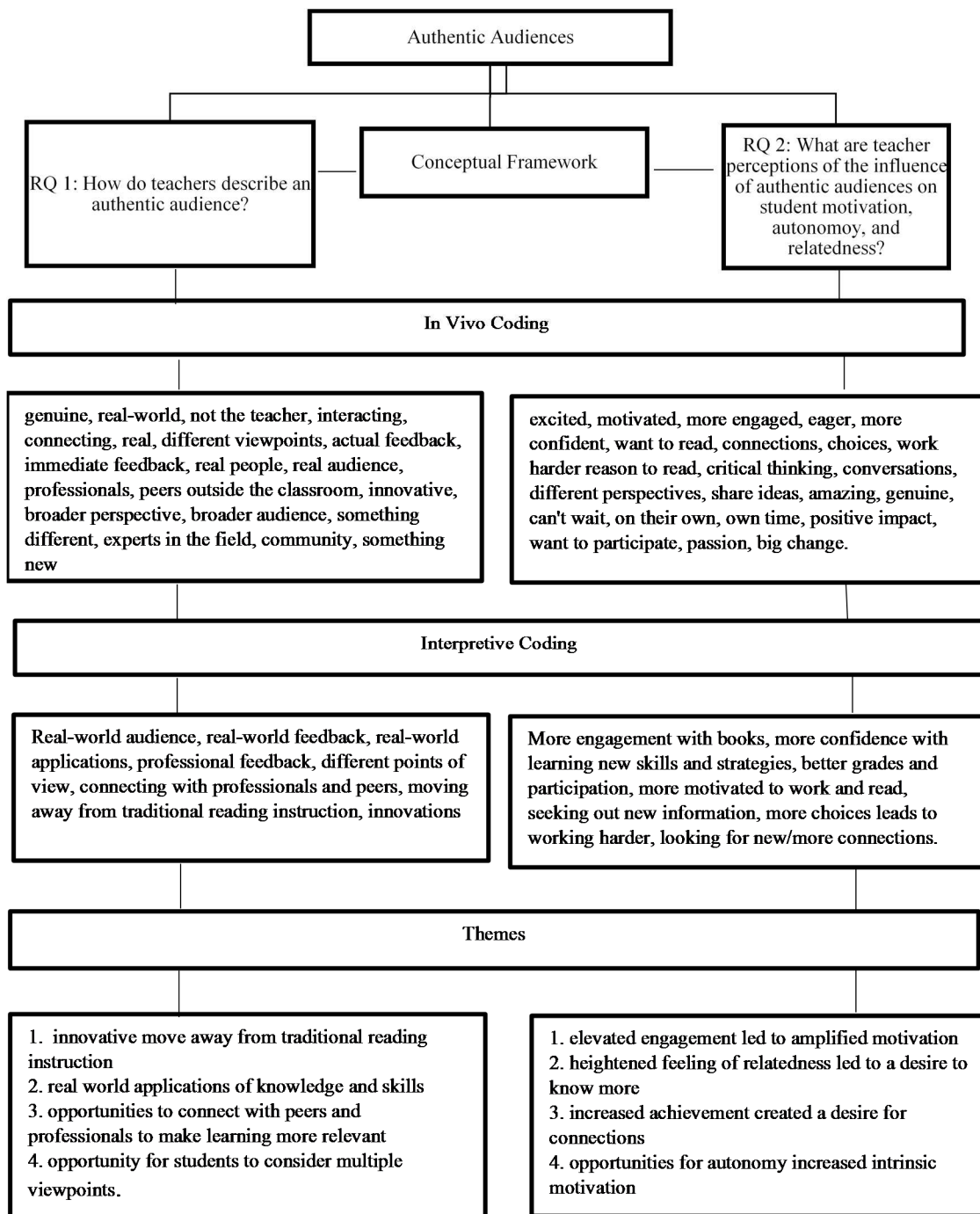
In the second round of coding, I was more interpretive and analyzed patterns that emerged, viewing the data through the lens of the conceptual framework applied. I asked myself, "What is this an example of?" while remembering the foundation of my conceptual framework. Some of the common categories that emerged for RQ 1 were: real-world audiences, real-world feedback, real-world applications, professional feedback, different points of view, connecting with professionals and peers, moving away from traditional reading instruction, innovations. Some of the common categories that emerged for RQ 2 included more engagement with books, more confidence with learning new skills and strategies, better grades and participation, more motivated to work and read, seeking out new information, more choices leading to working harder, looking for new/more connections.

For the last round of coding, I looked at codes that emerged across all answers to the interview question, by research question, and used concept coding. The themes that emerged from RQ1 were real world applications of knowledge and skills; innovative

move away from traditional reading instruction using technology; opportunities to connect with peers and professionals to make learning more relevant; opportunity for students to consider multiple viewpoints. The themes that emerged for RQ2 were elevated engagement led to amplified motivation; heightened feeling of relatedness led to a desire to know more; increased achievement created a desire for connections; opportunities for autonomy increased intrinsic motivation.

Figure 1

Mind Map of Data Analysis



To ensure that I accurately captured the intended meaning behind the participants' answers, I employed member checking. I shared the codes, categories, and themes with each participant on the transcript of their individual responses. I sent each participant their individual transcript page. All participants responded that they agreed with my analysis and had no additions or corrections.

Discrepant Case

The analysis of the data revealed one discrepant case among participant responses in this study when analyzing responses for RQ2. This participant responded with both positive responses reflecting the emerged themes mentioned above along with responses that reflected the opposite influences of the themes. For example, in response to Interview Question 4: What have you noticed about student motivation when utilizing these types of authentic audiences, Participant 2 responded, "Student nervousness is higher; they are more anxious. A small majority of students exhibit what I would describe as motivation or desire to do better." The response to Interview Question 5: What have you seen with regards to student autonomy when utilizing authentic audiences, was,

Student autonomy in the classroom, or giving students choices in what they perform, for example, leads to either students opting for the easiest option or students who choose the perceived most difficult choice in order to challenge themselves or show off. (Participant 2)

In response to Interview Question 6: What impact have you seen on student intrinsic motivation when students have an authentic audience, the participant responded, "Intrinsic motivation goes up in some students, creates resistance in some students, and in

group settings creates a group motivation that students easily separate themselves from and go along with the flow.” The response to Interview Question 7 about students’ feelings of competence was, “Students exhibit a buoyed sense of confidence when they perform well for an authentic audience. The opposite is also true. Poor performances for an authentic audience results in lowered self-confidence.” In response to Interview Question 10: How do authentic audiences impact motivation in students, the response was, “Authentic audience does motivate students. The degree to which it does varies widely.” This response was not consistent with the response to the next interview questions. In response to Interview Question 11 about comparing motivation levels of students from before using authentic audiences to after, the respondent stated, “The changes in motivation over time have been less motivated students with the level of authentic audience engagement remaining the same.” With this response, the participant suggested that he provides consistent opportunities for students to engage with authentic audiences; however, he perceived the students are less motivated over time. In other words, this participant thinks that students may start out motivated but motivation declines.

In analyzing this participant’s responses, some responses contributed to the themes that emerged from the data. On the other hand, some of this participant’s responses were in direct opposition to those themes, sometimes within the same answer. These responses were the only responses that did not fit into the themes discovered. According to Mason (2010), sample sizes in qualitative studies are small since qualitative researchers are seeking to make meaning in a specific context instead of broad

generalizations. Guest et al. (2006) conducted an analysis to determine when saturation occurred, and found that after conducting 60 interviews, no new themes emerged after the first 12. The sample size for this study was 12 participants. Even when considering the discrepant parts of the responses from Participant 2, saturation in the themes emerged from interview questions that explore teacher perceptions regarding motivation, autonomy, and relatedness. This sample size is in alignment with recommendations for a qualitative study and, therefore, the resulting analysis of the data can support some generalizations about authentic audiences and the influence on motivations in junior high students.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is imperative in qualitative research due to the possibility of bias and preconceived notions that are possible if a researcher is actively involved with study participants. This is a fundamental characteristic of qualitative research. Therefore, in conducting this study, the components of trustworthiness - credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability – were used to assess and ensure the trustworthiness of the results.

Credibility

Methods that have been well established in other studies were used in this qualitative study. Interview data were collected from 12 teachers that met inclusion criteria and coded using in vivo coding and descriptive coding. These methods are widely accepted and often described as the foundation of qualitative data. To ensure what Shenton (2004) refers to as *honesty of informants*, I sent an email invitation to participate

as well as the informed consent document via email before beginning. Iterative questioning was used, and I confirmed that informants knew I was looking for individual perceptions, not a “correct” answer to all interview questions (Shenton, 2004). I utilized transcription verification and member checks to ensure that I captured and reflected participant perceptions accurately (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Frequent debriefing session with my committee members to ensure sufficient peer scrutiny took place as the review of chapter 4 was conducted (Shenton, 2004). A sufficient number of participants, a sample size of 12, also adds to the credibility of the results (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Shenton (2004) pointed out that to suggest transferability in a qualitative study, the researcher should make sure thorough descriptions of the phenomenon are explained so that readers can compare those descriptions with their own experiences. Sufficient descriptions were obtained by asking iterative, open-ended questions and analyzing the data to discover themes that emerged. Shenton (2004) implied that is very difficult to infer transferability with a qualitative study. Instead, a more appropriate suggestion is to offer ideas for further research, empower the reader to determine if the results might be applicable in their particular situation. Therefore, I will elaborate on the current study later in this chapter as well offering ideas for further research of this phenomenon in chapter 5.

Dependability

Data were confirmed with transcription verifications. I was reflexive when analyzing the data, and I wrote memos to keep my beliefs, assumptions, and biases about authentic audiences in check and apparent. I continuously returned to my conceptual framework and research questions to ensure I was viewing the data through the intended lens instead of my own. The audit trail included: documenting in clear detail the data collection methods; how the data were analyzed; and how themes were discovered. My audit trail included all reflections and decisions I made during data analysis.

Confirmability

All predispositions and assumptions along with the explanation of the chosen design can be found in chapters 1 and 3 of this study. To strengthen the confirmability of my study results, I performed transcription verification and member checks. I kept a reflective journal during data analysis. I have included an explanation why a basic qualitative study was chosen over other designs. The conclusion of this study will include all weaknesses in the study. The audit trail includes all data and procedures used, including the coding process and analyses steps. This audit trail was available to my committee so that any bias could be highlighted and addressed (Shenton, 2004). This qualitative study was transparent, and I was open to discovering data that was not expected (Shenton, 2004).

Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and

feelings of relatedness of junior high students. The data source was teacher interviews and were analyzed with open coding to identify rich themes and patterns. The results of this study may provide a better understanding of teacher perceptions of the use of authentic audiences in reading motivation, autonomy, and relatedness of students at the junior high level to help inform teacher practices in the classroom.

I collected data from interviews conducted with 12 teachers who met the inclusion criteria for this study. Those criteria included teachers who: taught at the junior high level; taught reading; used some form of authentic audience in their instruction; and teachers with more than five years of experience. I recruited research participants online on various social media platforms. I began coding after I received transcript verifications. Data analysis included three rounds of coding to inductively derive the themes discussed below. The themes discovered are organized by research question.

Research Question 1

RQ 1 asked how teachers describe an authentic audience. After inductively moving from the codes to categories mentioned previously in this paper, responses to interview questions 1, 2, and 3 revealed the following themes:

- innovative move away from traditional reading instruction
- real world applications of knowledge and skills
- opportunities to connect with peers and professionals to make learning more relevant
- opportunity for students to consider multiple viewpoints.

Since one of the inclusion criteria for the study was that the teacher used authentic audiences in their classroom, this question guided the exploration of junior high teachers' perceptions in defining an authentic audience. Participants used multiple platforms to provide an authentic audience for their students. These platforms included FlipGrid, Glogster, Edmodo, Prezi, Google HangOuts, Skype, KidBlog, email, and BlogSpot were the platforms named. These platforms are blog sites, video conferring sites, and chat pages.

The authentic experience provided to students varied by participant. In some cases, teachers utilized these platforms for students to conduct and share their research. Much reading is involved when conducting research, however, the email and video conferring platforms, such as Google HangOuts, allowed students to discuss topics with experts in the field, thereby providing some real-world information about that topic. Other participants used the blogging platforms, such as KidBlog, Blogspot, and Glogster, to allow students to participate in book club discussions with students in other areas. Video and presentation platforms, such as FlipGrid and Prezi, were often utilized for students' culminating activities where they presented a final project on the novel or other texts they were reading.

Innovative Move Away from Traditional Reading Instruction

One theme that became clear from the data analysis was that teachers perceived the use of authentic audiences in the classroom as a move from what they called traditional reading instruction to a more innovative method of facilitating learning. As stated in the problem statement, reading motivation is a struggle for many junior high

reading teachers. This perceived struggle was an impetus for some participants to provide an authentic audience to their students. Participant 1 shared:

I was struggling with the grade level I was teaching, and the district was beginning to paying teachers to start innovating. I have always had an interest in teaching outside of the box with technology in the class Since I wanted to become and innovator and embark into the 21st century of teaching my students.

Participant 3 stated, “A team member and friend helped me to step away from my traditional method of teaching to utilize the digital world.” Teachers have struggled with student boredom and student achievement in reading classes and sought ways to address this struggle. Participant 5 shared this struggle by revealing:

Well I have 20 plus years of teaching and I have taught so many different reading programs that have come in like gang busters strong, it was the shiniest new thing at the time, and they fizzle out because the kids eventually get bored with it. It’s tedious. It’s monotonous. And so, to try to keep the kids engaged, I wanted to try something different. So that was my preference for stepping out of the comfort zone of the traditional, pre-scripted programs. To try to keep them engaged. To keep them learning.

Participant 6 echoed this struggle when stating:

The majority of the students I taught struggled with reading and the more I researched I found that if they don’t start reading in junior high, they would struggle throughout school. I decided the current program, READ180, wasn’t

cutting it so I had to do something different; drastic to help them catch on to reading.

Participants also reflected on student comments and current practices, expressing the need to increase engagement and improve student discussions around books and concluding that a more innovative process in the classroom, such as use of authentic audiences, might facilitate these improvements. Participant 10 shared:

My students hated reading, but not really, you know? They always loved the books. I heard, ‘Mr. _____, can we just read? Do we have to answer all those questions?’ or ‘do we have to do that report?’ I realized they just wanted to read and talk. I mean, I wouldn’t want to have [to] answer someone else’s questions or do a book report every time I read a book. I just like reading for – reading. So, yeah, I thought this sounded like a great way to get kids to read more. Well, not just read more – but to enjoy reading more.

This boredom and lack of motivation was expressed by participant 12, also, as a reason to move to more innovative teaching practices:

I found that students discussions sounded bored, contrived, and lazy. I wanted to motivate them to be more passionate and involved with the books. I realized that the peer group is the most important group, and they love getting likes and comments on their social media posts they send out to the world, basically, so, I wanted to find an avenue like that where they could post their thoughts on books.

Other participants moved to, what they considered a more innovative way of teaching reading, due to connections with other teachers who sought them out and

encouraged them to collaborate. This type of support system and peer pressure, so to speak, is shown by this statement from participant 7:

Well, I had a colleague who suggested it (authentic audience) based on a professional book she read. She wanted a coworker to participate. So, I thought it sounded like a great idea. I decided to do it. It was something I thought was a great idea. Kind of like a pen pal project. Well, an email project.

Participant 9 had a similar experience with a colleague who encouraged her.

I have a coworker in a grade below me, and she wanted me to join her blog to have my students converse with her students about books, since my students read the books last year her students were reading this year...she begged me.

The theme of moving to a more innovative way of teaching was a prevalent motivator found in participants' responses to the interview questions. Teacher felt that their students were bored, unmotivated, and not engaged in the act of reading. They felt that student responses to questions were contrived and that students were, as expressed by participant 11, "...[not] very articulate." Teachers perceived that using authentic audiences was a way to improve reading instruction.

Real-World Application of Knowledge and Skills

Another theme that emerged from the interview data was that authentic audiences provide an opportunity for students to apply their knowledge and skills in a real-world application. As shown in the previous discussion around a move to a more innovative teaching practice, students can feel that their reading assignments in class lack relevance to their lives, seem contrived, and are created with preconceived "answers" in mind.

Participants described an authentic audience as an opportunity to move away from this. For example, participant 1 stated, “I think of an authentic audience means something that is genuine. An authentic audience is when students work to understand real-world applications with someone.” Participant 2 likened an authentic audience to her own experience as a professional and shared the need for students in junior high to have a similar experience:

An authentic audience is any audience that is not the teacher, classroom administrators, the classroom peers. In the real world, an authentic audience is the audience who you work for, a boss, a coworker, a company, a school. In my classroom, it was students and adults out in the real world.

Participant 9 also connected her own professional experiences to those of her students when stating:

So, um, when I think of an authentic audience, I think of, like, me - when I'm working. As a teacher, my audience for my writing is my colleagues, like in a staff meeting, and my students in the classroom, and my administrators and the parents of my students. Those are the people that judge my work, so to say...

Participant 3 stated:

When I think of an authentic audience, I immediately think of what authentic means which is something that is true, real, and genuine. An authentic audience provides students with a genuine audience to help them understand my objectives, well, the state's and school's objectives. And mine too.

Some teachers felt that having preconceived ideas for responses to assignments made the assignment and reading inauthentic and lacked a real-world application. Participant 10 felt some of the assignments and activities in the reading class was not authentic. She described her own reading activities, and explained that, as a reader, she never has to write a book report or essay. She explained his by saying:

Hmmmm...well, authentic to me means that it's not me. Does that make sense? Authentic means real and objective. I'm not really objective, right? Because, I have a preconceived idea of what I expect from every assignment or questions. And, I am bound by rubrics and grading scales. My evaluations are inauthentic, because they are judged on a standard created by others not even in the classroom. But an authentic audience, I think, is one that can give thoughtful, unbiased feedback to a student without the constraints of the expectations set by a school district or state agency. Instead, it's a real-world audience that students can communicate and share with to gain varying perspectives and insights without the underlying agenda of preconceived expectations. For example, after a student reads a novel, they have to do something for me that "proves" they understood it.

This same idea is expressed by participant 12:

Well, let's see...an authentic audience to me is something that is not contrived with, like a preconceived answer or expectation. It's like me reading a book and talking openly with friends about it instead of answering pre thought out questions

that someone feels they already know the answer to. So, in my classroom, an authentic audience is someone like peers or people outside of me. Not me.

Opportunities to Connect with Peers and Professionals to Make Learning more Relevant

The next theme that emerged reflected teacher perceptions that an authentic audience provided students with connections that made learning more relevant. A common statement throughout the interview was the teacher saying, “not me.” It is often the case that the audience for all student assignments, reading responses, essays, reports, and even just thoughts and perspectives is exclusively the teacher. Participants expressed the idea often that an authentic audience gave students valuable opportunities to connect with peers and even professionals, making their learning more relevant. Participant 2 felt, “Authentic audiences in classrooms might include experts in the field, clinicians, or an audience from another school through multi-media and internet.”

Participant 4 stated:

Well, for me, an authentic audience for my students is connected to anybody but me. Because for them to respond, if they're just writing to me it's just very rare in any kind of professional setting that you're writing to only just one person. You tend to be writing to a variety whether they could end up choosing to be a blogger and that's the whole world, right? It's a completely different audience. It's a completely different way you choose to respond, and being able to have that is tremendous because kids need to learn how to respond to not just one person.

Participant 4 gave a detailed example of her move from the peer group to the professional group in her answer. She initially began with finding blogs for students to connect her learners with other students. She then sent the blog site to parents. After that, she shared the site with her school and eventually her entire district. Finally, she contacted a liaison to a local engineering group that had previously worked with the school and sent the blog link to those professionals. This perception of an authentic audience being an opportunity to connect with peers and professionals was continued with participant 5 who said, “Let’s see, an authentic audience is when you are actually interacting with another person or with other people.” This same perspective was expressed by participant 6 with, “When I think about the words ‘authentic audience,’ I think of interacting with real people.”

Further, participant 7 stated:

Authentic Audience means that the people reading or responding to a student’s thoughts and work is someone out in the community or out in the world; someone not in the student’s classroom or school. I think it’s someone the students don’t know in everyday life. It can even be in the industry about what the work is done. For example, if a student is doing a report on some nonfiction reading about whales, the student could send it to a marine biologist. That would be a real audience.

Participant 7 described in detail an assignment where students chose their own research topics, read extensively on those topics, and shared their drafts of their reports with professionals in the field. She gives the example of a student who did a project on grizzly bears and sent his paper to a park ranger who worked at Glacier National Park in

Montana. Another one of her students from Africa did research on ideas to improve access to water in her hometown community in Africa. That student sent her paper to a member of the Peace Corp. Participant 8 discussed her perceptions of an authentic audience of peers with:

Oh, let's see. An authentic audience...is an opportunity for a student to discuss their reading with someone besides me or a classmate they see every day. Instead, they can discuss with someone else, outside the school. I even try to get students for them to talk to in other states and other countries.

Participant 9 further emphasized the importance of the peer group and industry professionals as components of an authentic audience by stating:

With junior high students, the audiences are their peers, their parents, their teachers, but mostly their peers. That's the most important group to them at this age. So, I think an authentic audience for students is a group of peers. One that isn't inside their own classes, but outside. Now, that's for their thoughts and opinions on the books they read. I guess an authentic audience for their work would be other teachers or other adults. Maybe professionals like authors and writers. Yeah.

Participant 9 went on to describe the success she had with her seventh-grade readers:

I sent my blog to other teachers I found on social media, and their students logged in and found my students. It's amazing the connectivity these kids have. They find each other - some reading the same books. Some reading different.

They just talk (well, type) and go on and on about what they are reading. It's great.

Connections with peers continued to be a common theme throughout the interviews.

Participant 11 excitedly shared her experience with peer to peer connections outside the classroom:

My first move to bring authentic audience was to bring in students that are their peers to “practice” with them. I chose students who were recommended by their teachers. My greatest fear that this would BLOW up in my face like a volcano. Students who are in resource classes are very aware they are behind their peers. I didn't want to create a situation where they felt mocked or intimidated by their disability. After putting my plan in action (jumping through administrative) hoops, my hard work unfolded and it was a success. My students were excited when their new “friends” came to help them. Normally these kids would not know each other but this program bridged a gap. I just wanted my students to practice [book] discussions but it led to more than I could imagine. My students would ask them questions about their schoolwork and weren't intimidated to ask for help plus new friendships formed.

The theme of opportunities to connect with peers and professionals to make learning more relevant was a prevalent perspective expressed during data collection. Teachers placed great emphasis and value on the positive consequences of students interacting and communicating with peers and professionals. Participant 4 and participant

9 were particularly enthusiastic and passionate about their experiences, often surprising themselves with the remembrance of how successful the practice was.

Opportunity for Students to Consider Multiple Viewpoints

The final theme found in the interview data is the perception that teachers saw authentic audiences as an opportunity for students to consider multiple viewpoints. This is an important component of education in that participants felt being the only audience for student work and thoughts did not motivate or engage students. Rather, having this broader audience led to increased engagement and motivation to read and share their thoughts on their reading. Participant 1 stated, "...they got to discuss with each other back and forth, uh, about the topic...whatever the book or the story we were talking about. So, they actually engaged with their peers...and got actual feedback and their thoughts were being able to be expressed..." When asked for an example, participant 6 said:

An example I think of is when immediate or quick feedback from our audience just like when a host of a talk show or the laughing you hear on a talk show. The people are real and their laughter is a sign of interacting with the show...I started with folder swapping with the sixth-grade class so they could get feedback when they answered questions...they would get to discuss in person with their partner.

Participant 11 emphasized the importance of these various points of view by highlighting the immediate feedback the platforms for authentic audiences provided by disclosing that she physically takes her students to other classrooms to practice discussions. Even participant 2, who often offered discrepancies to the data collected, stated, "Authentic

audiences are part of the nature of reading and writing, right? Projects led to sharing. Discussions in front of people, right? Book clubs, writer's groups. It's just a natural thing," illustrating the perception that authentic audiences provide an opportunity for students to be exposed to various viewpoints when discussing reading and reading responses.

Participant 4 was especially enthusiastic about the exposure to various viewpoints. She wanted her students to know that the assignments they did in class had a broader purpose than to earn a grade. She felt it was important that her students were able to express their thoughts and viewpoints to people outside her classroom walls and to even foster some positive change. She explained:

That has so much more relevance than responding to any kind of test or writing to just a teacher. It gives them that sense of somebody else can look at this and maybe it's a peer, maybe it's somebody else. Maybe it's a sixth grader. Maybe it's a high schooler. They don't know who's going to read their things, and when you look at it from being able to broaden out that audience from themselves, it has a huge impact on what I have to say.

Participant 7 pointed out that students were "tired of reading just my responses." When this teacher began supporting her students in the act of sending their work to professionals in the field, they received a lot of feedback and new ideas that both supported and elaborated on their work. Her students had told her that she only gave them "nice comments." Even after receiving feedback from professionals that maybe disagreed with their initial thoughts, students felt that "all grownups" provided "nice comments."

This indicates that students began seeing that different viewpoints were not always a suggestion that their “answer” was wrong or right. Instead, this feedback showed that different people in different areas have different ideas. This taught students that different viewpoints are valuable and worth consideration.

Participant 9 further indicated that multiple viewpoints were a positive outcome of authentic audiences when she said, “So, my students were sharing their thoughts and her students were sharing theirs and they all talked about the books.” Participant 9 continued in a later response with this idea saying, “I don’t provide time at school anymore, either. They do it anyway.” This statement supports the idea that participants felt their students were motivated to seek out differing viewpoints; they wanted viewpoints other than their own or their peers’.

When discussing ways to find her students to connect and hear viewpoints from other students, participant 8 explained, “I found the Global Read Aloud online. I thought it was a great avenue for my students to read the same story and then talk to other students in other states and countries.” When asked about authentic audiences, participant 5 discusses the methods and reasoning behind her decision to give students access to other viewpoints:

I provide it by searching for classes like the global read aloud or other classes that are doing the same lessons that we’re doing and linking up with them. Going to profession blogs or different professional blogs or online different avenues and just finding social media outlets, educational social media outlets, finding out what other teachers are doing to see if we can connect together to, uh, to have an

authentic audience. Something different in a different location so they can have a different perspective and have a different viewpoint.

Participant 3 added, “Students that had the opportunity to interact with other students in real time and face to face to discuss the novel in both classes were reading.” Participant 8 discussed two outlets students had for discussions and stated that she gave no direction or guidance for this discussion in order to “see what the students had to say” to one another.

Participant 12 elaborated on the benefit of experiencing different viewpoints:

You know, junior high kids sometimes feel like they aren't competent. That's a manifestation of the system, I think. Someone is always telling them the "right" answer or the "right" way to think, in my opinion. But with their blogs or videos, even if kids or others responding disagree, kids see they're not "wrong." Now they see there are just different opinions...and that's okay, right? They see that people can think differently, but no one is wrong or right.

Providing opportunities to make connections with others and offering students platforms to be exposed to differing viewpoints emerged as a common theme from data collected. Teachers spoke often about connections with interactions and feedback. Participants placed significant value on these opportunities and the connections that allowed their students to be exposed to feedback from multiple audiences. Multiple participants pointed out that, often, teachers are the only audience for student work and thoughts. Participants' responses to the interview questions clearly indicated that authentic audiences provided a remedy to this issue. Participants perceived that authentic audiences were a way to innovatively improve reading instruction in their classroom.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked what teacher perceptions of the influence of authentic audiences on student motivation, student autonomy, and student relatedness were. The themes that emerged from the interview questions relating to this research question were:

- elevated engagement led to amplified motivation
- heightened feeling of relatedness led to a desire to know more
- increased achievement created a desire for connections
- opportunities for autonomy increased intrinsic motivation

Most of the participants were looking for a way to combat the lack of motivation to read in their classrooms, and they felt that authentic audiences fostered increased motivation, engagement, and, even, achievement. Participant responses indicated that engagement levels grew and amplified overall motivation to read and respond to reading when authentic audiences were employed in the classroom. Students felt that classroom activities and assignments were more related to their lives, and this led to an intrinsic desire to know more. Students performed better in school and, as a result, sought out and asked for more connections. Teachers perceived an increase in intrinsic motivation resulting from opportunities for autonomy in their learning and in their demonstration of learning with these authentic audiences.

Elevated Engagement Led to Amplified Motivation

Overall, participants perceived an increase in engagement levels that led to amplified motivation. Common words and phrases found in the responses include influenced, made all the difference, it's working, drastically, amazing, and tremendous.

Participant 12 reported that the improvements in motivation in her classroom were significant. She went on to elaborate how she no longer must use grades as an extrinsic motivator. She concluded by asking, “That’s amazing, isn’t it?” Participant 9 also reported that students were so motivated, she no longer needed the extrinsic motivator – grades. Students were reading and writing about their reading for no other reason than to know more and connect with others. Participant 10 also saw an increase in engagement that led to amplified motivation. He stated:

The increase in motivation is substantial. I don’t hear the whining anymore about the reading logs, reading responses, or final projects. I get all that from the blog, now. Since I am required to provide a grade for these, I do have to go through the blog and evaluate their responses. However, now, it is about the authenticity of the response – are they thoughtful, passionate, engaged in the blog... I can clearly see that the audience made all the difference in how engaged they were with their reading and subsequent discussions about their reading. If it weren't for the responses of the professionals, I know they would not have been as engaged OR have worked so hard. The students wouldn't have been as motivated as they were without the professionals. I just know it.

Participant 3 shared this example of increased motivation:

I did a character debate where students debated against other characters in the book (I can’t think of the word right now where students pretend to be person) They chose a character and were given a debate topic. Can I just say wow, they

blew my mind with the preparation and the in-depth thinking they did to prepare for the debate?

Participant 4 shared that her students spent much more time engaging with text to prepare their answers to blog prompts and conversations. She shared that discussions were “deeper” and that students were more “willing to express themselves and not hold back” She also passionately stated,

They wanted to continue. They were engaged in reading. They were engaged in writing. They wanted to tell you... the kids were so excited and motivated they wanted to read and write more because they suddenly realized that people were reading their things!

Participant 6 did something a little different and connected her students with younger students in order to become leaders. She shared this:

The very first thing I noticed was their interest and engagement went up. I found they read past the assigned chapter and a thirst for learning. They were eager and excited to engage with the “older kids” and they felt special because that the time the 6th grade teacher and I were the only teachers that were doing it.

She goes on to report, “Before authentic audiences had 80 to 90 percent engagement with authentic audiences, I had 100% engagement.” Participant 7 mirrored these thoughts and stated that her students wanted to do more research projects that they could send to professionals in the field. Unfortunately, that unit was over, and they had to move on. She reports that the students were “very disappointed,” and elaborated with, “I would say they were very motivated...” Participant 7 concluded with:

I can clearly see that the audience made all the difference in how engaged they were with their reading and subsequent discussions about their reading. If it weren't for the responses of the professionals, I know they would not have been as engaged OR have worked so hard. The students wouldn't have been as motivated as they were without the professionals. I just know it.

Teachers reported increases in class lessons and discussions as well. Participant 8 stated that students loved to share their ideas and added:

I have noticed that they are much more motivated to listen to my read aloud and participate in the discussion in class. They ask me more questions than in times past. I think it's because they want to be able to type up their Edmodo responses...The motivation has increased so much. So, so much. One example I can think of is that students ask me if they can check out the book themselves and read it independently. That's never happened before with any other read aloud before...

This statement from Participant 3 clearly sums up the ideas expressed by the participants with regard to the increase in motivation perceived, "At first, I was skeptical but I have seen increased motivation and critical thinking skills emerge from my students. When students have an authentic/genuine experience, it helps them grow as a lifelong learner."

Heightened Feeling of Relatedness Led to a Desire to Know More

Participants' responses indicate a common perception that the increased feelings of relatedness due to the authentic audience use caused students to want to know more just for the sake of learning new information or increasing their skill levels. Participant 1

expressed this idea by saying, “One thing I notice is the hard work my students put a great deal of critical thinking and creative thinking in the target objectives. They become active monitors of their own actions and their teammates to stay on task.” Participant 2 expressed a similar idea with her response, “Students performing for an audience of their family and peers seem to exhibit a strong sense that what they do is part of their life.” Participant 3 perceived that students work harder and had “internal accountability” when they were able to work with an authentic audience.

Participant 4 explained, “They’ve never really experienced this idea that I’m pushing myself out there...and somebody else is going to read it. I saw them being far more concerned about how they wrote. The words they chose.” She went on to describe her thinking behind why they wanted to work harder and know more:

...it started helping students to realize that they were more, really, kind of alike one another than they thought, that they had a lot more in common than they thought. Especially in that, you know, Junior High, you know, hormones filled angst filled Junior highness to discover that, oh my gosh, the emotions that I'm going through, I think I thought it was just me, because I live in my own little world and this own little bubble, and to have somebody comment that they feel the same and help them re-connect back that they're not alone, that they're not the only people feeling this. And, it really improved, it kind of helped change the dynamic of some of the angst that I would see because suddenly they were also feeling they were heard.

Participant 5 also expressed a similar thought about why students who experienced a higher sense of relatedness experienced this desire to know more:

They relate to each other better than relating to, let's say, an adult, to me. They're more open with each other. And, it's like they're not inhibited. Because they have each other to relate to, and they have these different connections that they make with each other that they can't make with me and I can't make with them because I'm a teacher more like a supervisor type role than somebody that's they're equal. But when they're discussing with their equals it's amazing how they relate to each other...

Participant 6 explained that her students felt much more relatedness with their learning, and this led to a change from "forced engagement and learning" to "having a strong desire to learn." Participant 7 shared this example:

They felt they were doing something valuable. One student said, "Finally I'm doing something that means something to me." That was an eye-opener. I do have to say. It motivated ME to find more avenues for students to communicate with grownups in other professions.

Participant 9 shared a similar anecdote about students:

Oh, I hear this ALL the time. "Finally, an assignment about me!" or "This is awesome Mrs. _____. I get to talk about my thoughts!" I think students feel this type of "work" is very relevant to them. I think that's why they work harder on that blog than on some of my other assignments the district mandates I do - because it is relevant.

Participant 9 added, “I have even taken kids to the library, and they ask the librarian to order a certain book that’s not in our library because a blog pal suggested it. I would call that motivation.” She goes on to report:

Oh, they feel that their blog is like a "professional" does, you know? Like the Pioneer Woman blog or political bloggers or travel bloggers. They also feel like "YouTubers" now with their videos. I mean, this is the wave of the future, right? Putting yourself out there on social media? So, they feel a big sense of relatedness, I think. Because they're doing what they see others, grownups, do.

Increased Achievement Created a Desire for Connections

Interview data showed that students felt more confident in their achievements which led to a desire to make more connections. Participants expressed perceptions of increased student confidence, achievement, and desire to express and share with others.

Participant 4 shared:

My students were excited because they started mastering the target objectives from 60% to 85%. Also, students were excited because they were able to use their own electronic device to interact with another class across the world.

And

...the next big kind of “a ha” revelation that hit them was when people started actually responding and commenting, engaging with them over what they wrote. That's when they suddenly wanted to write more. They wanted to do more of this. “How often can we do this?” “Can all of our responses be on here?” You know?

It was like suddenly they couldn't get enough because people were commenting and writing.

Participant 4 continued on to say that some students, when given the opportunity to revise and edit their reading responses with her or their peers, they then wanted to post publicly on the blog. Participant 3 echoed this with:

My students were eager to participate and learn. I noticed their comprehension and communication skills increased. Also, students were so eager to participate they gave up lunch with their friends for the opportunity to interact with another class.

Participant 9 reported that students craved connections as part of their reading expectations and saw their blogs along the same lines as their personal social media platforms they spent so much time on. She illustrated this increased desire with this example:

I have students who aren't the strongest readers picking out books from the library that might be a little too challenging, in my opinion. However, they are not concerned, because they know they have a support network of peers to go to for support. So, I hadn't thought of that, but the blog HAS increased their feelings of competence. That's so cool.

Yet another teacher of struggling readers, Participant 5, said:

Um...compared to the traditional methods of reading, they seem to be more engaged, more connected and, in a sense, they learn more. And they retain the information more. That's important because a lot of the students I teach are

struggling readers. They have a hard time retaining information. But when you put up an authentic audience when they have to think about who they're connecting to, they have a tendency to retain more of the information than before.

Participant 10 compared the difference in achievement before and after providing authentic audiences by saying:

You can always tell a rote, going-through-the-motions answer like I used to get on my worksheets from an engaged, thoughtful, insightful response. On the blog, the comments and questions and conversations are always thoughtful, engaged, and insightful

Participants reported the perception that an increase in achievement which led to a desire for connections. In addition to the work done in school, students made these connections on their own time and without any mandates from the teachers or the curriculum. Participant 9 expressed her appreciation of this by stating, "It's great. They blog with students they will probably never meet, but they make connections over books. Books!"

Participant 10 pointed out that he initially set up the social media platforms and connections, but students continued to seek out connections and supplemental information on what they are learning on their own, now.

Participant 11 noted, "They like connecting with their peers. It's interesting to see their interactions without my involvement." This statement from participant 12 is a clear reflection of this theme, "They kind of sound like adults, you know? They say, 'Hey, my

friend _____ likes that kid of book! I'm going to share your post with him.' That's so cool, huh?"

Opportunities for Autonomy Increased Intrinsic Motivation

Participants perceived an increase in intrinsic motivation due to the autonomy offered with authentic audience use. Participants discussed many ways they offer autonomous opportunities in their classrooms. Some offered autonomy in the discussion platforms online, allowing students to choose what they discussed and with whom they participated in discussions. Other teachers offered choices in books and reading responses. Yet others offered pen and paper options for those who were not comfortable posting their thoughts in a public forum. In each instance, however, participants perceived that autonomous opportunities led to increased intrinsic motivation.

Participants expressed their perceptions of increased intrinsic motivation by reporting that students wanted to explore more, to learn more, to read more, to connect more, to write more, and to think more.

Participant 1 stated that his students have control of their learning in three different social media platforms, and he sees more engagement and motivation from his students when they work on those objectives, as compared to the objectives on which students work outside of the autonomous environment. He concluded with, "Student motivation increased because they want to explore more."

Participant 3 also saw this increase in intrinsic motivation when autonomous opportunities were given to students. He stated, "Student motivation increased because

they want to learn more. I am not pushing them. They are pushing themselves to learn.

He also reported:

I noticed when I let go and let them have more control of their learning to prepare for the Google Hangouts, they worked harder than if I had given them the traditional lesson of a “pretend audience” They were given questions to prepare the sessions and they worked in groups to answer and practice their communication skills. As I walked around to monitor, they needed little help from me and they stayed focus and on task.

Participant 4 proudly exclaimed:

...you could just kind of see it on their face or body language would change and once we started opening these doors for being able to write to a broader audience they were more interested in being able to express themselves. They were more open to taking what they had internally and putting it out in a writing format. And that desire that increased desire to do so more frequently and that increased desire...

Participant 5 mirrored these observations and perceived an increase in intrinsic motivation resulting from the autonomy allowed to her students. She expressed pride in that she no longer needed to offer extrinsic motivators to try to get them to read. She observed an increase in the desire to read and the desire to engage with others. She even went on to describe a situation when a student was supposed to be working on a specific assignment not related to their novel, but she found him sneaking his reading in; hiding

his novel under his desk in order to keep reading so he was ready for his online discussion. She stated:

I see when they were given the autonomy to discuss, it's actually more. It's more elaborate. Their thinking is out of the box as opposed to me giving them a question and answer and getting feedback. When they actually discuss with an audience, I've even heard, overheard, you know, when I'm walking around, I've overheard even ideas that I didn't even think about in the book that these kids are discussing which is above their typical level, academic level...

A common phrase I saw throughout the interview responses was, "I don't have to..." This phrase was often followed by things like offer grades, giving students specific directions or assignments, reminding students to start, continue on, or finish their work, and tell students they 'have' to. Participant 6 reported that she used to give prizes from a "treasure" box, but noticed students were so intrinsically motivated that she didn't need to "bribe" them anymore. Participant 10 stated that, prior to offering autonomy with authentic audiences, getting students to read, write, and work was "like pulling teeth," but with the autonomous opportunities and authentic audiences, he no longer had to use grades or rewards.

Participant 8 reiterated the struggle junior high reading teachers have with motivation and went on to report:

Intrinsic motivation is so difficult to foster with junior high students. So difficult. However, I have seen a huge improvement. Well, not even an improvement. I didn't see any intrinsic motivation before. Now I actually see intrinsic motivation.

Before, I had to use grades or other motivators. Now...well, I don't. I don't even grade their Edmodo responses, and the kids do those enthusiastically. They look very forward to logging in and reading and responding to others' responses.

Participant 9 illustrated this same perception with the following comment:

Oh, this is a big one. Students in my class chose who they blog with. They choose their own books. They choose their own timeframe for participating. I don't have to remind them. I don't have to assign things. They just choose to do it.

Participant 9 went on to say that students no longer wait on her to assign a book or a due date. Her students don't read and respond to their reading with other students outside of the classroom for a grade or to receive praise. They read and respond and work, sometimes outside of the school day, for self-edification. This response from participant 10 further illustrates the increase in intrinsic motivation due to an increased level of autonomy:

Like I said before, they want to blog. They don't blog because I tell them to or because it's for a grade. They blog because they want to do it. It gives them something I'm not able to as a teacher in the classroom. It's not about grades or assignments or praise from me. It's not even about praise from others. It's about connecting with like-minded or even un-likeminded students their age and having real conversations about what they think. Their opinions. Their thoughts. I think that is the secret to increasing intrinsic motivation – allow students to share their opinions and thoughts without the burden of grades. It's a great thing to see.

Participant 12 had a very similar experience leading to the same perception. She also saw an increase in intrinsic motivation illustrated by the fact that she no longer had to do the traditional teacher overseeing of every aspect of student response. She said:

I don't assign a time or an amount. They just do it. So, their feeling of autonomy is, I think, great. They feel that they can go on and make a video or blog post whenever they want about what they want. I don't even have to monitor anymore, because they know I will shut them down if they use any inappropriate language. So, yeah. I think they feel autonomous.

Participant responses to the interview questions demonstrated a perception that providing authentic audience increased engagement, motivation, feelings of relatedness, and achievement. Students sought out connections and differing points of view in order to learn more than they could from texts.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness of junior high students. In Chapter 4, I reported the findings based on the inductive analysis of the data collected. Data were hand coded using in vivo coding and concept coding. The themes that emerged were presented and answered the research questions.

In summary, junior high reading teachers perceived that using an authentic audience is an innovative way to transition away from traditional methods of reading instructions. Some of these traditional methods participants listed were predetermined

questions and answers to reading passages, essays about reading, research reports, and preset discussion questions. In place of this, teachers offered online platforms such as blogs, FlipGrid, Edmodo, and other social media environments to provide opportunities for students to engage with authentic audiences. Participants reported that authentic audiences offered a setting for real world applications of knowledge and skills. Students met and collaborated with peers and professionals outside the classroom walls.

Participants also reported that these opportunities to connect with peers and professionals made learning more relevant. Finally, teachers perceived that authentic audiences provided students with an opportunity to consider multiple viewpoints. In answer to research question 2, teachers perceived that authentic audience influenced the motivation of their students in four ways. One-way authentic audiences influenced the motivation of their student was that elevated engagement led to amplified motivation. Teachers perceived that the more students were engaged with their learning, the more motivated they were to participate. Second, participants perceived that a heightened feeling of relatedness led to a desire to know more. This desire to know more was perceived by teachers as an added component of increased motivation, specifically, intrinsic motivation. Third, teachers perceived that increased achievement created a desire for connections. Students asked for and sought out multiple connections in an attempt to increase their knowledge. Finally, participants perceived that authentic audiences provided opportunities for autonomy which increased intrinsic motivation. There were many statements in the data that showed students no longer needed grades or other

extrinsic motivators to engage in learning. Students who engaged with authentic audiences were intrinsically motivated to learn.

The results of this study have the potential to support educational stakeholders in providing quality instruction and learning opportunities to junior high school students that may increase student motivation. Chapter 5 continues with a review of the purpose and nature of this study as well as the reason it was conducted. Following that is a summary of the key findings, an interpretation of the findings that describe how the findings extend the knowledge in the current literature as well as an analysis of the findings in the context of the conceptual framework that guided this study. In Chapter 5, I also discuss the limitations, recommendations, and implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of how the use of authentic audiences influences the reading motivation, autonomy, and feelings of relatedness of junior high students. The results of this study provide a better understanding of these perceptions, add to the current literature about authentic audiences, and can help educational stakeholders make more informed decisions about instructional reading practices at the junior high level. The conceptual framework lens through which this study was conducted and guided included Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT and Siemens's (2005a) theory of connectivism.

Teacher perceptions regarding authentic audience use with junior high students indicated that an authentic audience is an innovative teaching strategy that can help reading teachers replace traditional methods of reading instruction. Social media platforms such as blogs, FlipGrid, Edmodo, and other social media environments provide opportunities for students to engage with authentic audiences. Participant perceptions were that using authentic audiences offered real world applications of knowledge and skills within the classroom setting. Participants also reported that learning became more relevant for their junior high students because they connected with peers and professionals. In addition, participants reported that authentic audiences allowed and encouraged students to consider multiple viewpoints.

Teachers perceived that authentic audiences positively influenced the motivation of their students. Students were more engaged with their learning, and therefore, were more motivated to read and participate in discussion and lessons about their reading.

Participants also reported that students felt a heightened feeling of relatedness and this led students to want to learn and read more. Participants perceived this phenomenon as an increase in intrinsic motivation. Teachers also perceived that learners sought out multiple connections to increase their knowledge. The autonomy provided by authentic audiences also, according to participants, led to increased intrinsic motivation. Teachers felt that students who engaged with authentic audiences were intrinsically motivated to learn.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked how teachers described an authentic audience. Four themes emerged from interview data that answered RQ1. First, participants perceived that an authentic audience is an innovative move away from traditional reading instruction. Participants often used the words “new” and “not the teacher” to describe what an authentic audience is. These perceptions aligned with Hoch et al. (2019) who pointed out that literacy experts feel teachers need to use new literacy practices to increase motivation and achievement. This finding aligned with the ideas of Neugebauer and Blair (2020) who found that elementary students were more motivated by authentic reading activities that were not limited to assignments and end goals dictated and limited by the school’s more traditional literacy objectives. Carrillo (2017) reported that students were more motivated by publishing their writing online than the more traditional practice of turning the final draft into the teacher. Pandya and Low (2020) posited that an audience for student work can no longer be simply addressed, as has been the traditional practice in school. Instead, students should engage with audiences and consider the viewpoints of

those audiences (Pandya & Low, 2020). In describing what an authentic audience is, participants reported similar beliefs. Participant responses reflected the perception that authentic audiences are a new and different destination for student work where students can receive feedback from those outside their classroom. This feedback can provide students with differing perspectives and increase student motivation.

Another theme that emerged was that authentic audiences provide real world applications of knowledge and skills. Teachers perceived that an authentic audience allows students to work on genuine tasks instead of contrived lessons with predetermined outcomes. This theme is aligned to the findings of Andenoro et al. (2017), who put forth that, at the college level, students and professors felt authentic audiences include industry professionals and the opportunity to solve real-world issues and problems. Similarly, this theme is aligned with the findings of Hermann-Wilmarth et al. (2017), who conducted a study a study in which elementary students wrote letters to the author of a book they were reading and created public service announcements. The results of this study also aligned with a study conducted by Stover et al. (2016) in which college student participants shared that authentic audiences allowed them to put the strategies they had been learning into practice. These perceptions as well as the corresponding studies are worth noting with regards to instructional strategies and student perceptions about assigned activities. It appears, as evident in both this study as well as in the literature, that students of all ages appreciate having a real-world application for their work as opposed to curriculum based, one-size-fits-all activities. It was encouraging that participants perceived authentic audiences can provide this real-world application.

Yet another theme that emerged in answer to research question is that authentic audiences provide opportunities to connect with peers and professionals to make learning more relevant. Participants perceived that providing opportunities for students to connect with others was a defining element in describing authentic audiences. This finding is aligned with Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT and the assertion that students need to feel socially connected by contributing to a social destination beyond oneself or the classroom setting. This theme also aligned with Garcia et al.'s (2015) finding that college students felt an increase in relevance when they connected with others through blogs. This study confirmed promoting connections outside the classroom walls is a significant component of authentic audiences. In addition, providing students with activities that are relevant is shown, in both this study and the current literature, to have a positive influence on student motivation. This finding is worth considering when creating learning activities as well as when designing formative and summative assessments.

Another theme that emerged was that authentic audiences provide opportunity for students to consider multiple viewpoints. This supports Siemens's (2005a) theory of connectivism which suggests that learning is constructed by considering various opinions through multiple connections. This theme also aligned with Aksal et al. (2013) who found that college students constructed learning and new knowledge based on connections with others. Likewise, college students in the Garcia et al. (2015) study reported learning from multiple viewpoints with connections provided by authentic audiences. In my study, data analysis showed that students received various opinions and points of view when they offered their assignments and opinions to multiple audiences,

and teachers perceived that this varied feedback from multiple connections led to new learning, as posited by Siemens. This was a surprising finding since students of this age group are often seen as developmentally self-centered. It is noteworthy that even students at the junior high level were perceived to value multiple viewpoints and various opinions. This finding further supports Siemens' theory and has the potential to improve instructional practices.

The results of my study confirmed the themes present in current literature that defines authentic audiences but extends the results by more elaborately describing what an authentic audience is and illustrating the possibilities at the junior high level. Overall, the results of the data analysis showed that teachers perceived authentic audiences as the utilization of technology to offer junior high students an innovative way to move beyond traditional teaching practices, learn from connections with peers and professionals, and apply newly learned skills to real-world situations. Though most participants used technology to provide authentic audiences, a few did have other avenues to ensure those who could not or did not want to use technology still had the opportunity to engage with an audience outside the classroom walls. One teacher had journal pals write back and forth with older students. Another mailed letters. Technology is a convenient and possibly critical component in providing authentic audiences. However, other options could be found for sharing student work outside the classroom walls without the use of technology. This is a missing component in the current literature, and it is a topic worth exploring more.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked what teacher perceptions of the influence of authentic audiences on student motivation, student autonomy, and student relatedness are. Four themes emerged to answer RQ2. One theme was that elevated engagement led to amplified motivation. This theme aligned with many of the studies in the current literature. Liu et al. (2018) found that elementary students were more engaged with a project and motivated to succeed when engaged with a social network. Likewise, Anderson et al. (2017) and Puttick et al. (2015) found that high school students were more engaged and more motivated when authentic audiences were part of students' learning tasks. This theme also aligned with studies at the college level. Kaldor and Flacks (2015), Yearata et al. (2015), and Andenoro et al. (2017) all reported on studies which demonstrated that college students were more engaged and more motivated when authentic audiences were included in their instructional practices. My study adds to the current literature by placing similar results at the junior high level. It is not surprising that adolescents in junior high seemed to also be more engaged and motivated by authentic audiences. This age group is a very social group and adding the social aspect to the learning environment seemed to lead to higher levels of engagement as it has been shown to do at other levels.

A second theme that emerged from data analysis was that heightened feelings of relatedness led to a desire to know more. This theme aligned to current studies. Anderson et al. (2017) found a similar theme at the college level in that students felt an increase in motivation when given the opportunity to connect with students in other schools, teachers

in other schools, community members, and professionals. Peterson and Mosley-Wetzel (2015) pointed out students' feelings of relatedness and motivation increase when there is an authentic audience with whom to share their opinions and be exposed to multiple perspectives. Maulana et al., (2016) posited that feelings of relatedness were a significant motivator for high school students. This theme was presented in a study conducted by Zainuddin (2018) in which data analysis indicated that relatedness is a factor in improving intrinsic motivation. My study findings broaden the knowledge in the current literature by extending these findings to the junior high level. It was not surprising to see that junior high students were also perceived to seek out the relevance in their learning activities.

The third theme that emerged was that increased achievement created a desire for connections. This theme aligned well with the underlying conceptual framework. First, students need to feel efficacious in school and real-world challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Second, students need opportunities to connect with others to be engaged and motivated (Siemens, 2008). The findings were also in alignment with the study conducted by AlDahduoh et al. (2015) as well as with the Garcia et al. (2015) study in which learners experienced success and sought out connections with others outside their own classroom walls. Study results were also in alignment with Liu et al. (2018) that found elementary students sought connections with others as their achievement grew. Again, my study extends the finding in the current literature by adding similar findings at the junior high level. Also, this finding is in alignment with the other findings in the current study that suggest this age group is motivated by social connections. It is worth

considering that the abundance of evidence indicating students seek out and desire social connections be noted by instructional stakeholders when creating curriculum.

The last theme that emerged was that opportunities for autonomy increased intrinsic motivation. This theme aligned with Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT which posited that autonomous learning fosters engagement and increases a student's motivation to succeed. This theme was reflected by Lee and Hannafin (2016) who suggested that learners are more motivated when they have some autonomy in their learning. Fischer (2017) also pointed out that autonomy in school has the potential to increase student motivation. Kiefer and Pennington (2017), as well as Williams, et al. (2016), conducted studies at the junior high level that showed providing autonomy in the classroom can improve student motivation. Their findings indicated that more student autonomy is needed in junior high classrooms. Teachers who do not embrace opportunities to provide students with some autonomy in either their learning activities or their assessments may continue to struggle with student motivation. It is interesting to note the relief and enthusiasm demonstrated in participant responses with regards to the changes they reported on in their students once students were given opportunities for autonomy in their activities.

Overall, responses to the interview questions indicated that teachers perceived a significant increase in motivation when students knew their work would be viewed by more than just the teacher in the classroom. Teachers felt that this increase in motivation was a direct result of the social destinations teachers provided for their students' work. Even the one discrepant case stated some positive results of using authentic audiences.

Despite stating that students were not more motivated, the participant pointed out that, in the real world, the audience for readers' thoughts is not a teacher, but peers and professionals. Overwhelmingly, teachers were excited about and impressed by the improvement they saw in their students' motivation, engagement, and achievement when they provided authentic audiences.

When offered an authentic audience for their work, students showed passion and excitement about completing their learning tasks. As participant responses showed, this was in stark contrast to their attitudes about learning prior to the use of authentic audiences. In addition, these findings are in stark contrast to the current literature on the state of junior high students' motivation levels. It is worth noting that, though providing authentic audiences may not be the answer to the declining motivation of junior high students, it is one strategy that can begin to address the problem faced by many junior high reading teachers in the United States.

It was surprising that there was only one discrepant case. Education is not one-size-fits-all, so the overwhelming percentage of responses indicating the authentic audiences fostered a significant increase in motivation and achievement is encouraging for the possibility of addressing the struggles teachers have with motivating this age group. It is worth noting that the nature of the strategy to provide authentic audiences was shown to provide the differentiation needed in instructional practices to meet the needs of all learners. Participants taught all levels of students including English language learners, special education students, and students who excel regularly. It is interesting to consider that authentic audiences proved to be beneficial for all these levels of learners.

This study revealed that teachers need support when using authentic audiences. It is important for educational administrators to understand that teachers who want to use authentic audiences by engaging with innovative strategies and technologies will need support to do so. Respondents' responses indicated this often. Some only began to use authentic audiences because a colleague encouraged them. Other learned about this through professional development opportunities. In many cases, teachers depended on partnering teachers to implement the use of authentic audiences effectively. Beginning to use any new innovative practice presents challenges, and the many struggles teachers already face could prove to be a barrier in beginning the use of authentic audiences. Support for teachers should come in the form of ideas for possible authentic audiences, support with the technology required, and support during the implementation of authentic audience use with regards to student safety and privacy.

Limitations of the Study

As is the nature of qualitative research, there were limitations to this study. The nature of qualitative research assumes that the results of the study will be subjective in nature and bound by the interpretation of the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, "qualitative researchers do not believe or claim that there are universal, static 'truths' but rather assert that there are multiple, situated truths and perspectives" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 5). Therefore, it will be up to educational stakeholders who want to explore the possibilities of authentic audience use to determine if the findings of this study are applicable to their learning environments.

One limitation was the narrow focus of the participant pool. I only interviewed junior high school teachers in a public-school setting. I did not interview junior high students which would have possibly provided more insight and deeper understanding of the influence of authentic audiences on motivation as well as their feelings of autonomy and relatedness. This data would have offered understanding from the learner's perspective as to the exact influence of authentic audiences on motivation.

Other limitations included time and the smaller sample size of the participant pool. A larger sample size over a longer period of time might have yielded additional data or more discrepant data and may have allowed for greater transferability. Ravitch and Carl (2016, p.189) stated that the purpose of qualitative research is "not to produce findings that can be directly applied to other settings and contexts." With regards to transferability, it was my responsibility as the researcher to provide the richest most descriptive data possible utilizing the sample size. I have to allow interested stakeholders to determine how much of the findings of this study can apply in other contexts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for further research are grounded in the strengths and limitations of this study on teacher perceptions of junior high student reading motivation when using authentic audiences as well as the literature reviewed in chapter 2. Additional qualitative research is recommended to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of authentic audiences on motivation, feelings of relatedness, and feelings of autonomy. The results of a student study could potentially show in more detail how educational stakeholders could implement this teaching strategy to better motivate

and engage junior high students. The student research might be more transferable than the current study, in that it would bring to light the perceptions of this age group in general. In addition, future qualitative studies should consider a larger sample of junior high teachers in different settings, i.e., private schools, home schools, and schools outside the United States, could yield broader generalizations that might possibly add more evidence to the current literature that authentic audiences have the potential to influence increased motivations and achievement at the junior high level. There is a large gap in the literature about authentic audience use at the junior high level, and these recommended studies could help fill that gap.

Implications

The results of this study and the teacher perceptions presented may have the potential to inform educational stakeholders about providing quality instruction and learning opportunities, including the use of authentic audiences, to junior high school students that may lead to increased student motivation. Since today's students are part of a digital and social society, it is important that teachers implement instructional practices that have the potential to increase the declining levels of reading motivation currently evident at the junior high level.

Social Change

Implementing the use of authentic audiences in the junior high classroom has the potential to effect positive social change as can be concluded by the findings of this study. The results of this study showed that junior high students felt more motivated to engage in learning when there was an authentic audience for their work. Participants

shared many ways to provide authentic audiences which included blogging their reading responses, sharing their research projects with professionals in the field, making FlipGrid videos after reading assignments, and connecting with younger students. This attempt to increase motivation can lead to positive social change in that increasing motivation at the junior high level, where it is historically low, can improve reading achievement (Lau, 2016; Locher et al., 2019; Neugebauer & Blair, 2020; Sofiana & Mubarok, 2020). Improved achievement can result in a better educated group of learners entering high school who are better prepared to face the challenges presented there.

A second implication for positive social change is that teacher perceptions of successful instructional strategies can potentially lead to increased use of more effective teaching methods. Teachers are a social group, and they listen to one another. As shown by some of the interview responses, some teachers implemented authentic audiences at the request or suggestion of another teacher. As a result, they found that authentic audiences resulted in greater feelings of autonomy, relatedness, and connectivity in their students. Teachers trust the input from other teachers. Other teachers, if made aware of this study, may also try the strategies to implement authentic audiences in the classroom and benefit as well.

A third implication for positive social change is that with the use of authentic audiences, students could become better prepared for the expectations of their post-secondary endeavors. Colleges and employers expect that students are collaborative, self-determined, and open to new perspectives. As shown by this study, authentic audiences in the junior high classroom have the potential to provide opportunities for junior high

students to become engaged and autonomous participants in their learning while seeking out new connections to broaden their understandings. This is a significant implication for learners at the junior high level; this practice can lead students to being more effective 21st century learners.

Recommendation for Practice

Students, in their personal lives, are connected socially and have instant access to ever changing information. Adolescents spend much of their day connecting with others through social media sites online. Members of this age group are digital citizens in society with immediate access to information, and they expect immediate responses and feedback (Anagün, 2018). This study posits that junior high students need these same technological connections in their educational lives to see learning as relevant and where they can engage with others and share ideas. The results of this study could be used by teachers, curriculum writers, principals, and other educational stakeholders to guide the creation and implementation of practices that integrate the use of authentic audiences.

Conclusion

The 21st century has presented educators with many challenges that cannot be successfully met with 20th century instructional practices. The days of teachers being the sole proprietor and distributor of knowledge while students receive knowledge passively need to come to an end. Today's learners are a connected, integrated, and active group in online social media. They connect with large groups through Instagram, FlipGrid, SnapChat, etc., and they seek and are granted instant feedback. The more "likes," the better. They have access to infinite amounts of knowledge through the internet and are no

longer bound to the knowledge obtained from textbooks and hard copy materials as their parents and grandparents were. The world of these students is drastically different, and so must be the instructional environments in which they learn. As reading motivation levels decline, changes in instructional practices must improve. The results of this study have the potential to support educational stakeholders in providing quality instruction that could improve the declining state of junior high reading motivation by mirroring, in some way, the connected and social environments in which students already reside in their personal lives and will be expected to reside in their post-secondary lives. Changes in instructional practices are needed to ensure the success of students. Teachers must be a willing and motivated part of this change. Teachers are a critical component of this kind of change, and, therefore, must be provided the support and development needed as they face the ever-changing learners in their charge. The benefits of instructional practices such as authentic audiences are clear in the literature as well as in this study. It is up to teachers, administrators, and other educational stakeholders to encourage instructional practice reform that embraces the digital and social connections available to today's learners to promote collaborative, thoughtful, and engaged learning that results in citizens who welcome multiple perspectives and understand the ever-changing nature of today's world.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introductory Statement

Thank you for your time. I appreciate your willingness and generosity in helping me conduct this study for my dissertation. The purpose of the information gathered from this interview is to gain individual perspectives regarding the use of authentic audience and the perceived impact on student motivations. I am most interested in individual opinions, experiences, and perceptions.

For the purposes of this study, “authentic audience” is defined as an audience broader than the teacher and peers inside the classroom walls that better represents a “real” audience made up of engaged peers, community members, families, and experts that can provide feedback which may better reflect the interactive and collaborative environments students will face in their post-secondary endeavors.

Intrinsic motivation is defined as a desire to achieve or participate for the enjoyment or interest of it.

Competence is defined as the feeling of being able to succeed or have efficacy at a task.

Relevance is defined as feeling that the task or learning relates to one’s life, and autonomy is defined as feeling that one has choices.

Do you need me to clarify any of these terms?

Interview Questions

1. Let’s begin with what “authentic audience” means to you. How would you describe what an authentic audience is? Please give an example?

2. What led you to decide to provide an authentic audience? That's interesting to me. Can you tell me more?
3. How do you provide authentic audiences in your classroom? Could you elaborate on that?
4. What have you noticed about student motivation when utilizing these types of authentic audiences?
5. What are your perceptions of how authentic audiences use relates to student intrinsic motivation? Can you give me an example?
6. What have your witnessed regarding students' feelings of competence when they have this authentic audience? Can you give me more detail?
7. How do you perceive that the authentic audiences you provide are impacting these motivations in students?
8. Thinking about the time in your classes prior to utilizing authentic audiences to now when you are, what changes have you noticed in the differences in motivation?
9. What have you seen with regards to student autonomy when using (insert the type of authentic audience here, i.e. blogs, twitter, etc.)? Can you give me an example?
10. Thinking about student relatedness, what have you observed when students have an authentic audience for their work? Can you give me a specific example?

11. What are some examples of how students connect with others outside your classroom?
12. What impact to motivation have you witnessed with regards to these connections?
13. Is there anything else you'd like to add to your responses on authentic audiences and motivation that I did not cover?

Concluding/Closing Statement

Thank you, again, for your time and for sharing your perceptions with me today. I will store this data on my computer, not on a cloud, and your name will be kept confidential with the use of a pseudonym. I will be emailing you a transcript of the interview that you can read and correct if needed as well as for final approval of accuracy. Nothing will be turned in or discussed without your final approval.