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Culturally Relevant Pedagogy And Student Motivation: An Applied Study Of Their Relationship In Fourth Grade English Learners

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CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND STUDENT MOTIVATION: AN APPLIED STUDY OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN FOURTH GRADE ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of English as a Second Language.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Setting the Stage

“Bridging the gap” of student achievement in diverse populations has become the center of discussion in school districts across the United States. Indeed, school districts dedicate much of their time and resources to programs that are designed to bridge the gap, whether they are literacy programs, math programs, credit recovery programs, or programs that focus on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). This last example, culturally relevant pedagogy, although it doesn’t seem to address a specific academic goal directly and is therefore often overlooked, could have what it takes to go farther than a new literacy program whose goal is to help all students read at grade level. Literacy is an extremely important goal, should continue to be a goal for all students, and new strategies and programs can help teachers address it, but if student scores do not improve as a result, oftentimes good teachers can be punished because their school did not make “adequate yearly progress” according to test scores. When the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was implemented, and measuring student progress via standardized tests increased, the performance gap between white students and students of color remained (Hollie, 2001).
My Research

I will look specifically at the practical implementation of a pedagogical framework that is culturally relevant in the classroom and its connection to student motivation. While based in the theoretical, I will examine specifically how feelings of motivation are observed in and reported by English learners (ELs) when they are educated in culturally relevant ways. I see culturally relevant pedagogy as somewhat of a lofty goal, and more of a mindset than a classroom strategy, but educators must have practical guidance in planning lessons that they know will have a lasting effect on their students’ lifelong journeys in learning. I am studying student motivation because student motivation predicts success (De Castella, K., Byrne, D., & Covington, M., 2013; Martin, K., Galentino, R., & Townsend, L., 2014; Slanger, W. D., Berg, E. A., Fisk, P. S., & Hanson, M. G., 2015; Zumbrunn, McKim, Buhs, & Hawley, 2012). I am aiming to strengthen the link between culturally relevant pedagogy and student motivation through my applied research with fourth grade ELs.

The theoretical framework I will base my research on is that of Ladson-Billings (1995), which defines a culturally relevant pedagogy as one that includes student success, cultural competence, and social critique at its heart. Student success refers to their academic and personal success, in this case. Students should be empowered by the teaching that takes place. Cultural competence represents the teacher’s ability to communicate the lessons across cultures. In other words, does affirmation of students’ cultural identity exist in the lesson? The definition of culture that I will work with is that of Gonzalez (2005), with culture as a lived experience that includes a person’s life in their home community, school community, and any other community of which they find
themselves to be a part. Therefore, each person’s culture, or lived experience, is different. Social critique is the idea of empowerment through literacy, the idea that what people read is just as important as reading itself, as well as helping students to challenge the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Other frameworks exist, and I will acknowledge some of them here, as I have drawn ideas from them even if I am not emphasizing them as much as Ladson-Billings. For instance, there are the frameworks of Gay and Paris, known as culturally responsive teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogy respectively. Although Gay also uses lived experience as a definition of culture, three out of her five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching mention ethnicity (Gay, 2002). Her five essential elements are to develop a knowledge base about cultural diversity, include ethnic and culturally diverse content in the curriculum, demonstrate caring classrooms, communicate with ethnically diverse students, and deliver instruction that responds to ethnic diversity. Culturally relevant pedagogy puts the student more at the center of deciding how relevant ethnicity is to their personal identity. The stance that Paris takes towards culture and teaching is that we need to adopt a pedagogy that aims to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism. He believes that culturally relevant pedagogy does not go far enough into disrupting the monocultural and monolingual practices of most schools in the United States (Paris, 2012). Although I value his point of view, and believe he may be right that we need to go farther than we have, culturally sustaining pedagogy does not have a checklist, so to speak, to measure whether instruction is culturally sustaining or not, although it can have guidelines. It seems that culturally sustaining pedagogy is mostly a
balance of sustaining all cultures and languages in our pluralistic society, while at the same time recognizing the fluidity of culture and language.

The framework that I will use for looking at motivation will be the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this theory, people have three basic needs that drive intrinsic motivation, or what causes a person to be energized toward an activity or task (Pintrich, 2003). They are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. In this theory, competence refers to being able to master an environment, autonomy is the desire to be self-determining in one’s own behavior, and relatedness is wanting to belong in a group. In this study, I will be measuring the level of motivation, or energization towards the given tasks utilizing the self-determination theory as a framework. This framework fits nicely with a culturally relevant pedagogy because its emphasis on belonging corresponds to cultural competence, and its idea of competence coincides with academic and personal success, while its inclinations towards autonomy are related to social critique by way of self-determining.

**Personal Experience**

The most important desire I have for my students is to provide a meaningful education which propels them towards lifelong learning and successful living. I define success as being able to live life meaningfully, as a free person, and having meaningful connections with others. Success can be different for different people, which is why I am giving a general definition here. My own personal experiences with education and the experiences of those around me have not always reflected this type of meaningfulness, but when they have, it has been wonderful.
Most of my time in high school was spent wishing for graduation to come sooner so that I could get to college and study something interesting. I have seen these feelings of boredom, frustration and disinterest reflected in the students I have taught, including the fourth graders I currently teach. Students are experiencing an educational burnout, sometimes at a very young age. I first saw it while teaching ninth graders. Their lack of motivation as they went through the school day was astounding. A small handful of students were trying to learn and process the content they were being taught. Many others were focused on doing the smallest amount of work possible to get a passing or good grade. Those who did not have graduation or college in mind would simply put their heads down and do nothing. Simply put, most students found school to be irrelevant, or they saw it as a necessary evil to get to the next stage of life.

Fourth graders have not been in school for very long, so not as many have burned out. However, I can already see that the monotony of school is bothersome to a number of my students at this early age. I have witnessed eye rolls, sighs, and frequent disruptions where there should be enthusiasm, smiles, and an eagerness to learn. But who can blame them when rarely a week goes by without a formal test of some sort, measuring students’ readiness to perform on the multiple high stakes tests throughout the year? On top of test-taking, students spend an inordinate amount of class time preparing for the various tests. Some of this is explicitly stated, as in teaching standardized test-taking strategies, and some is less obvious, such as reading a passage and finding the main idea. For example, since knowledge of main idea and detail is a state English language arts standard, it is assumed to be tested on the state standardized tests. Therefore, much effort is put into teaching concepts that will probably be on the test, and
less time is applied to finding the relevancy of the content in students’ lives. For instance, if they read a passage about recycling, finding the main idea could be useful for understanding the passage, but do the students make a connection to the importance of recycling in their own lives? There is nothing inherently wrong with teaching how to find the main idea of a passage, and it is a positive skill to possess. However, public school teachers often feel pressured to stick to a pre-defined set of skills that they must teach students, which makes it hard to go deeper into a subject area or topic if you find that your students are interested.

One area where students could go deeper is that of culture. Earlier in the year, our school had a “culture parade”, where students wore traditional clothing from various places in the world that they had connections to, and performed a fashion show of sorts. Based on parent feedback, we know it was affirming for many students and parents. However, there is so much more that can be studied with regard to culture, and students could find meaning and motivation to learn more in the classroom. It doesn’t have to be an event that begins and ends all in one day. Students could reflect on what their culture means to them, for example, and share that in some form of artwork. I am not saying that this never happens in the classroom or that the day of the culture parade is the only day of the year that culture is celebrated in our school, but I am saying that with all the pressures of standardized testing, there are important subjects such as culture that might not get as much attention as they could.

The advantage for students in elementary school is that much of the content they are taught is still new to them. It can be exciting to see yourself move up a level in reading, or have the lightbulb go on when it comes to fractions. But some students have
already started to show signs of boredom and burn-out. One fourth grade student mentioned to me, this winter, that he plans to move to Atlanta for middle school because he wants to attend the Ron Clark Academy. He has heard that they have a big slide in the school, and that they do a lot of outdoor learning activities, and that schools around here aren’t really his style. Ron Clark Academy is a private middle school that proclaims “teach in ways that promote creativity, innovation, wonder, joy, and a passion for learning” (http://www.ronclarkacademy.com/Mission-Vision-and-Values) as one of their founding principles. Another student told me that she’s not really looking forward to spring break because when it’s over, that means it is time for the state standardized testing to start. Imagine, as a fourth grader, not being able to enjoy a week off because of the constant reminders from teachers and administrators about high-stakes testing.

High school, middle school, or even elementary school can feel pointless if the only focus is on test-preparation or preparation for college. As important as these two goals can be, students should have a relevant experience in school in any grade, with learning that pertains to their life right now, not only in the distant future, as some students experience. When school is relevant to students, I believe they are motivated to learn, and they do learn. I believe that if more teachers were committed to culturally relevant teaching, student interest and motivation would increase, and educational burnout would decrease.

**Culturally Relevant and Critical Pedagogies**

With this in mind, how can we make education relevant for all students all of the time? What is meaningful for students today? One way to look at the answer to this question is through critical or transformative/liberation pedagogy. Critical pedagogy’s
most well-known author, Paulo Freire (1993), saw education as a tool for oppressed
groups of people to educate and transform themselves in order to transform society and
become liberated from their oppression. It was the opposite of top-down education.
Students would lead the way, and the teacher would assist as well as learn with the
students. Student-led education is transformative because students learn about
themselves, where they fit into the socio-economic-cultural structures of the day, and
where inequalities exist. They find ways to change the inequalities, transforming
themselves and the world (Breunig, 2005).

One of the most meaningful educational experiences I ever had during my formal
education was when I studied in Mexico for a semester of college. The program leaned
heavily on the side of experiential learning and encouraged critical thinking and a critical
reading of both texts and the world. It was uncomfortable at times, as I was forced to
question assumptions I had made for my entire life until that point about myself and
others. How different it is to read an article about water pollution (traditional education),
versus visiting a community whose water source had been tainted by pollution from a
nearby factory, and talking to the women who were trying to make a change by opening a
recycling plant in their town. They talked to us about their struggles against big business,
and sometimes against social norms of wanting women to stay at home instead of work.
I began to see connections between different forms of oppression. This had a lasting
impact on my life because I learned that I wanted my life to be about liberation, but I
didn’t know what form it would take. When I’m teaching, liberation should take the
form of cultural relevancy, allowing the students to lead and learn from where they are
towards empowerment and transformation of themselves and society. It is important,
therefore, to examine the relationship between student motivation and practical implementation of culturally relevant teaching with the fourth grade English learners in the classes I teach.

The stakes are high. As teachers, we must concern ourselves with bridging the educational gap in this country that exists within a culturally and linguistically diverse student population. Furthermore, we must ensure that students’ educational experiences are meaningful and beneficial to them in the short and long-term. These are the reasons that I am embarking on a search for the answer to this research question:

- How are feelings of motivation observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways?

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have introduced my research question, which is to find out how feelings of motivation are observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways. I have talked about why it is important to me, to other educators, and why it should be important to all of us. It is important to me because I want my daily life and that of my own children and students to be meaningful and to ultimately transform us all into more just people in a more just society. On a practical note, it is important to teachers because we need strategies that will be successful for a culturally-linguistically diverse population of students, which aid in providing community in the classroom. Everyone concerned with education today should pay attention to this, since teaching to the test has not worked to the benefit of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at studies and literature around culturally relevant pedagogy and student motivation.
Following that, in Chapter Three, I will outline the methods and the processes involved in my research. Chapter Four will document the results of the research, including a complete analysis of the data and explanation of the results. Finally, Chapter Five will reflect on the major learning of the study, looking at its possible implications and directions for future studies in light of previous research, as well as consider the limitations of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Student motivation is at the heart of student academic success. By discovering tasks that produce a high level of motivation in students, and understanding that motivation, we will be helping students on their road to success. Therefore, my research is centered around the following research question:

- How are feelings of motivation observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways?

There has been a growing interest in culturally relevant pedagogy and its implementation in an educational system that is structured around standardized tests, a seemingly hostile environment for culturally relevant pedagogy. A number of aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy have been highlighted in research, such as cultural connectedness and identity (Irizarry, 2007), the negative effects of standardization on culturally relevant pedagogy and on students (Sleeter, 2012), and the importance of individual and societal transformation (Allen and Rossatto, 2009; Freire, 1993; Reynolds, 2007). While researchers such as Sleeter (2012) are calling for more research on the connection
between culturally relevant pedagogy and academic success, this study looks specifically at the students’ perspective via motivation.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Before attempting to analyze student motivation around culturally relevant pedagogy, we must have a working definition of such. Culturally relevant pedagogy has been defined in several ways. Despite relying specifically on the definition put forth by Ladson-Billings (1995) for the purpose of this study, I respect the definitions of other researchers and see them as meaningful and useful. Gay (2010) refers to this type of pedagogy as culturally responsive teaching and defines it as teaching “to and through [students’] personal cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments” (p. 26). Au (2009) highlights that culturally responsive instruction doesn’t just mean good teaching. When it is seen this way, there is a tendency to simply teach from a European American perspective. And Noddings (2003) adds that allowing students the liberty to focus on those things in education that they are passionate about instead of having education for all students be standardized brings us closer to the true aim of public education and will make for happier students. It is important to note that when Noddings refers to happiness, she does not mean a mindless cheerfulness by way of ignoring problems, but rather more self-awareness, societal awareness, and working to make things better. Her book, *Happiness and Education* (2003), describes a strong connection between critical pedagogy and happiness.

The framework that I will use to investigate culturally relevant pedagogy is that of Ladson-Billings, who states that culturally relevant pedagogy is an empowering way to teach students that helps them to examine society critically, challenging the status quo
instead of assimilating into it (Ladson-Billings, 1992). I will highlight three ideas that I have come to see as central to the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy. These three ideas are cultural connectedness and identity, the negative effects of standardization, and individual and societal transformation. Ladson-Billings shares three criteria for culturally relevant pedagogy, which she states are “an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995).” The three central ideas I am using for research are intricately related to Ladson-Billings’ criteria: cultural connectedness and identity speaks to nurturing and supporting cultural competence; the negative effects of standardized testing deals directly with lack of academic success; and individual and societal transformation represents a sociopolitical or critical consciousness. I have termed my categories differently from Ladson-Billings in order to highlight issues that affect the English learners in my school directly, such as standardized testing, identity, and individual transformation.

**Cultural Connectedness and Identity**

A student’s identity relates to their cultural connectedness in that their identity is who they are as an individual, essentially answering the question, “Who am I?” and individuals share experiences with other individuals, which is what creates a cultural connectedness or cultural identity (Meca et al., 2017). When speaking of cultural identity in terms of cultural relevancy in the classroom, it is important to see each student as an individual, and not make assumptions of who they are based upon a preconceived notion of some given cultural identity (Sleeter, 2012). Their cultural identity lies in their lived experience, which each person lives individually while at the same time identifying with
any number of communities (Gonzalez, 2005). Noddings (2003) also makes a case for the importance of individual student differences in education, and how this relates to each students’ happiness. At the same time, teachers must recognize that culture is not completely individual, and incorporate what Au (2009) calls “diverse values” (Au, 2009, p. 180). Guay (2016) defines culture as the shared common experience of a group of individuals in a context. He goes on to say that culture clearly affects motivation, but that the role that it plays in motivation is an underdeveloped topic. In Guay’s view, culture can have an additive effect on motivation, but not a moderating one. In other words, he believes that other more universal needs drive motivation more than culture.

Since more research is needed on this topic, studying student motivation during activities and teaching associated with culturally relevant pedagogy is a step in the right direction. It is worth noting that Guay’s definition of culture as shared experience is different from Gonzalez’ definition as lived experience. However, lived experience does include any community experiences that an individual has in their life. The differences between what Au calls mainstream, or dominant culture values and diverse values, or values that a variety of nonmainstream groups share are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream</th>
<th>Diverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual effort</td>
<td>Working with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal achievement</td>
<td>Well-being of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success measured in material terms</td>
<td>Success measured in spiritual terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People control nature</td>
<td>People live in harmony with nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Mainstream and Diverse Values (Au, 2009, p. 180)
Here mainstream values include concepts such as individual effort and competition, while diverse values, in contrast, include experiences like working with others and cooperation. It is important to recognize that cultures are not as binary or simplistic as this table seems to represent. Many people will have experiences in their lives with both types of cultures. Competition can be valued, and at the same time cooperation recognized as important. Think of how extensively mainstream culture in the United States uses the term \textit{teamwork}, and how it includes cooperation without excluding competition.

Still, acknowledging the diversity of cultures is an important part of culturally relevant pedagogy. Taking into account diverse cultural experiences of students will support cultural competence by bringing about an awareness that lessons should not always be taught in a traditional or mainstream way and should not only include mainstream cultural content, and by affirming the identities of all students. For instance, a teacher should take into account the various worldviews of their students. If one student’s family is living in fear of deportation because of the current political climate and the people in power, then telling them that a particular writing skill will be useful to them in college or high school is not relevant to them. They may wonder if there is a point to learning more about a language they are likely to stop using shortly.

Additionally, the differentiation of lessons, which in the world of public education is generally defined as the teacher anticipating and responding to a variety of student needs by making modifications to lessons, lends itself to student success. Thirdly, students and teachers are in effect questioning the status quo in a society that generally speaking, tends to be more individualistic, materialistic, and focused on achievement. The status quo in
the United States can also be named white mainstream culture. Ideas that do not prioritize white mainstream culture are therefore challenging the status quo. Teachers can achieve this with their students when they have an openness to considering cultural issues in their students’ behavior. Using the example above, instead of trying to get all students to conform to the idea of going to college in the United States, a teacher could take the time to find what truly motivates the students and springboard the learning from that place of motivation. Even if a family is living in fear of deportation, and it is difficult to find motivation, perhaps the student is motivated by what their family wants for them, or a dream that they have, or who they want to become.

**Negative Effects of Standardization**

The second component I will highlight is the negative effects of standardization on diverse population of students, especially the negative effects of standardized tests. This is not so much a component of culturally relevant pedagogy, as it is the reason that we need it. One component of culturally relevant pedagogy is developing students academically (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and the negative effects of standardization stand in the way of this. The obsession, in education today, with standardization and standardized testing is politically motivated and has not been very helpful in closing learning gaps (Sleeter, 2012). Furthermore, it has harmed some culturally and linguistically diverse groups of students (Thompson & Allen, 2012; Lomax, Maxwell, West, Harmon, Viator, & Madaus, 1995).

Sleeter (2012) studied the national reading and math scores of students of color compared to those of white students between 1971 and 2008. In the early years, despite many problems within the education system, progress in bridging the achievement gap
was being made. Sleeter attributes this mostly to the mindset of the day when districts were sending their teachers to trainings on working with diverse populations, as well as a social push towards equity. This is contrasted to the last two decades when the scores of students of color are not showing the growth they were before, and the focus in education has been shifted to standardized curricula and pedagogy (Hollie, 2001).

Since high stakes testing was mandated through NCLB (2002-2015), there have been adverse effects on teachers and students. Students have become more apathetic as a result of teachers’ lack of autonomy in creating interesting and creative lessons due to the necessity of teaching to the test (Thompson & Allen, 2012). The emphasis on standardized testing contributes to two other problems. Thompson & Allen (2012) point out are that more youth, especially African American youth, are being pushed into the “prison pipeline” and the American educational system is becoming more narcissistic. The “prison pipeline” means that some students are punished more harshly than others, and attend prison-like schools with less experienced teachers where they are more likely to be suspended or punished for behaviors that other students, specifically white students, are not, which can in turn result in a higher rate of incarceration in young adults (Thompson & Allen, 2012). Anyone who is not white, and English learners often are not, can be subjected to this “prison pipeline.” An educational system that is narcissistic is one that must appear perfect and superior no matter what. Thompson & Allen (2012) believe that the start of the trend towards over-testing was with the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The US, out of fear and a sense of superiority, could not allow other nations to have better educational systems than ours, and so spiraled into a
full-blown high-stakes testing movement, of which NCLB was a part, and the needs of the adults were put before the needs of the children, the students. In a study that evaluated the use of standardized math and science tests, Lomax et al. (1995) found that students were receiving less quality instruction in high-minority classrooms. Higher order thinking questions were being ignored, and simpler questions that were more likely to be on the standardized test were favored. This could lead to students not qualifying for the types of classes needed for college, and to more apathy among students and higher dropout rates (Thompson & Allen, 2012).

**Individual and Societal Transformation**

The third aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy that I want to take a closer look at is individual, or personal, and societal transformation. Ladson-Billings stated that “the primary goal of culturally relevant teaching is to empower students to examine critically the society in which they live and to work for social change” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 314). This idea is closely aligned with other great educators’ ideas such as Freire (1993) and Hollie (2001). Individual transformation, or liberation, must take place in order for societal transformation to do the same (Freire, 1993). Individual and societal transformation is also congruent with cultural connectedness, and a supportive classroom community is the backdrop for achieving a critical pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

The idea that the aim of teaching should be to work for social change is one that is in contrast to what we often tell students is the aim of education, leaning more towards economic success or passing a test. On the other hand, a critical reading, in which students evaluate the text on a deep level, and analyze the author’s purpose, as well as identifying what information is included, and what is missing, ties literacy to personal
and cultural liberation (Ladson-Billings, 1992). If students can see education as an empowering force in their lives and in society, they could be motivated to choose academic success. In order to accomplish this, teachers must partner with students to achieve empowerment through literacy and challenge the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Within the current status quo educational system in the US, many teachers could be seen as members of the group of oppressors, while students could be associated with the group of oppressed. By this I mean that students have had their humanity removed from them in the current educational system, and the teachers are a part of this system. Learning in order to do well on a test or get a good job has isolated and oppressed students (Lomax et al., 1995; Thompson & Allen, 2012) but culturally relevant pedagogy should empower students as they partner with their teachers in learning that is focused on them and their own liberation (Ladson-Billings, 1992). In other words, the lessons aim at individual and societal transformation instead of performance on a test, or job acquisition. A liberating pedagogy is needed to humanize all parties involved, both the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire, 1993), and create a safe classroom community where all individuals are valued (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

**Student Motivation**

Studies have shown motivation, or being energized towards a task, to be a key element in student success. Community college students have a low percentage of graduation nationwide, but motivation is one of the characteristics that all those who graduate have in common (Martin, Glentino, & Townsend, 2014). Other characteristics identified in the study were clear goals, ability to manage external demands, and self-
emPOWERment. Another study of students in a college classroom shows a relationship between students’ sense of belonging, motivation, and success. Belonging precedes motivation, and motivation precedes success, with success being defined as academic achievement in the college course (Zumbrunn et al., 2012). Belonging can be seen as relating to cultural connectedness or cultural competence in the current study. Studies relating student motivation to success have mainly been conducted with college students, perhaps because it is easier to determine if they have succeeded or not based on completion of a course or graduation.

One study does compare the intrinsic motivation of elementary school children in Kampala, Uganda (referred to as a collectivist culture) with the lack of intrinsic motivation in elementary school students in Colorado Springs, Colorado (referred to as an individualistic culture) (Crow, 2015). The differences are similar to those described by Au (2009) between mainstream and diverse values. Crow’s study pointed to a few recommendations for fostering motivation in all students such as student choice, allowing student voices to be heard, helping students find their own strengths and interest, and play, all of which are related to culturally responsive pedagogy because they promote success, cultural competence, and social critique. These are some of the same concepts brought up by Ryan & Deci (2000) with regard to the self-determination framework of motivation. Allowing student voices to be heard can promote autonomy. Helping students find their own strengths and interests builds competence and relatedness. Students being energized towards a task in an educational setting could be directly related to a culturally responsive pedagogy, which in turn, could lead to higher success among students.
Implementation of Pedagogical Theory

Culturally relevant pedagogy itself is sometimes seen as more of a mindset than a strategy (Sleeter, 2012). Breunig (2005) discusses the intersection between educational theory and practice and explains that critical pedagogy, like culturally relevant pedagogy, has often been held in the realm of the theoretical despite having an emphasis on practice. It is important for educators to be able to turn these powerful theories into practice (Breunig, 2005). Not everyone in the world of education believes that the aim of education is liberation, so what is a teacher to do if their school’s main focus is to prepare students for a standardized test, or for a distant future goal such as being part of a workforce or going to college? Breunig (2005) suggests that the two do not have to be mutually exclusive. We can prepare students for the world as it is, and teach them to have a vision of how the world could be different, and how it could change.

There are a wide range of strategies and classroom activities that highlight this mindset, and they vary depending on the age of the student. While a middle or high school student may be ready to delve into the deep responsibility of personal and societal transformation, the focus for younger students should be affirmation of who they are personally and culturally (Hollie, 2001; Reynolds, 2007). My goal will be to provide students with age appropriate lessons that fit the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy, as understood by Ladson-Billings (1992). In other words, each lesson must meet all three criteria: personal and academic success; cultural competence; and empowerment through social critique. The following strategies and classroom activities will be the basis for my evaluation of the connection between student motivation and culturally relevant pedagogy.
Student-led Lesson

Katheryn Au (2009) states that culturally responsive instruction cannot be reduced to simply mean good teaching. She explains that the belief that one instructional method is good for all students in all situations is not reflective of culturally responsive instruction. She does mention that utilizing a wide variety of strategies is the best way to be able to include everyone. Within that ideological framework, she lays out four types of learning that would be good to include in order to encompass a more pluralistic educational setting. Those four are whole class lessons, teacher-led small group lessons, student-led small groups, and individual or independent work time. The student-led lesson is probably the most underutilized, and teachers might be surprised to learn that some students may be able to engage in a meaningful book club or completion of a group project without much teacher direction. This may be especially true if students come from a cultural background with an orientation toward interdependence versus independence or cooperation instead of competition (Au, 2009). Having fourth grade ELs take the lead on a group project, and studying their motivation during the project will help me determine if this aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy is linked to student motivation in elementary school students, specifically fourth grade ELs.

Student-led lessons exhibit all three characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy. First, they emphasize students’ personal and academic success by bringing students into a position of leadership. Second, they align to cultural-competence and cultural connectedness by way of students interacting with books on a personal level and creating a sense of connectedness within their own small group in ways that are culturally relevant to them. Finally, students will be encouraged to challenge the status quo in their
own lives, which is the beginning of social critique. That is not to say that student conversations would not lead into ideas outside of their own lives, but it is not completely necessary at this age, when students have just begun to self-reflect.

**Culture as an Iceberg**

Hollie suggests six instructional approaches he refers to as the Linguistic Affirmation Program (LAP), which is meant for English learners, as well as Standard English language learners who are speakers of a non-standard form of English (Hollie, 2001). His six approaches contain an emphasis on teachers’ attitudes, inclusion of the students’ languages, identities and cultures, and affirming students’ prior knowledge. The unique group of fourth grade ELs in this study will have their own individual and group linguistic identities, which will be beneficial for them to reflect upon, and beneficial for the teacher to discover. This can be done by having each student create a “culture iceberg”, where part of the iceberg is above the water, and part is below. This lesson also has a bit of an informal feel to it, and as Noddings (2003) points out, informal learning, or learning where students are relaxed and happy, can be more meaningful and permanent than more formal kinds of instruction.

The iceberg is each student’s lived experience, or culture. Above the water is what people can see, and below is what people cannot see. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) have divided the iceberg into four sections. They refer to the surface level as “popular culture”, and would include such things as language, habits, and visible things such as hairstyles. Immediately below the surface is the intermediate-level culture, which includes things like symbols, meanings, and norms. Below that is the deep-level culture
which consists of traditions, beliefs, and values. A fourth level is also included at the very bottom of the iceberg, which is “universal human needs”.

The culture iceberg lesson fits into the culturally relevant framework in these ways. First of all, with regards to personal and academic success, students will be working with subject matter that is familiar to them since the content of the iceberg will be based in their own life experiences. At the same time, they will have opportunities to grow their academic vocabulary as they search for ways to represent who they are on paper. Secondly, this lesson supports the cultural competence and connectedness of the students and the teacher. Students learn about themselves, each other, and in the process may find connections with other people in their class that they weren’t aware of before. Teachers will have a greater understanding of how each student sees themself. Additionally, this lesson challenges the status quo about what culture means, expanding beyond clothing associated with various cultural groups and the celebrations associated with them.

In studying the student-led book club lesson and the culture mountain lesson as they relate to culturally relevant pedagogy and how fourth grade ELs respond to them, and in light of what the literature and previous studies say about success, motivation, cultural connectedness, and transformation, one can look specifically at the practical implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom, and its connection to student motivation. How is student motivation affected by practical applications of culturally relevant pedagogy?

Research Rationale
Although several case studies have shown that culturally relevant teaching improves student achievement (Camangian, 2010; Lee, 2006), researchers state that more studies should be done to strengthen this connection (Sleeter, 2012) in order to show its importance and to be able to transform today’s educational system with confidence. Studies addressing the connection between student success and student motivation are numerous (De Castella, K., Byrne, D., & Covington, M., 2013; Martin, K., Galentino, R., & Townsend, L., 2014; Slanger, W. D., Berg, E. A., Fisk, P. S., & Hanson, M. G., 2015; Zumbrunn, McKim, Buhs, & Hawley, 2012). Other studies have connected culturally relevant pedagogy to student engagement (Crow, 2015; Sleeter, 2012; Souto-Manning, 2009), but the focus of this study is explicitly the students’ own thoughts and motivation when educated in culturally relevant ways. This study is also unique in that it highlights fourth grade English learners in a first ring suburban setting specifically. This study takes an important step on the road to connecting culturally relevant pedagogy to student success. It examines the connection between student motivation and culturally relevant pedagogy. The question examined in this study is:

- How are feelings of motivation observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways?

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I defined culturally relevant pedagogy and discussed its three primary aspects that are often found in literature: cultural identity and connectedness, the negative effects of standardization, and individual and societal transformation. I have explained how these three themes fit within the framework of Gloria Ladson-Billings’ culturally relevant pedagogy framework. I have defined student motivation in terms of
research that connects it to student success, as well as connections in research to culturally relevant pedagogy. I have also highlighted two specific implementations of culturally relevant pedagogy, student-led book discussion and the use of the cultural icebergs, and shown how my research will add important findings to existing research. In Chapter Three, the method and process of the study to evaluate the relationship between student motivation and culturally relevant pedagogy in fourth grade ELs is outlined and explained.
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

In Chapter Two, the paradigm behind the implementations of a culturally relevant pedagogy were discussed based on relevant studies, as well as the research behind the connection between student motivation and student success. The question guiding the research is the following:

- How are feelings of motivation observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways?

Chapter Three outlines the methods and the processes involved in my research to evaluate student motivation in fourth grade ELs as it relates to culturally relevant pedagogy.

Research Paradigm

I will be conducting classroom research, and the data collection tools will be in the form of questionnaires, observation checklists and field notes through two separate lessons that have qualities that are categorizable as pertaining to culturally relevant pedagogy. Classroom research is an efficient way to establish the type of relationship that exists between culturally relevant teaching and student motivation because it is
typically how researchers have examined relationships between instruction and learning in second language classrooms (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

Participants and Setting

The school where I work is located in a first ring suburb of a city in the American Midwest. Over eighty percent of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. The population is also culturally and linguistically diverse. The fourth grade ELs I work with have home languages of Spanish, Hmong, Arabic, and Somali, among others. There is a wide range of levels of English language development, but the students in this study have a composite score in the 2-3 range of the yearly EL test they take, which is designed by World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA). States that are a part of the WIDA consortium use the framework provided by WIDA, as well as the test results, to understand the needs of the ELs in their classrooms, and provide instruction and scaffolds to move students up in their levels of proficiency. Level 2 is called “emerging”, and level 3 is called “developing”. There are a total of six levels in the WIDA framework, with the final level being labeled “reaching”. Reaching connotes students being on par with their grade-level peers who are not ELs. The lessons I teach are a combination of whole group, small group, and one pull-out group. For this study, there will be no pull-out groups. Lessons will be whole and small group, and will take place in a co-taught class where I am the EL teacher that pushes into the class for an hour and a half to two hours daily to co-teach with the classroom teacher. The entire class will participate in the lessons, but data will only be pulled on the ELs in the class. I will pull data for this study on a total of ten ELs with home languages of Spanish (7 students), Hmong (2), and Khmer (1). There are seven boys and three girls in the study.
Once data has been collected and analyzed, I will use it to make adjustments to my instruction. I will analyze how feelings of motivation are observed in and reported by ELs by using the data collection tools prepared, and charting the observations and the student responses. If I find that teaching students in culturally relevant ways does indeed influence motivation in a positive way, I will know that I can put future lessons to the CRP test before implementing them. I will ask these three questions: Does the lesson support cultural competence? Does it encourage academic success? Does it incorporate a critical consciousness? If I find that lessons taught in a culturally relevant way do not positively influence feelings of motivation in ELs, I will continue to look for ways to engage students and bring meaningfulness to the classroom.

**Data Collection Tools**

This study has three data collection tools: questionnaires, an observation checklist, and field notes. The use of the questionnaires found in Appendix A will provide answers to both closed and open-ended questions from students, which is desirable since the goal is not to hypothesize about what student motivation will be, but to learn from the students what it is. Beyond that, the observation checklist found in Appendix B will provide data based on my or another teacher’s observation of student behavior during one or more of the tasks. A third data collection tool will be my own field notes, which track the process of the study and summarize my observations. This triangulation will provide greater validity and dependability of the results (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

**Questionnaires**
There is one questionnaire for each of the lessons (See Appendix A). They include closed-ended questions, such as *How did you feel during the lesson?*, *Would you call this a boring or an interesting lesson?*, and *Did you complete the work for this lesson?* They also include open-ended questions such as *Why or why not?* I am very interested to see how ELs answer both types of questions, as I believe this is my opportunity to discover their mindset and ascertain their perspective on their own motivation. I also ask participants to choose whether or not they would recommend the lesson to other fourth graders, and explain their reasoning. This question is not entirely different from the question about boring vs. interesting, but it looks at the idea from a different angle, which may elicit different responses from students. I am providing scaffolds in the questionnaires in order to ensure students’ abilities to complete the questionnaire authentically and thoroughly. There is a list of 12 feelings, with accompanying pictures, and a space for students to write any other feelings they may have. A sentence frame is provided for students to be able to provide a thorough description of what type of lesson this was for them.

While the checklist will include specific details related to student engagement during the lessons and activities that the students themselves might not be aware of, the questionnaires will provide a wider and deeper range of data due to the fact that not all students can be observed simultaneously, and students do no always exhibit internal feelings and motivation in predictable ways. It is important to gain the students’ own perspectives on their engagement during the lesson. This information can then be compared to the data from the observation checklist for a deeper understanding of the students’ experience with the lessons. The original comments by students on the
questionnaires cannot be predicted and therefore cannot be classified until after the questionnaires are complete. At the same time, students are offered a list of feelings to choose from, so as to avoid all answers of only “good” or “bad”.

**Observation Checklist**

The observation checklist is designed to be used in a co-taught classroom with mainstream students and ELs that will be participating equally in the same lesson, so that one teacher can be teaching, and one observing. During a thirty minute period, each participant in the study will be observed three times. A tally mark will be made under each behavior that is observed. The list of possible behaviors includes looking around the room, looking at the work, talking that is off-topic, and talking about the work. I chose these behaviors, as they are typically seen as either engaged or unengaged behaviors. There is also a column for the observing teacher to make note of any other behavior they observe that could be related to motivation. This checklist should be used at least twice during the study, once for each of the two lessons, but it can be used more than once per lesson if the lesson takes more than one day.

The observation checklist is an important aspect of this study, since it provides evidence of student motivation that is observable by a teacher during the lesson. Generally speaking, if a student spends the entire time talking about video games, a teacher would assume that they are not engaged in the lesson or motivated to participate. At the same time, if a student is focused on the work and actively participating, teachers would assume that there is a level of motivation present based on their observed engagement. It will be important to compare and contrast student responses to teacher observations to look for any inconsistencies and have a broader picture of student
motivation during the lessons, thereby lesson the opportunity for assumptions of teachers
to dictate the outcomes of the study.

Field Notes

Field notes are the final piece of the data collection. I will be taking notes on each
student in the study with regard to what their participation in class has been like, and
compare it to what it is like during the lessons in this study. I will also take notes on how
the lessons go in general, as well as how well the other data collection tools appear to
have worked. With regard to the data collection tools, I will look for the following: Were
the questionnaires completed in a timely manner? Did students explain their reasoning
for their answers? Was the observer able to observe all participants in the study an equal
amount of times? With regard for the lessons, I will look for the following: Did the class
as a whole need multiple reminders to stay on task? Were the instructions clear enough
for the students, or were there several clarifying questions during independent work time?
What were student reactions when the lessons were introduced or announced?

The usefulness of the field notes lies in their ability to provide an overview of the
study and the other data collection tools. Without them, there could be important aspects
of the study that go unnoticed, or nuances of the other data collection tools that are
missed. For instance, it is important to take into account what a student’s typical level of
engagement is in the classroom, and compare it to their engagement level during the
study. Furthermore, if there are any abnormalities to the day that are not accounted for in
the questionnaire or the observation checklist, they can be written in the field notes.
Examples of abnormalities that would be written in the field notes are a student having a
headache, the lesson being interrupted by a fire drill, or a missed recess, which might destabilize students’ educational experience that day.

The three data collection tools together will provide the triangulation necessary in this study to elicit the desired validity and dependability of the results, which will be important for determining how feelings of motivation are observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways.

**Classroom Research**

The classroom research will consist of two separate lessons, both of which will be evaluated for student motivation. The two lessons are the creation of a personal “culture iceberg” and a student-led reading lesson based on the “book, head, heart” (BHH) method (Beers & Probst, 2017). After each lesson, students will complete a questionnaire about the lesson. The questionnaire will ask the following questions: *How did you feel during this lesson? Would you call this a “boring” or “interesting” lesson? Did you complete the work for this lesson? Would you recommend this lesson to other 4th grade students? Why or why not?* Each question will have a scaffold available to ensure completion to the best of students’ abilities. I will also sit with students as they write these to encourage answers to be as long and as detailed as possible, as well as to encourage students to be honest, and not answer to please a teacher. I will use the question, *Can you write more about that?* As far as the checklist is concerned, for a thirty-minute block of time during each lesson, another teacher or I will check off students who have their eyes on the work at hand, are actively engaged at regular intervals, and participate willingly in verbal and written tasks. The observer will be
observing all ten students one time in a 10 minute cycle, and can write comments on the checklist to specify what the on or off-task behavior is for each student.

**Student-led Lesson**

The student-led small group lesson will consist of students forming a book club around a book that they have chosen together. The teacher will manage who is in what group, and what the choices are, in order to find interesting books as close to students’ independent reading levels as possible. This will be done by grouping all students in the class according to reading levels previously determined by a formative reading test during the year. The class will be divided into approximately three groups, and the teacher will pick two or three books per reading level. Then, each group of students will be given a sticky note, and called up to look at their choice of books. They will have some time to look over the books and put their name on a sticky note on the book that seems the most interesting to them. Books will be chosen from the school’s book room after reading levels are determined. The school’s book room contains a variety of new books with themes ranging from school and friends, to aliens, monsters, and mermaids with many non-human main characters and diverse human main characters including male, female, black, white, Latino, Asian, and Native American. I have used books from the book room with small groups during the year, and students have been able to find books that interest them from the options available. After each student has put their name on a book, teacher will form the book clubs based on their book preferences. Students will organize the club by deciding which role each person should have when they meet, and how long they will read before discussing. Book club roles will include discussion facilitator, recorder, vocabulary builder, and reporter (See Appendix E). The BHH
framework for interacting with literature provides a set of questions that help students interact in a meaningful and academic way, but students will lead the discussions with a combination of these questions and questions that they create. The facilitator will make sure that one question from each category of the BHH framework is asked, as well as one or two of their own original questions. Students will have a copy of Jeff Zwiers’ fortify poster, which is shown in Appendix D, available to them to aid in the conversation around the questions. The fortify poster has a list of prompt starters and response starters that students can use when discussing a topic. They are essentially sentence frames that are purposed for discussion. All members of the book club are expected to participate in the discussion. When it is time for book club to begin, students will read for a time that they determine as a group between ten and twenty minutes. They will also decide what section of the book they will discuss regardless of whether everyone ends on the same page. The list of questions posed by the BHH framework are listed below in Table 2.

After reading, they are free to discuss and record their discussions for several minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you read, think about what is in the BOOK:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What’s this about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who’s telling the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What does the author want me to know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you read, think about what is in your HEAD:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What surprised me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What does the author think I already know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What changed, challenged, or confirmed my thinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What did I notice?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you read, think about what is in your HEART:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What did I learn about me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will this help me to be better?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. BHH Framework (Beers & Probst, 2017)

Students are already familiar with the terminology in and the questions posed by the BHH framework, as they have been using it to analyze texts periodically throughout
the year. They are questions that help students analyze the text on a deeper level, and think about the text in a different way than they would if they were finding the main idea and supporting details, or writing a one paragraph summary of a story.

**Cultural Relevancy of Student-led Lesson.** Student-led lessons exhibit all three characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy: nurturing and supporting cultural competency, encouraging academic success, and emerging critical consciousness. First, its alignment with cultural competency is evident through both a sense of connectedness and belonging to a group, in this case a book club, and also through its emphasis on cooperation and interdependence – what Au (2009) refers to as “diverse values”. Second, this lesson is supportive of academic success because it is centered around reading high interest, good fit books, or books that are at students’ independent reading level. Due to the choice that students have, and the appropriate level, they are likely to fully participate in the reading, and still be challenged enough to encourage growth in their reading. Finally, use of the BHH questions is designed to encourage reflective conversations among students. In fourth grade, students have just begun to self-reflect and analyze the text in front of them, which are both important steps towards critical consciousness.

**Culture Iceberg**

The premise of this lesson is around culture as lived experience. Students will talk about what the word “culture” means to them, and learn that it can mean different things to different people. We will then use the “lived experience” definition to create a culture iceberg, which represents each person’s cultural identity, the parts that are seen (above the water), and the parts that are unseen (below the water). Before students make their own culture iceberg, the teacher will make an example of her own culture iceberg.
Students will use a graphic organizer with questions about each student’s identity (See Appendix C), and students will use their answers to write on the iceberg within the appropriate level. The teacher will also demonstrate this portion of the lesson, answering several questions about herself before adding her answers to the culture iceberg. Students will not be required to answer every question in every section, but will be asked to answer a minimum of three questions from each section, with the option to answer more if they so desire. Students will be encouraged to use color and use creativity, as their icebergs will be displayed in the classroom or in the hallway. This will provide an audience, and students can look forward to viewing their classmates’ icebergs.

**Cultural Relevancy of Culture Iceberg Lesson.** The culture iceberg lesson exhibits all three characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy: nurturing and supporting cultural competency, encouraging academic success, and emerging critical consciousness. To begin with, this lesson supports the cultural competence and connectedness of the students and the teacher. Students make connections to other students in the classroom, and are able to reflect on their own lives and values in the process when answering the questions on the graphic organizer. Additionally, students have a great opportunity to be successful in a highly academic task with this lesson. Students use academic language in the form of tier two vocabulary as they fill out the graphic organizer first, as well as the iceberg. Some examples of the tier two words used are *intermediate, surface, culture, symbols, traditions,* and *universal.* Since they are used in a context that is familiar to students, their own lives, they can be successful with the academic vocabulary. Finally, this lesson challenges the status quo about what culture means, expanding beyond clothing associated with various cultural groups and the
celebrations associated with them, and recognizing culture as lived experience that is sometimes also shared with a group, such as the students’ own families or their classmates. If students can gain an understanding of each other as people in this way, they will be better situated to confront societal prejudices against people and generalizations about cultures, instead seeing everyone they meet as a human being.

Ethics

As required by my form submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), it is of great importance to protect the rights and safety of the research participants. Listed below are specific precautions to ensure that the privacy and rights of the participants will be maintained throughout the study and during the process of completion and publication. Appendix G contains the IRB and school district approvals, as well as a copy of the parent or guardian consent form. The precautions taken in this study are:

1. Anonymity and confidentiality of students will be protected. Student names and identifying information or characteristics will not be recorded in the capstone.
2. Participants will be taught in a private classroom with no video or audio recording.
3. All data will be stored on a password protected computer.
4. Participation in the study will be voluntary. A parent or guardian consent form will be signed for each participant. Included in the consent form is a statement about the purpose of the research, a statement about the risk and confidentiality of the study, information about where the completed capstone will be located, as well as contact information for both the investigator and Hamline University’s IRB. Participants and parents or guardians will be informed that they can choose
to discontinue participation at any time, choosing not to have their child’s research data used in the capstone, without negative consequences.

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the reasoning, setting, and methods of the study. It is classroom research with fourth grade ELs in a first ring suburban school in the Midwest that will use questionnaires, observation checklists, and field notes to determine how feelings of motivation are observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways. Checklists and questionnaires are being used to have a broad understanding of the students’ own view of their motivation as well as teacher observations. Chapter Four will document the results of the research, including a complete analysis of the data and explanation of results.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

Chapter Three outlined the methods and the processes involved in my research to evaluate student motivation in fourth grade ELs as it relates to culturally relevant pedagogy. The question guiding the research is the following:

- How are feelings of motivation observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways?

Chapter Four documents the results of the research, including an analysis of the data and explanation of results. The major themes that evolved when looking to answer the research question are four ways that ELs experience motivation when educated in culturally relevant ways. In order to say that English learners are being educated in culturally relevant ways in this study, the lessons must support cultural competence or connectedness with students’ identities, ensure students’ academic success, and work towards individual and societal transformation. ELs experience cooperation, choice, academics, and self-reflection as motivators in culturally relevant lessons. These four motivators are reported by ELs and observed in them through the student questionnaires and teacher observation checklists in the study. It is important to understand these
motivational sources and how they connect to culturally relevant pedagogy in order to answer the research question. Within the student responses and observed behaviors, there can also be seen instances where students report and exhibit feelings that I do not consider to be related to motivation. This is sometimes due to an imperfection in the cultural relevancy of the lesson, or what I will refer to as normal student behavior. Since these lessons represent a shift in the classroom way of doing things, some students may not have immediately adjusted to the change. This is what I mean by normal student behavior. In the next section, I will explain how the results of the study answer the research question while confirming the research on culturally relevant pedagogy and motivation.

**CRP and the Study**

Through the results of this study, it has become clear that the motivation reported by and observed in ELs in this study directly correlates to the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and the self-determination theory. The four sources of motivation that were revealed through the observation tools coincide with both CRP and the self-determination theory.

In order for a pedagogy to be considered culturally relevant, it must nurture and support cultural competence, academic success, and a critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The two lessons of the classroom research, the culture iceberg and the student-led book club, were designed to uphold those three tenets. They were designed to incorporate what Au (2009) refers to as diverse values, encourage academic success by moving away from the negative effects of the focus on standardized testing (Thompson & Allen, 2012; Lomax et al., 1995), and move students towards a critical consciousness by
taking the first important step, which is self-reflection, since individual transformation, or liberation, must take place in order for societal transformation to do the same (Freire, 1993) and a supportive classroom community is the backdrop for reaching a critical pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Feelings of motivation were reported by and observed in English learners, the participants in the study, by way of four specific sources of motivation. The four sources of motivation that were reported and observed were cooperation, choice, academics, and self-reflection. The connection between the four reported sources of motivation and culturally relevant pedagogy are clear.

Cultural Competence

To look at the connection between the results of the study and a culturally relevant pedagogy, what is needed is to examine each source of motivation that was reported or observed. First I will look at cooperation. Cooperation, an important source of positive, motivating feelings in the lesson according to the students, aligns closely to culturally relevant pedagogy in the area of cultural competence or cultural connectedness. Participants in the study were able to be themselves as individuals, having their lived experience (Gonzalez, 2005) affirmed, while at the same time identifying with various communities (Meca et al., 2017), such as when they belonged to a book club, or when they learned things about each other’s lives in communities outside of school that they didn’t know before.

Academic Success

Choice and academics, the second and third sources of motivation for participants in the study, align with academic success and combating the negative effects of
standardization. In place of standardization of education and an excessive focus on high-stakes standardized testing, which has not been helpful in bridging learning gaps (Sleeter, 2012), one useful idea is student choice and allowing more student voice to be heard (Crow, 2015). Participants in this study were able to choose a book of interest, choose to work with friends, choose what questions to discuss, choose how long to read, choose what role to play in the group, and choose which questions to answer about themselves in the iceberg lesson. This list of choices is much longer than it would be if they were required to all read the same passage and summarize it or answer multiple choice questions about it. As a result, students were enjoying the challenge of learning and finding happiness in the work, which should be an aim of education as well (Noddings, 2003).

**Critical Consciousness**

Self-reflection, the final source of motivation evident in the study, aligns to the development of a critical consciousness, or individual and societal transformation. It is possibly the most essential aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy, being its primary goal (Ladson-Billings, 1992). It is also the most radical of ideas, as students read, interact, and analyze texts and the world on a deeper level without the passing of a test as their primary aim, which has isolated and oppressed students (Thompson & Allen, 2012) (Lomax et al., 1995) and instead aim for individual and societal transformation (Ladson-Billings, 1992). The culture iceberg lesson and the student-led book club lesson both provided opportunities for students to analyze, self-reflect, and look deeper at the text or subject-matter, and this self-reflection emerged as one of the sources of their positive motivation towards the lessons. In the iceberg lesson, they reflected on their own lives,
what is important to them, and how they were similar and different to those of their classmates. In the book club lesson, they reflected on their own reactions to the books they were reading, as well as looking for themes in the book that they could apply to their lives.

**Motivation and the Study**

According to the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the needs that drive intrinsic motivation are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. According to this theory, competence refers to the ability to master an environment, autonomy is the desire to be self-determining in one’s own behavior, and relatedness is wanting to belong in a group. CRP and its tenets, when used in a classroom setting, have shown evidence of this type of intrinsic motivation in students. Students’ ability to master their environment, in the case of this study, has a lot to do with cultural relevancy. When students are able to speak of what they know and relate familiar things to new concepts, they are able to succeed academically. The lessons in this study also relate to the autonomy of the self-determination theory. Student choice is a central theme in both lessons, and it is one of the sources that participants report in their feelings of motivation. The relatedness that the self-determination theory relies on is shown in this study through cultural competence and cultural connectedness. Students experience being a part of a unique group in the book club lesson, and they learn about themselves and their classmates in the culture iceberg lesson.

**Data Synthesis and Analysis**

The results of the study show that feelings of motivation are reported by and observed in English learners in various manners when they are educated in culturally
relevant ways. Tables 3 through 7 are located in Appendix F, and show an overview of the data collected via student questionnaires and observation checklists. Positive feelings and the reasons for the students’ points of view are evidence that they had feelings of motivation at the time of the lessons, using Pintrich’s definition of motivation as being energized towards a task (Pintrich, 2003). In the sections of this chapter that follow, I will discuss the findings in depth and highlight specific student responses. Feelings of motivation in participants relate to the meaning of cultural relevancy and motivation, as well as research in these areas. While analyzing how feelings of motivation were reported by and observed in ELs during the study, I will also continue to synthesize how the results interconnect with the various learnings from the literature review about CRP and motivation.

During the study, feelings of motivation were observed in and reported by English learners in a variety of ways. Four themes emerged as sources of this motivation, which are cooperation, choice, academics, and self-reflection. The feelings were reported on the student questionnaires and supported by observations in the teacher observation checklist as well as data from the field notes.

**ELs Experience Cooperation as a Motivator in a Culturally Relevant Lesson**

ELs reported positive feelings during both lessons, as well as considering the lessons to be interesting, and recommending them to other fourth grade students. When asked the reasons for their thoughts about the lessons, one of the themes that emerged was that of cooperation. In the case of the culture iceberg lesson, seven students reported feeling positive towards the lesson in general, as shown in Table 3 with thirteen instances of four feelings: happy, surprised, confident, and good. There was no limit set for
students as to a quantity of feelings to express. When the participants were further asked to define the lesson as interesting or boring, and give a reason, seven of them defined it as interesting, and one as fun. A breakdown of the answers to this question for both lessons can be found in Table 7. Of those who looked at the iceberg lesson in this positive light, three gave reasons having to do with cooperation. For instance, they mentioned getting to learn about their friends, and that people are different from each other. The final question in the questionnaire asks students to recommend or not recommend the lesson to other fourth graders and state a reason. Interestingly enough, nine out of ten students recommended the lesson, even if only seven had initially reported positive feelings. Their reasons for the recommendation that coincide with cooperation are about learning things about others, and having the opportunity to share about yourself with others. These responses demonstrate the cultural competence piece of CRP, as well as the relatedness of the self-determination theory.

In the case of the student-led book club lesson, the participant response was even more positive. All ten students reported at least one positive feeling about the lesson, as shown in table five with a total of twenty instances of six different positive feelings about the lesson: happy, surprised, confident, cool, wowed, and interested. Eight of the participants found the lesson to be interesting or fun, and all ten of them recommended it. Reasons for their interest were similar to those of the culture iceberg lesson, but with more of a focus on working together instead of sharing information with each other. One participant stated, “Teachers show how to work with others” (Participant B, Survey, May 18, 2018). One benefit of the lesson taking place in a co-taught class is that the teachers were able to demonstrate how a group might begin and continue a conversation about a
book. Another said “I read a book with a group of people and I was in a book club for the first time” (Participant C, Survey, May 18, 2018). This happens to be the same student that came up with “wowed” as a feeling they had during the lesson, a student who has struggled in reading and who has often lacked motivation to complete assignments in class as noted by their lack of work produced and, at times, interruptive behavior.

Not only was cooperation reported as a motivator by the students, but it was also evident in the teacher observation checklist and in the field notes. During the ten-minute observation cycles utilized for the observation checklist, there are times when students’ behavior is noted as talking about the work (See Tables 4 and 6). Students discussing a book or sharing their culture iceberg with another student connotes cooperation. Field notes that relate to cooperation as a motivator include notes on the excitement that was built up in the days before the book clubs began. Once students had chosen a book, and knew who was in their group, several participants were very excited to start reading together and kept asking when book clubs would begin. Students who had been in book clubs before were the more advanced readers, and some of the English learners in this study had not had the opportunity before. Having the opportunity to work together cooperatively in the form of a book club definitely elicited reports and observations of feelings of motivation.

**ELs Experience Choice as a Motivator in a Culturally Relevant Lesson**

Another contributor to the positive feelings and motivation of ELs during the study is choice. Taking a look, first, at the questionnaire results of the culture iceberg lesson, there was one response that showed choice as a reason for positive feelings, or feeling motivated or energized toward the task at hand. The participant stated “You get
to write whatever you feel” (Participant A, Survey, May 16, 2018). I believe this is in reference to the graphic organizer and the fact that they were allowed to pick any three questions from each category to write about. They did not have to answer any questions they did not want to answer. More ELs responded that choice was a motivator for finding the book club lesson interesting or recommending the lesson. Several of the responses revolved around being able to choose a book, as well as having time to read the chosen book, which is something they enjoyed. These responses coincide with the autonomy of the self-determination theory as well as the cultural competence aspect of CRP since students’ individual differences are embraced.

As far as teacher observations of choice as a motivator, the field notes account for students’ enthusiasm around choosing books to read. All participants were able to pick a book that was of interest to them, and that fit with their reading level. Some students asked if they would be able to keep the books when the book club finished. A book called *Monster Heroes* elicited a high enough level of interest to create two groups and I told one of the groups that they might have to pick their second choice. They were quite relieved when I found sufficient copies. See Appendix H for a list of books chosen by students for the lesson. The observation checklist does not specifically look at whether or not choice was part of the motivation, but it again confirms that students were mainly on task during the lessons.

**ELs Experience Academics as a Motivator in a Culturally Relevant Lesson**

Participants also reported academics, or being challenged to learn more, as a motivator by stating it as a reason for calling lessons interesting or recommending the lessons to other students. There were a total of ten comments related to academics when
asked for the driving factor behind their reasoning for calling the lesson interesting or good, or recommending the lessons to other fourth graders. For the culture iceberg lesson the comments had to do with difficult but interesting work, learning, and enjoying the work. One student stated, as their reason to recommend the lesson, “It’s challenging for your brain and will make you smarter” (Participant C, Survey, May 16, 2018). The student-led book club lesson elicited responses such as vocabulary building, learning in general, and getting better at reading. One student recommended the lesson because “it’s interesting to learn” (Participant D, Survey, May 16, 2018), and another said “you will get better in reading” (Participant H, Survey, May 16, 2018).

Academically speaking, the teacher observation checklist tells us that students were engaged in the work, which challenged them academically since the books were chosen at appropriate reading levels for the book clubs and the culture mountain lesson incorporated academic language in the way of vocabulary. After reviewing the field notes, I also find that students had questions about what would be appropriate answers to some of the questions. If there are questions, that could mean the work is academically challenging. It was also especially notable that students are motivated to do tasks that they find difficult when they had just completed two weeks of standardized testing, and appeared to be exhausted from schoolwork. Teachers had observed their state of tiredness towards work in the days leading up to the study. I believe that this shows that when English learners are educated in culturally relevant ways, they are willing and desiring to be challenged. Academic success, which is important in a culturally relevant lesson, was demonstrated in these lessons and in the students’ responses and teacher
observations. In the same way, these responses highlight competency, or the ability to master an environment, as required by the self-determination theory of motivation.

**ELs Experience Self-Reflection as a Motivator in a Culturally Relevant Lesson**

The final source of motivation that emerged in the study was that of self-reflection. The participants reported these feelings in the questionnaires for both lessons, but especially for the culture iceberg lesson. When asked to classify the lesson as interesting or boring, some of the reasons for choosing interesting were “It can help you understand about your life” (Participant D, Survey, May 16, 2018), “You are talking about your feelings” (Participant F, Survey, May 16, 2018), and “You tell how you feel” (Participant I, Survey, May 16, 2018). Similarly, when asked why they would recommend the lesson, one participant said that he liked the questions they had to answer for the iceberg. Responses for the student-led book club lesson were not as strong in the self-reflection area, but there were a couple of responses about having new experiences, which is similar to reflecting on your life’s experience up to that point. They talked about reading books they had never read, and recommending that other fourth graders “give book club a chance” (Participant C, Survey, May 18, 2018).

Based on the teacher observation checklist and field notes, it is not easy to determine what portion of the participants’ motivation is caused by a desire to self-reflect, but we can notice a couple of things. Certainly, the culture iceberg lesson is a highly self-reflective lesson, and students were mainly engaged in the work based on the data from the observation checklist. One participant initially told me that they didn’t want to create a culture iceberg if it was going to be displayed for other people to see. This participant changed their mind during the lesson, enjoyed answering the questions,
and later told me that they would like people to look at their iceberg after all. The student was hesitant to enter into self-reflection, but discovered that it could be a positive experience. During the book club lesson, students chose the question or questions that would be discussed from a list of question provided. One observation I made was that the most common question they chose to discuss was *What surprised me?* This question is highly reflective, as it asks the reader to reflect on how the book affected them. Other highly reflective questions were discussed, as well. Although most of the questions in the BHH framework include reflection, students could have chosen to discuss what the book was about or what the author wants them to know. Students’ responses and teacher observations that highlight self-reflection relate directly to the critical consciousness of CRP.

Results of this research show that cooperation, choice, academics, and self-reflection are four sources of motivation when English learners are educated in culturally relevant ways. Motivation, or being energized towards a task, was observed using the observation checklist and was also reported by participants in their questionnaires. The questionnaire is the tool that specifically was useful in determining what the sources of the motivation were. The field notes provided additional insight into the motivation.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have analyzed the results of the study and synthesized them to answer the research question:

- How are feelings of motivation observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways?
I learned that there are four main ways that English learners report feelings of motivation and that motivation is observed in them when they are educated in culturally relevant ways. I learned that teachers can observe the motivation through observing behaviors with a background understanding of the point of view of the ELs, as well as ongoing relationships with students to support this understanding. The main sources of motivation that were observed and reported were cooperation, choice, academics, and self-reflection. Overall, the reasons that participants gave for their motivation to work on the lessons were consistent with the goals of a culturally relevant pedagogy.

In Chapter Five, I will reflect on the learnings of the study, revisit the literature review, discuss possible implications of the study, and examine its limitations. I will also discuss my plans for utilization of the results and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Introduction

Chapter Four analyzed the results of the study and synthesized the data by explaining how it answers the research question. Chapter Five reflects on the study’s major findings, revisits the literature review, discusses implications and limitations of the study, makes recommendations for future research, and presents a plan to communicate the research with stakeholders. In this way, Chapter Five looks at the meaning behind the answers found, as well as uses for the answer to the research question:

- How are feelings of motivation observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways?

Major findings include the ways that English learners report feelings of motivation when educated in culturally relevant ways, as well as how teachers observe behaviors related to motivation and feelings of motivation. These findings are important because they are the answer to the research question. In revisiting the literature review, I will discuss whether or not my results were in agreement with previous research on culturally relevant pedagogy and motivation. Next, I will discuss limitations of the study, which will clarify what future research projects myself or others should undertake to
further this research. I will discuss these as well. Following the limitations will be the implications of the study. Based on past research, and this current study, what does it mean for education, and specifically for school? I will discuss these as well. Finally, I will present a plan of communication of these results to stakeholders.

**Major Findings**

Through the capstone process, the research and writing, I have learned that when ELs are educated in culturally relevant ways, feelings of motivation are observed in them and reported by them in a number of ways. During the two lessons that were designed to be culturally relevant, I observed a high level of engagement, as noted by the amount of on-task behaviors on the observation checklists. Students who had been fatigued with school in previous days due to the stress of standardized testing were focused on the task at hand during the culture iceberg lesson and the student-led book club lesson. Participants also reported feelings of motivation during the lessons in the form of feeling happy, confident, surprised, good, wowed, cool, and interested. The vast majority of ELs found the lessons to be interesting and recommended the lessons to other students.

The sources of the motivation for the ELs came from four places during the study: cooperation, choice, academics, and self-reflection. I was pleasantly surprised that these four themes emerged as sources for motivation, as they align nicely with the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. My surprise, of course, doesn’t come from doubting the ability of CRP to bring out feelings of motivation in students, but from how closely their reasons aligned to CRP given the open-endedness of the questions they were asked. Participants could have written anything as their reasons for finding the lesson interesting or recommending it, but their answers were very much about achieving, working with
others, having choice, and analyzing themselves and their place in the world, all of which coordinate with CRP.

**The Theoretical Frameworks and the Current Study**

Several themes stood out from the literature review that guided me in answering the research question. Here I will highlight the most important findings from the two major sections of the literature review, culturally relevant pedagogy and student motivation. I will also discuss whether or not the learnings from these sections agree with the findings of my study.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

The theoretical framework I based my research on is that of Ladson-Billings (1995), which defines a culturally relevant pedagogy as consisting of student success, cultural competence, and social critique. In my research, I used cultural connectedness and identity to represent cultural competency, the negative effects of standardization to represent an aim towards student success, and individual and societal transformation to represent social critique or a critical consciousness. The reason for the change in terminology was to align the research to the specific needs of the fourth grade English learners in my school.

While researching cultural connectedness and identity, the definition of culture that I relied on the most was that of Gonzalez (2005), where culture means lived experience in all of its aspects. Some of the other definitions of identity that I recognized as important contributors to my understanding of culture and cultural identity were those of Meca et al., Guay and Au. Meca et al. (2017) recognize that individuals share experiences with other individuals thereby creating a shared cultural identity. Guay
(2016) defines culture as shared experience, and Au (2009) differentiates between two types of culture, mainstream and diverse. When thinking about the English learners in the study, Gonzalez’ definition was useful because each student has a unique life experience that they were able to share in the culture iceberg lesson. At the same time, Guay’s definition and Meca et al.’s emphasize the importance that the participants found in being able to share the book experience with their friends in the student-led book club lesson.

Research around the negative effects of standardization shows that the focus in education around standardized testing has not been helpful in closing any learning gaps (Sleeter, 2012). As such, the focus is not on students’ academic success, but on comparing schools across the country and the world, and holding on to feelings of superiority (Thompson & Allen, 2012). Research shows that the fixation on standardization has caused diminished use of higher order questioning, and an increase in questioning that is more likely to be on the test (Lomax et al., 1995). My study does not confirm or deny the effects of standardization, but it does show that students report feelings of motivation when they use higher level thinking, and participate in lessons that are sometimes reserved for more “advanced” learners, such as a student-led book club lesson. This type of motivation, if continued throughout an EL’s school career, could help diverse student populations instead of harming them as the current school environment often does (Thompson & Allen, 2012).

The research regarding individual and societal transformation brought to light a need to work for social change, and create a safe classroom community where all individuals are valued (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Fourth graders, still developing into the
people they will become, can focus more on individual transformation as a starting point towards societal transformation. As Freire (1993) points out, individual transformation, or liberation, must take place in order for societal transformation to do the same. In the study, this was evidenced in the self-reflection of students as a source of motivation. The students enjoyed analyzing themselves with a cultural backdrop in the iceberg lesson, and they shared their reflections about their personal interactions with a book using the BHH framework in the book club lesson.

**Motivation**

The working framework for motivation in this study was the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation itself was defined as being energized toward a task (Pintrich, 2003). In order for someone to be motivated, Ryan & Deci (2000) state that three needs should be met. They are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. This study confirms Ryan & Deci’s ideas about motivation. Participants in this study demonstrated motivation in this way when they were educated in culturally relevant ways. The self-determination theory aligned well to CRP in this study. Another study points to belonging as a requirement for motivation, which precedes success (Zumbrunn et al., 2012). This idea of belonging also aligns well with CRP and with the current study.

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study include subjectivity, construct validity, generalizability, and lesson imperfections or normal student behavior. While both objectivity and subjectivity have a role in second language classroom research (Mackey & Gass, 2016), I tried to be as objective as possible, since, as the teacher of the students, I already had
relationships with them, and could therefore have a tendency to read additional perceived meanings into what they write based on what I know about them. At the same time, this subjectivity and prior knowledge about the students was helpful when analyzing the meaning behind the data. Conversations with students and observations during the study informed me of pertinent information such as students who hadn’t slept enough the previous night, students who were excited about the lessons, students who were arguing with other students, among other observations.

Construct validity is a challenge because student motivation is not easily and directly measured, nor can its source be easily determined. Even though I feel confident that the sources of motivation are clear, there is always the possibility that students are not telling the whole story of their emotions and thoughts. The triangulation of the data, which included student surveys, teacher checklists, and field notes, helped to increase the construct validity of this study, but it is also possible that student motivation could have a completely different source if the lesson were a different type of lesson. Also, students’ feelings of motivation or lack thereof during the study could be as a result of the study, or they could be a result of another outside motivator or personal intrinsic motivation. Additional data could have helped in the area of construct validity. For instance, if I could have observed and surveyed the same group of students during a lesson that was designed to not be culturally relevant, I could have been more certain that my results mean what they appear to mean.

This study can’t be generalized since the study takes place in a specific classroom, with fourth grade English learners in a first ring suburban school in the Midwest. The same techniques may not have the same effect on the motivation of another set of
students in another grade or another location. To make the study as generalizable as possible, I used the widest range of students available when it comes to English language proficiency level, home language, years in the United States, and gender. There are a few limitations, as there are in any classroom research. However, the real life setting can provide a multitude of data that wouldn’t be possible in a more controlled setting.

Some students also had feelings that did not reflect motivation, at least during some parts of the lessons, and this can be attributed to lesson imperfections or normal student behavior. Feelings of boredom, fear, and difficulty were at the heart of this, and were reminders to me that in order to teach in culturally relevant ways, I have to be open to altering lessons in order to consistently provide the type of experience that would benefit all students the most. One example of an unmotivated feeling was when Participant A referred to the book club lesson as a boring lesson. The reason stated was that the book was boring. One of two things may have happened: Either the book choices were not culturally relevant for this student because they were not of interest, or the student chose a book that was not of interest because they wanted to choose the same book as their friends. I tend to think that it was the latter since the participant goes on to recommend the lesson “because you have fun reading with other friends the same book and talking about it” (Participant A, Survey, May 18, 2018). Of course, there are other possibilities. The student may have progressed to a new reading level, and found the current selection to be boring for that reason, or there could have been a lot on their mind and reading was not a priority at the moment. The other instances of unmotivated feelings can be described in much the same way – they are either a result of the lesson not
living up to cultural relevancy for that particular student, or other normal classroom situations with students.

**Implications**

One possible implication of the results of this study is that culturally relevant pedagogy can be utilized as a vehicle to help schools bridge learning gaps, as they were doing at a time when standardized testing was less of a focus in schools (Sleeter, 2012). Teachers, administrators, and parents are united in the desire to see students succeed. CRP could put the focus back on student, and the standardized tests could still be used to measure growth, but the detrimental focus of all instruction towards standardization could be eliminated and the focus put back on each students’ educational journey. This is not a change that could happen overnight, however, but one that all stakeholders can work towards little by little. For instance, in my school, which has approximately 30% ELs, and is a culturally and linguistically diverse school, teachers are accustomed to designing lessons based on state standards, and specifically focusing on lessons that, to some extent, mimic the format of state standardized tests. That is not to say that culturally relevancy is completely ignored in the school. Many of the teachers have had training in cultural responsive strategies, and administrators are always reminding teachers that the emotional well-being of students is a top priority, as well as encouraging teachers to embark on new adventures with students, and incorporate art into academics. What teachers could do to make their lessons more culturally relevant is to keep the three tenets of CRP in mind when they are creating the lessons. If the lesson stands up to the test of cultural competency, student achievement, and social critique, that would be a good first
step. If it is lacking in one of those areas, perhaps the teacher should re-evaluate the focus of the lesson.

**Recommendations and Communication**

Future research should look to make a stronger connection between culturally relevant pedagogy and student academic success (Sleeter, 2012). A study of this sort would have to be more long-term if, by success, we mean a closing of the achievement gap. However, a short-term study could show success by measuring students’ mastery of one objective using culturally relevant pedagogy instead of trying to look at a whole year or more of progress. Another way to strengthen this connection would be to do a similar study to this one, but include a lesson that would not be considered culturally relevant in the study as well, to look at its effect on motivation. Studies on the connection between motivation and success could be useful to strengthen that connection as well, even though there are some studies that make that connection. One final direction I would like to take in continuing this research is to look closer at Paris’ culturally sustaining pedagogy, since I like the idea of disrupting the monocultural and monolingual practices of most schools in the United States (Paris, 2012). It seems to take the idea that CRP has of a critical consciousness, and apply it directly to the educational system we currently have.

I plan to use the results of this study to create supportive classroom environments in the classes where I co-teach, and hold my lessons to the culturally relevant pedagogy test: Does it support cultural competence or connectedness with students’ identities?; Does it ensure students’ academic success?; Does it work towards individual and societal transformation? It will be important, therefore, to learn about each student’s culture, or lived experience, early in the year in order to grasp what might motivate each student.
Apart from this, I will share what I have learned with my EL and grade level teams, and be vocal about the importance of cultural relevancy.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have reflected on the study’s major findings, revisited the literature review, discussed implications and limitations of the study, made recommendations for future research, and presented a plan to communicate the research with stakeholders. I have learned that ELs experience cooperation, choice, academics, and self-reflection, and report them as motivators when educated in culturally relevant ways, and that teachers can observe this motivation through watching student behavior and interacting with the students. I want English learners to enjoy learning and the challenges of academics, feel connected to others, and move towards personal and societal transformation. As a teacher of ELs, I hope that I can continue to work towards providing experiences that are a motivating and fulfilling part of their educational life journey.
APPENDIX A

Student Questionnaires with Scaffolds

Name:__________________________________________ Date:____________

Please answer the following questions about the “Culture Iceberg” lesson.

1. How did you feel during this lesson?

Any other feelings?________________________

2. Would you call this a boring or interesting lesson? Why?

I would call this a _______________ lesson because _______________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

3. Did you complete the work for this lesson? YES or NO

4. Would you recommend this lesson to other 4th grade students?
   Choose one: I RECOMMEND IT or I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT

Why or why not?
Please answer the following questions about the “book club” lesson.

1. How did you feel during this lesson?

   Any other feelings? ______________________

2. Would you call this a boring or interesting lesson? Why?

   I would call this a ______________ lesson because __________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

3. Did you complete the work for this lesson?       YES or   NO

4. Would you recommend this lesson to other 4th grade students?
   Choose one: I RECOMMEND IT or I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT

   Why or why not?
Lesson: Culture Iceberg or Book Club

**Instructions:** Observe in 10 minute cycles. Place a tally under the behavior if observed in a student during those 10 minutes. Make note of any other behaviors on or off task. Does it seem like the student is participating willingly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Looking around the room</th>
<th>Looking at the work</th>
<th>Talking that is off-topic</th>
<th>Talking about the work</th>
<th>Other observed behaviors related to motivation</th>
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</table>
APPENDIX C

Graphic Organizer for Cultural Iceberg Lesson

**Surface Level culture: what people can see, popular culture**
What kinds of music do you enjoy?
What kinds of movies or TV shows do you like?
How many people are in your family?
How old are you?
Do you have siblings?
What languages do you speak?
What color is your hair?
Have you ever lived anywhere besides this state?
Have you ever gone to a school besides this school?
What is your favorite place to hang out?
What do you like to do at recess?
What kinds of food do you eat at home?
Do the adults in your home drink tea, coffee, or something else in the morning?

**Intermediate-level culture: symbols and meanings**
What is your favorite subject in school?
What do you like to do for fun (sports, games, art, etc.)?

What languages do you understand some or all of?

Do you like things to be loud or quiet?

Do you have a favorite animal?

What are you afraid of?

What is something you know a lot about?

What is the biggest problem in the world that you would like to fix?

What kinds of food do you like the most?

**Deep-level culture: traditions, beliefs, values**

Do you participate in a religion?

Do you think honesty is important?

What holidays do you celebrate?

What is the most important thing in life?

What are some traditions your family has?

What are some rules your family has?
APPENDIX D

Jeff Zwiers' Fortify Poster

FORTIFY

Prompt Starters:
Can you give me an example from the text?
Where does it say that?
What are examples from other texts?
What is a real world example?
What is the strongest support for...?

Response Starters:
For example,
In the text it said that...
Remember in the other story we read that...
An example from my life is...
One case that illustrates this is...
Strong supporting evident is...
## Book Club Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title and description</th>
<th>Student’s name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator</strong>: decides how far to read in book each day, chooses discussion questions, leads discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recorder</strong>: Records information from the discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Builder</strong>: Finds interesting words to share with the group and discuss their meaning</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: Verbally shares results of discussion with teacher or classmates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Book club discussion questions - Day 1

1. Pick a question to discuss. Write it here:

2. What did each student have to say about the question?

3. What was one interesting word and its meaning?
APPENDIX F

Results Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Number of students who reported any one of these feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy, surprised, confident, good</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored, exhausted, confused, shy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Feelings reported by students regarding culture iceberg lesson. Some students reported more than one feeling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>How many times it was observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking at the work</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about the work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking around the room</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking that is off-topic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Behaviors observed by teacher during culture iceberg lesson. Each of ten students were observed once per ten-minute cycle during a total of 3 cycles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Number of students reporting any one of these feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>happy, surprised, confident, cool, wowed, interested</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused, scared, exhausted</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Feelings reported by students regarding student-led book club lesson. Some students reported more than one feeling.
Table 6. Behaviors observed by teacher during student-led book club lesson. Each of ten students were observed once per ten-minute cycle, with 2 cycles on the first day, and 3 cycles on the second day. One participant was absent for 3 of the 10-minute cycles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>How many times it was observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking at the work</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about the work</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking around the room</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking that is off-topic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Responses when asked if the lesson was boring or interesting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of students who responded this way in the iceberg lesson.</th>
<th>Number of students who responded this way in the book club lesson.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

Research Approval Letters

Hamline IRB Approval

TO: JOY MCCLAIN

FROM: HAMLINE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)
(05/14/18)

RE: IRB APPROVAL

Your proposal entitled "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Student Motivation: An Applied Study of Their Relationship in Fourth Grade English Learners" has been reviewed and approved.

No further revisions or reviews are required.

Thank you for registering with the IRB.

Good Luck with your project.
Robbinsdale Area Schools Approval

May 4, 2018

RE: District approval for research proposal by Joy McClain
Title of Study: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Student Motivation: An Applied Study of Their Relationship in Fourth Grade ESL Students
Contact Person: Joy McClain, teacher at Northport Elementary School and Hamline University student

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter describes the conditions agreed upon between Joy McClain and Cheryl Videen, Director of Research, Evaluation and Assessment for the Robbinsdale Area Schools, for a research project to be conducted in the district. The purpose for the research is to examine how feelings of motivation are observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways. The research will be conducted as described in the researcher’s request to conduct research that was submitted on April 23, 2018.

Data will be collected from students using a survey after two lessons. These data will be collected from approximately eleven EL students. Teacher observation checklists will also be completed. The research project will begin in May 2018 and data collection will be completed by June 2018.

Any reports that are published will not include information that would make it possible to identify individual subjects.

The principal has the right to decline participation or to end the study at any time.

Verification of human subjects approval from Hamline University needs to be submitted to the district’s Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department before any data are collected.

An abstract of the research findings needs to be placed on file with the district’s Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department when the study is completed.

As a learning organization, the Robbinsdale Area Schools supports the research efforts of its staff as much as possible. We wish you well as you complete your study.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Videen, Ph.D.
Director of Research, Evaluation and Assessment

CC: Frederico Rowe, Northport Elementary School Principal
Anh Tran, Multilingual Learning Coordinator
Informed Consent Letter in English and Spanish

April 23, 2018

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am your child’s EL teacher and a graduate student working on an advanced degree in education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research in your student’s classroom from May 14-June 1, 2018. The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission for your child to take place in my research.

I want to study how feelings of motivation are observed in and reported by English learners when they are educated in culturally relevant ways in order to promote student academic success. I plan to use two lessons to examine this: a lesson about culture using an iceberg analogy, and a student-led book club lesson. After each of the two lessons, students will fill out a short 5-10 minute questionnaire. During the lesson, a teacher will fill out an observation checklist to record student behavior.

There is little or no risk for your child to participate. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record information about individual students, such as their names, nor report identifying information or characteristics in the capstone. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time and without negative consequences that information about your child not be included in the capstone.

I have received approval for the study from the School of Education at Hamline University and from the principal of Northport Elementary, Frederico Rowe. The capstone will be cataloged in Hamline University’s Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. My results might also be included in an article for publication in a professional journal or in a report at a professional conference.

If you agree that your child may participate, keep this page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return to me no later than May 14, 2018. If you have questions, please email or call me at school, or contact Matthew Olson of Hamline University’s Institutional Review Board at mholson@hamline.edu.

Sincerely,

Joy McClain
Northport Elementary School
5421 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429
763-504-7876

Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Study

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be observing students’ behavior during class time. I understand there is little or no risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

Parent/Guardian Signature ____________________________ Date ____________

Researcher Copy
23 de abril, 2018

Querido Padre o Guardián,

Soy la maestra de inglés como segundo lenguaje de su hijo/a y estudiante en un programa de educación avanzada en la universidad de Hamline en St. Paul, Minnesota. Como parte de mi maestría, planeo hacer una investigación en el salón de su hijo/a entre el 14 de mayo y el día primero de junio del 2018. El propósito de esta carta es pedirle permiso a que participe su hijo/a en la investigación.

Quiero estudiar cómo se demuestran y cómo reportan sentimientos de motivación en los estudiantes de inglés cuando los están educando de una forma culturalmente adecuada para promover éxito académico estudiantil. Usaré dos lecciones: una sobre cultura que utiliza una analogía de un iceberg, y una de lectura de un libro donde los estudiantes son los líderes. Después de cada lección, los estudiantes llenarán un cuestionario que les llevará entre 5 y 10 minutos para completar. Durante la lección, una maestra llenará una lista de observaciones del comportamiento de los estudiantes.

Existe entre cero y muy poquito riesgo en este estudio. Todos los resultados serán confidenciales y anónimos. No anotaré información sobre estudiantes, como sus nombres, ni reportar información que los pueda identificar en el reporte. La participación es voluntaria y Ud. puede decidir en cualquier momento sin consecuencias negativas que la información de su hijo/a no se incluya en el reporte.

Ambos la universidad de Hamline y el director de Northport, Frederico Rowe, han aprobado esta investigación. Mi reporto estará catalogada de forma digital que se puede buscar en la biblioteca Bush de la universidad de Hamline. Los resultados pueden ser incluidos también en un artículo en alguna publicación profesional o en un reporte en una conferencia profesional.

Si está de acuerdo que su hijo/a participe, mantenga esta página. Llene el acuerdo que está en la segunda página y regrésemela antes del 14 de mayo del 2018. Si tiene preguntas, favor de llamarme o mandarme un mensaje, o si prefiere se puede comunicar con Matthew Olson de la universidad de Hamline Institutional Review Board al mholson@hamline.edu.

Sinceramente,

Joy McClain
Northport Elementary School
5421 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429
763-504-7076

Consentimiento Informado para Participar en Estudio Cualitativo

He recibido su carta sobre el estudio que se va a realizar y la observación del comportamiento de los estudiantes. Entiendo que hay cero o muy poquito riesco para mi hijo/a, que se va a proteger su confidencialidad, y que mi hijo/a o yo podemos en cualquier momento salir del estudio.

_____________________________  _______________________
Firma del padre o guardián                    Fecha

Copia para la investigadora
APPENDIX H

Books Chosen by Students for Book Club Lesson

_The Curse of Mars (Out of This World)_ by Raymond Bean

_Shyanna’s Wish (Mermaid Kingdom)_ by Janet Gurtler

_Nikki and Deja_ by Karen English

_Please Write in this Book_ by Mary Amato

_Growling Gracie (Adventures at Hound Hotel)_ by Shelley Swanson Sateren

_Rise of the Balloon Goons (The Notebook of Doom #1)_ by Troy Cummings

_The Five Lives of Our Cat Zook_ by Joanne Rocklin

_Monster Heroes_ by Blake Hoena
REFERENCES


