CONDENSE THE NONSENSE:
ON-TASK VERSUS OFF-TASK SUSTAINED SILENT READING AS RELATED TO READING MOTIVATION

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This is dedicated to my parents for recognizing my potential, even when I could not see it myself; for refusing to accept that I could do anything less than my best; and for providing me with the opportunity and support to continue my education. You both are my tower of strength.
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ABSTRACT

Cindy Hendricks, Advisor

Sustained Silent Reading is an instructional practice utilized by many schools throughout the world. A decade ago, the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000) reported that it could not conclusively deem Sustained Silent Reading a useful exercise due to a lack of evidence. This study of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) as related to reading motivation, seeks to discover whether students are engaging in on-task behaviors, or off-task behaviors during SSR time, and how this may be related to these same students’ reading motivation.

The findings of this investigation indicate that in a Northwest Ohio middle school language arts class consisting of 25 students, the majority of students, approximately 77%, are engaging in off-task behaviors during their Sustained Silent Reading time. Results from the instruments utilized in this study also indicate that a 71% correlation exists between on-task or off-task behaviors and students’ motivation to read. This precludes that a strong correlation exists between students’ motivation to read and their behaviors during SSR.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical Background of Sustained Silent Reading</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common Themes Found in SSR</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Reading Panel Report</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response to the National Reading Panel Report</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>METHODS AND PROCEDURES</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustained Silent Reading Environment</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table of Contents

### CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS ........................................49
- Data Analysis ..................................................................................................................50
- Formal Observations ..................................................................................................50
- SSR Surveys and Motivation to Read Profile Reading Surveys..................................56
- Case Studies and Interviews ......................................................................................61
  - Timothy’s Interview ..............................................................................................62
  - Renee’s Interview .................................................................................................63
  - Tristan’s Interview ...............................................................................................63
- Discussion of Results .................................................................................................65
- Summary .....................................................................................................................68

### CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ...........................................70
- Summary .....................................................................................................................70
- Conclusions ...............................................................................................................74
- Recommendations ....................................................................................................75
  - For Teachers ..........................................................................................................76
  - For Administrators .................................................................................................80
  - For Teacher Preparation Programs .......................................................................81
  - For Further Research .............................................................................................82
- Summary .....................................................................................................................83

### REFERENCES ...........................................................................................................84

### APPENDIX A. Student Survey ....................................................................................87

### APPENDIX B. Motivation to Read Profile ....................................................................90

### APPENDIX C. Formal Observations Checklist of Behaviors .......................................94
APPENDIX D. Semi-structured Interview Questions ................................................................. 96
APPENDIX E. Letter to Principal .............................................................................................. 99
APPENDIX F. Letter to Parents ................................................................................................ 101
APPENDIX G. Overview of Study .......................................................................................... 104
APPENDIX H. Scoring Guide for SSR Survey ......................................................................... 106
APPENDIX I. Scoring Guide for Motivation to Read Profile .................................................. 109
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Balanced Literacy Instruction</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Balanced Sustained Silent Reading</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Five-Step Process for Action Research</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Data Analysis Steps</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Observed Behaviors: Day One</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Observed Behaviors: Day Two</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Observed Behaviors: Day Three</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Percentage of Student Responses to Enjoyment of SSR</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Students’ Time Spent Focused on Reading During SSR</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Fake-Reading During SSR</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Correlation Between SSR Survey and MRP Reading Survey</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

As many life-long readers can verify, there is always a positive reading experience that changed the way they viewed reading for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately, many non-readers can account for the same experience, recalling a negative moment that essentially brought the idea of reading to a resounding halt. The goal of educators is to ensure that all students have ample chances to engage in successful reading opportunities that evoke an aesthetic response to literature. Rosenblatt (2005) states:

We should help young people to discover the power of literature to enable us to experiment imaginatively with life, to get the feel and emotional cost of different adult roles, to organize and reflect on a confused and unruly reality, and to give us pleasure through the very language that accomplishes these things. Both our classroom atmosphere and the selection of reading materials should therefore be guided by the primary concern for creating a live circuit between readers and books. (p. 66)

Reading affects students by “shocking” them with an emotional response. They feel drawn to, or electrically connected with a text. If this connection can be created and maintained, students will be better motivated to read.

Perhaps even more pressing for teachers, however, is helping students reach reading objectives to guarantee high testing scores that lead to continual school funding. To achieve this, students need to practice and fine-tune the language skills involved in efferent reading. Comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary prowess, are all vital literary competencies. Whether reading for information or for interest, a regular practice in schools to attain the various goals associated with reading achievement is that of Sustained Silent Reading.

Sustained Silent Reading, or SSR, has been implemented in classrooms since the 1970s under various guises, including, but not limited to: USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent
Reading), DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), ScSR (Scaffolded Silent Reading), FVR (Free Voluntary Reading), and DIRT (Daily Independent Reading Time). While all of these forms of SSR basically operate under the same guidelines, the sheer amount of variations can overwhelm any effective educator. As thoughtful, reflective teachers often worry about strategies to most benefit their students, the question concerning how to facilitate a successful SSR program, or even where to start, can become a conundrum.

The utilization of SSR, however, does in fact have some positive support. Gardiner (2007) states:

Students who spend time silent reading regularly learn how the language is used and become comfortable with language issues. They learn to know intuitively whether words are spelled correctly, whether grammatical expressions are used appropriately, and whether meaning is evident in their own writing and reading. (p. 16)

However, no matter how much support may exist for Sustained Silent Reading, if students are not literally engaging in it, they are not going to develop the language savoir faire Gardiner (2007) and many other researchers recount. For SSR to be effective, educators first have to be able to assess whether their use of SSR is creating on-task readers, or off-task readers. If the former, consideration has to be made on how to sculpt SSR into a best practice that works for each particular classroom.

Reading motivation, or a lack thereof, may be one reason, for instance, that SSR could be producing off-task readers. While little research exists regarding the link between motivation to read and Sustained Silent Reading, many researchers do claim that motivation in general is a vital factor in producing functionally literate individuals. Consider, for example, the previous discussion on the need for schools to raise, or keep consistent, high state standardized test scores.
It is arguable that to successfully teach the skills-based knowledge required for this feat, educators must consider the students themselves. Teaching and learning is not just a matter of business; it is personal as well. Tovani (2004), for instance, acknowledges that literacy skills are important, but does not rate them as the only component in successful student learning. Instead, she states:

    My job isn’t about raising state test reading scores or getting kids to the advanced reading level on someone else’s scale. My job is about teaching kids how to read and think about text in meaningful ways to help them better understand the people around them. (p. 16)

Reading instruction needs to incorporate both skill development and sincere learning experiences to be truly successful. Creating a motivation to read, therefore, is an integral element not only in general classroom practices, but also in any Sustained Silent Reading program. What remains to be discovered, however, is if students are mostly on-task or off-task during SSR, and how this result may be tied to fostering a motivation to read.

Statement of the Problem

Recently, the National Reading Panel (NRP) report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHHD], 2000) has instilled an even more sizeable fear in teachers that SSR may be ineffective altogether. Many administrators and educators alike have, since then, stopped using SSR programs under the pretext that “the research” does not support it. The dilemma with this rejoinder is that “the research” has numerous discrepancies such as: mostly considering only early childhood learners; not inspecting research conducted outside of the United States when the same specification did not remain standard for all topics considered by the panel; using a medical model of research criteria that focused solely on quantitative data, which greatly limited the number of studies that could be considered (including those that were
long-term studies); and dismissing qualitative studies (those that are most often conducted as
action research projects by actual educators and should be considered just as valuable).

Despite some members of the NRP repudiating the use of SSR due to the lack of
substantiated research, other panel affiliates proclaim that SSR may still have numerous
constructive advantages. Stahl (2004), for example, was a panel contributor who worked on the
fluency subgroup committee. In his discussion of fluency, Stahl challenged the claim that it may
not be wise to utilize SSR as a part of classroom instruction by stating, “Students should spend
15 to 30 minutes a day reading books of their own choice as an essential component of reading
instruction” (p. 201). Among his reasons for citing this recommendation is the concept of
increasing reading motivation. Students who are merely allowed to choose their own books to
read are more likely to engage in the reading process and not fake read or remain off-task during
Sustained Silent Reading. Consequentially, they are more likely to possess a motivation to read,
creating life-long readers, and developing or rekindling an interest in reading (Chua, 2008;

SSR also supports skills in fluency, reading comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, and
language use, all of which result in higher achievement scores (Gardiner, 2001, 2007; Krashen,
2005). Finally, simple common sense promulgates that extra practice in reading helps increase
reading competencies, just as extra practice in art, music or sports will help fine-tune those
respective skills. The underlying problem, however, is that if the emerging trombone luminary
does not engage in actually playing the trombone, but instead fakes playing his or her instrument,
he or she will not flourish. Very little, if any, progress will be made. The simple exposure to
practice does not make a difference. Similarly, if students are off-task and perhaps fake reading
during SSR, they are not truly engaging in any practice to advance their skills in reading.
Caught in the middle of this impassioned and often ungainly debate, are educators who are merely trying their best to make a difference in the success of their students. Not knowing where to turn, the first step in any effectual, evaluative classroom is to assess what is taking place during SSR. Instead of solely relying on what the research claims, and automatically accepting it as law, teachers need to examine their own classrooms to decide if the SSR protocols being used are effective. However, if SSR is proving to be an unprofitable practice in the specific classroom being considered, teachers may not want to simply give up. A main problem potentially exists: teachers who find SSR to be ineffective do not try to tweak the program in any way before “throwing in the towel,” so to speak. If an inconsistency is found, educators need to consider all the possible reasons why that anomaly exists and strive to find a solution.

Perhaps one explanation for a potential lack of effectiveness in an SSR program is that the students may not believe any valid reason exists for independent reading, resulting in them floating in an unmotivated abyss. As Tovani (2004) states:

If [students] do not see how the piece is going to improve their life in some small way, they will have difficulty getting through it….When students perceive a piece to be boring or difficult, setting a purpose will help them through the read. (pp. 61-62)

Providing students with a set and generally accepted rationale to read may increase their motivation as well. Ideally, this established purpose should revolve around student interest. In other words, students are reading because they are interested in the book and want to finish it. The purpose for reading, therefore, is to read a book or other text because it gives the students pleasure to do so. While other purposes for reading exist, such as to pass a class, get a good grade, graduate, find out more about a topic, and so forth, the justification that needs to be focused on in this discussion of SSR is that of interest, since this is the basis for the original SSR
program being examined. This in turn, will help students to remain successfully on-task while independently and silently reading in their SSR program.

Some compelling challenges exist in regards to the use of Sustained Silent Reading. The main themes include: (a) lack of support from certain well-known and respected government designated authorities, (b) inconsistencies in opinion within academic communities, (c) potential off-task student participants in SSR, (d) deficiencies in exemplifying a motivation to read, and (e) an absence of structure and support for students. With all of these obstacles, some may ask why even bother with an SSR program. A potential answer is that when SSR does work, the benefits greatly outweigh the challenges. While the quandaries listed above may seem unmanageable and overwhelming, it is the goal of this discussion to reverse this effect, thereby creating easily implemented solutions to the perceived dilemma that is SSR.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to determine whether eighth grade students in a Northwest Ohio middle school were participating in on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading, or a combination thereof and to ascertain whether a link existed between the findings and students’ motivation to read. Previous research indicates that all too often, students engage in numerous, often unnoticed, activities that detract from their time actually reading during SSR (Chua, 2008; Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Stahl, 2004; Trudel 2007). Research also delineates that, “Using adolescents’ preferred reading materials and modes of instruction will lead to increased motivation, and perhaps to improvements in reading outcomes” (Pitcher et. al., 2007, p. 378). Based on this research, it was the goal of this study to apply observational methods to determine what is occurring during SSR and how these events relate to reading motivation, ultimately
deciding how to respond, what to recommend, and what action(s) to take to solve the potential problem.

Rationale

The National Reading Panel report (NRP; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHHD], 2000), once publicly disseminated, has acted as an incendiary device in releasing confusion amongst the academic community concerning the effectiveness of Sustained Silent Reading. A decade later, the debate still rages on. In the NRP report, nothing was mentioned about student motivation in regards to reading. Granted, the panel had more than their share of research to decode, process, and evaluate. It would be irrational to address every aspect of reading that teachers, parents, administrators, and even students promulgate as being vital. However, motivation to read is still a critical element in reading. While the panel digressed on including this topic in their discussion, research does exist on motivating students to read and needs to be evaluated, especially since motivation to read could possibly be a catalyst, or at least a crucial component, in Sustained Silent Reading. However, with all of the essential ingredients that go into creating the perfect classroom recipe for success, teachers are left with little time to evaluate these various aspects of their students’ learning.

Teachers need the ability to take the time during their lively, engrossing days to examine and analyze how SSR and motivation to read is affecting classroom learning. A look into on-task versus off-task SSR, and analyzing students’ Motivation to Read Profiles will help teachers be aware of both the potential benefits and possible shortcomings of SSR. Once determined, they can tailor their SSR program to fit the needs of their students. If a solution can be found from the suggestions this study will provide, it will hopefully help to reassure teachers that SSR can be beneficial to student learning and success.
Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study are extensive. The two definitions that are fundamental to this analysis of SSR are on-task versus off-task SSR. Both of these terms are based on specific behaviors that students may or may not exhibit during monitoring. On-task SSR is recognized as behaviors that are indicative of being actively engaged in reading. These include, but are not limited to: appropriate pace for reading; observable emotional responses to reading; and few, if any, visible distractions while reading. At the other end of the spectrum, off-task SSR comprises: non-appropriate pacing while reading (i.e. flipping pages after only a glance); observable indifference to reading such as blankly staring at a page with no observable eye movement; and many visible distractions while reading (i.e. looking frequently at the clock or continuous attempts to get up and move around).

To begin discussing SSR, the multitude of SSR classifications must first be outlined. These include: USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading); DEAR (Drop Everything and Read); ScSR (Scaffolded Silent Reading); FVR (Free Voluntary Reading); IR (Independent Reading); and DIRT (Daily Independent Reading Time) (Chua, 2008). The Sustained Silent Reading type that will be in use during this study is DEAR.

Drop Everything And Read is an original form of SSR where the students are given 20 minutes at the end of class to read a book of their choosing. At the specific school being studied, this occurs at the end of that last period in the day, one day a week. Books are the only reading materials allowed. If a student does not have a book with him or her, he or she is permitted to select one from the classroom library consisting of two shelves of books.

The two variations of SSR that hold the most differences to the original model are IR and ScSR. Trudel (2009) utilized Independent Reading as an adapted version of SSR. She based her
study on the research of Fountas’ and Pinnell’s (2001) five key elements of IR. These factors essentially define Independent Reading by explaining the adaptations. These include: (a) The books the students choose are guided by the teacher to ensure they are at the appropriate reading level; (b) Students keep track of what they read by using a logbook; (c) Mini-lessons and discussions are conducted in reference to students’ reading; (d) Students reflect on what they read, and (e) The teacher monitors reading instead of reading his/herself the entire time (Trudel). In Independent Reading, the students are held accountable for their reading.

ScSR, or Scaffolded Silent Reading, has the following integral components that differ from traditional SSR: (a) The goals of increasing fluency and comprehension are explicitly stated; (b) Teachers monitor the students while they read and with conferences; (c) Students are held accountable for their reading through extension activities; (d) Students must read more than one specific genre; (e) Students must complete their reading within a timeframe, and (f) Students are taught how to choose books (Ruetzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008). This variation of SSR will be further examined as a possible adaptation later in this discussion.

Motivation to read is another integral component to this discussion of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading. Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) define motivation in general as, “beliefs, values, needs and goals that individuals have” (p. 5). In relation to students, this definition presents the postulation that to be motivated to read, students must believe in their reading abilities, value reading, feel a need to read, and set personal goals/authentic purposes to read. Pticher (et. al., 2007), adds to this definition by stating, “Thus, motivation to read is a complex construct that influences reader’s choice of reading, their willingness to engage in reading, and thus their ultimate competence in reading, especially related to academic reading
tasks” (p. 379). In this study, motivation to read uses both of these definitions to gain the most valid and reliable information through the soon to be discussed research methods.

Finally, the term middle school as it is used in this study, refers to an educational institution containing grades six through eight. According to Foster and Martinez (1985), middle schools are distinctive to junior high schools for many reasons including, but not limited to: grades, teacher roles, student roles, teaching methods, and curriculum. In regards to the spectrum of grade levels, middle schools tend to cater to grades six through eight or five through eight, while junior high schools have a more set grade span of seven through nine.

Teacher roles in middle schools consist of the teacher being proficient in more than one content area. Class size usually ranges from 25-30. The number of students in the middle school language arts classroom in this study is 25, but only 22 student responses are documented due to absences during data implementation and collection. Junior high schools on the other hand, have teachers who are normally only trained in one subject area. The classroom teacher at the specific middle school studied is competent in both language arts and biology, and able to teach grades K-8, which is indicative of a middle school classification.

Student roles may also differ between middle schools and junior high schools. In middle schools, just like the one being investigated, students are more active in their learning processes. They can interact with each other, plan, and actively participate in lessons. Learning is more socially constructed. When conducting this study of SSR, the classroom teacher was extremely open to students speaking honestly, and voicing their true opinions. She encouraged her students to discuss what changes they may want to see in the SSR program and to voice these opinions when the time came. Conversely, students in junior high schools act more as passive receivers of knowledge in a classroom that is highly structured.
The differences in teaching methods are also apparent in middle and junior high schools, which correspond with teacher and student roles. Similar to the middle school being studied in this analysis of SSR, the prominent teaching methods are based on discovery learning, where students are guided through the pathways of knowledge by the teacher, and allowed to explore by themselves or with each other to construct their own meaning of the world around them. Junior high schools, however, primarily use lecture as the main method of instruction. Direct teaching approaches are valued, with the students acting as recipients of as much knowledge as the teacher can put forth.

Middle schools may also take a more exploratory and experimental approach to the curriculum. They are frequently willing to try new teaching techniques, and are concerned with the latest nuance in professional development seminars. The SSR program being utilized at the middle school in this study is a direct result of such a professional development presentation. However, basic skill development is still emphasized within middle schools. The difference lies in the fact that values are also incorporated into the curriculum, along with electives that are experimental in nature. The language arts classroom teacher in this study also teaches an elective course for sixth grade on cultural diversity; a class not normally seen in schools. Traditional curricular methods are also more often associated with junior high schools, with set electives in which students may participate.

The differences presented between middle schools and junior high schools are by no means standard in every school within the country. The characteristics are not indicative of every middle school and/or junior high school. Each attribute is also not necessarily better than the other. For instance, exploratory learning is not always better than direct instruction and vice versa. The traits of middle schools in comparison to junior high schools are utilized with the sole
purpose of creating a portrait of the educational institution being represented in this study of Sustained Silent Reading. Also worthy of noting is that only eighth grade classrooms are being investigated in regards to the Sustained Silent Reading program being utilized in this particular school.

Limitations

This study was limited by the ephemeral time in the field. Three weeks were spent collecting data due to the constraints related to graduation. To counteract this problem, the quantity and quality of data collected was extensive.

Diversity in relation to demographics was not present in the participating school. Students’ ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family background, reading achievement levels etc. were not considered. The findings, therefore, cannot be applied across the strata. An encouraging aspect in relation to this idiosyncrasy was that the school studied was free of potential bias associated with these demarcations.

Only one specific SSR program was studied: DEAR, or Drop Everything And Read. While the NRP (NIHCCD, 2000) values experimental, or quantitative data, the data in this study were divided between qualitative and quantitative data, a fact that should, arguably, be considered of equal value, especially in the field of education.

Finally, as in many studies, uncontrollable factors existed such as student honesty, hidden motivations, and unnatural behavior. To account for this potential discrepancy, students were informed before completing any of the components of the study that their responses were entirely confidential. Students were also assured that any recorded observations were not held against them negatively at any point in time. The classroom teacher was not permitted to know the individual behind the response.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A potential problem exists in middle school classrooms regarding the use of Sustained Silent Reading. While some research claims that adolescent students will remain on task during Sustained Silent Reading (Cohen, 1999; Herda & Ramos, 2001; Von Sprecken & Krashen, 1998), other studies suggest that a good majority do not (Stahl, 2004). If Sustained Silent Reading is going to be used effectively in classrooms, as with all instructional practices, it should be able to reach almost all students, not just a single grouping. An integral question, therefore, is if Sustained Silent Reading is not being successfully utilized by students in middle school classrooms (a point this study will try to discern), what can and should be done?

If this particular inquiry were posed to researchers, some might claim that Sustained Silent Reading may not be a good education practice (Shanahan, 2006). Others are proponents for keeping the traditional model of SSR, which includes providing students with anywhere from 10-45 minutes to read books of their choosing silently, while the teacher models appropriate silent reading habits (Gardiner, 2001; Krashen, 2005). This group of researchers would assert that SSR is effective just the way it is, and no changes need to be made. Another grouping of researchers would claim that while Sustained Silent Reading should not be eradicated entirely, some serious restructuring must occur to provide students with a foundational framework to reinforce their learning (Chua 2008; Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008; Trudel, 2007). The aim of this particular study was to use the review of related research to make connections between the previous and ongoing investigations of Sustained Silent Reading and the research questions posed by this study. The purpose of this study was to determine whether eighth grade students in a Northwest Ohio middle school were participating in on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading, or a combination
thereof and to ascertain whether a link existed between the findings and students’ motivation to read.

To accomplish this ambitious goal, a vital element of Sustained Silent Reading must be intricately discussed as well; that is, students’ motivation to read. Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) brought the paramount issue of reading motivation to the forefront of academic consideration. Citing revolutionaries such as Eccles (1983), Veenman (1984), and Ford (1992), these aforementioned researchers took the concept of reading motivation from a hushed afterthought to a central and illustrious matter that demanded accommodation in educational pedagogy. Their carefully developed Motivation to Read Profile finally gave educators a way to qualitatively and quantitatively assess their students’ self-concepts as readers and values concerning reading. The results allow teachers to tailor their curriculum in accordance to students’ needs and interests. It is a portion of the adaptation of this instrument for adolescent learners by Pitcher (et. al., 2007) that was utilized in this study of Sustained Silent Reading.

Research supports the claim that unmotivated readers are not as successful as their motivated counterparts. A main reason that students may be unmotivated to read is that they do not think highly of their reading abilities. Common sense and personal experience delegates that people do not want to engage in activities that might result in extreme hardship or failure. Consider, for instance, the person who knows nothing about, and finds extremely tedious, the act of cooking. Hosting a dinner party for eight is not going to be this individual’s first choice of social function. The same can be said for the struggling reader. If a student does not place his or her reading abilities on a positive scale, he or she is not going to be motivated to read. Similarly, if a student does not find the experience valuable, he or she will see no reason to engage in it. Eccles (1983) defines this phenomenon as the Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation. In this
theory, students who believe they can successfully do something, and that this “something” will hold at least minimal value, will be more inclined to engage in the task or activity. Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) expand on this idea by stating, “Students who believe they are capable and competent readers are more likely to outperform those who do not hold such beliefs” (p. 518). The implication, therefore, is that for Sustained Silent Reading to be effective, students need to perceive themselves as able to successfully and easily read.

If students are to be motivated to read in Sustained Silent Reading, and having a high self-concept as a reader is necessary for this to occur, then the next discernable step is for teachers to identify ways to boost students’ reading confidence. Text selection, therefore, is of vital importance to reading motivation. For instance, Tovani (2004) states:

> When I use text that is interesting, well written, and appropriately matched to the level of my students, my life as a teacher gets easier. Accessible text can come in a variety of forms. It is not ‘low level’ or ‘dumbed down.’ Most of the time it is of high interest, but often it is found in contexts outside of school….Accessible text is pleasant to the eye and interesting to read. (p. 39)

When given prominent importance, connecting students with reading materials they find interesting will greatly enhance their motivation to read. Teachers must, however, be able to research and keep up with the changing literary trends. They must also value getting to know their students as readers. Stairs and Burgos (2010) state that, “When teachers know their students’ interests, they can put the ‘just right’ books in their hands” (p. 47). Administering reading inventories at the beginning of the school year is a simple way to accomplish this goal. If reading inventories are too long and time consuming, teachers should consider simply having
students write down some titles or genres of reading materials they enjoy the most. Stairs and Burgos (2010) also recommend:

[Remaining] informed about the newest young adult literature by attending professional development conferences, checking resources through the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English websites, and reading book reviews published online in journals like *Language Arts, Voices from the Middle*, and *SIGNAL*. Teachers can then build on classroom libraries. (p. 47)

It has become increasingly apparent that if teachers are going to motivate their students to read, then they must be willing to put forth the time necessary to address student interest. A successful Sustained Silent Reading program should almost definitively include books that are appealing to students, and at their appropriate reading level.

While increasing students’ motivation to read is an essential component of SSR, another factor that is not often thought of is the SSR teacher’s motivation to read. If students can detect a lack of interest in reading from the teacher, can they really be expected to care that much in return? Dreher (2002) identifies motivating teachers to read as a significant obstacle to engaging students in successful reading experiences. For example, Dreher (2002) comments, “It has long been argued that teachers who are readers convey their love for reading to their students, that this love for reading provides a role model, and that it makes a differences in classroom practice” (p. 338). For students to be intrinsically motivated to read, they need to see and hear their teachers’ positive experiences with reading, especially to make up for a potential lack of reading exposure at home. This does not always have to be in the form of modeling. Teachers can discuss the appropriate aspects of the books they are reading with students as well. Either way, students are
seeing that reading is a valued practice, and are therefore potentially more likely to value it as well.

So what are the benefits of motivating students to read? Admittedly, the benefits go beyond the Sustained Silent Reading program. Since the fruitful rewards of motivating students to read are so vast, SSR acts as a conduit for these results. Some advantages of motivating students to read are described by Stairs and Burgos (2010). For instance, these researchers state that, “Independent, self-selected reading creates a classroom culture where reading and student choice are valued and the standards are met by employing meaningful pedagogy” (p. 43). From being motivated to read, students in Stairs’ and Burgos’ (2010) study were found to learn more about themselves as personal decision makers, participants in “healthy interpersonal relationships,” and as readers (pp. 45-46). Creating a motivation to read helps students to become more fully literate and successful. Sustained Silent Reading acts as the key opportunity students need to develop a motivation to read. Atwell (1998) comments that, “This is the kind of evidence that begins to convince doubting administrators and parents: Students read more, comprehend better, and value books and reading to a greater degree when we make time in school for them to read” (p. 96). From this perspective, Sustained Silent Reading is viewed as a valued and highly beneficial classroom practice for students. Reading motivation can be developed and transmitted from student to student through the use of SSR.

Historical Background of Sustained Silent Reading

To effectively implement a study on Sustained Silent Reading, and to eventually address the research questions posed by this study, a solid framework regarding the history of SSR is needed. The goal is to re-configure how SSR has been utilized since its implementation in
schools, and where it stands in the spectrum of instruction today. Deconstructing the history of Sustained Silent Reading will significantly aid in its discussion.

The idea of Sustained Silent Reading was originally posed by Lyman Hunt at the University of Vermont in the 1960s (Jensen & Jensen, 2002). It was not until the 1970s, however, that Hunt’s proposal gained popularity and began to be implemented in schools as a way to help students practice reading, and hopefully become interested in reading independently. Public schools also began utilizing SSR to help with skill development for fluency and silent reading comprehension, a necessary competency for students, along with oral reading comprehension and fluency (Reutzel, Jones, Parker, Fawson & Smith, 2008).

As with any popular educational practice, however, evaluative and reflective researchers began to question the effectiveness of Sustained Silent Reading. Studies began to emerge in the 1980s that examined whether SSR was actually increasing students’ attitudes towards reading and skills in reading. A good number of studies found that Sustained Silent Reading positively correlated to increased interest and attitude towards reading (Cynthia, 2000; Gardiner, 2001, 2007; Jensen & Jensen, 2002; Krashen, 2005; Valeri-Gold, 1995; Yoon, 2002). However, other studies have shown that SSR does not increase students’ interests in reading (Parr & Maguiness, 2005) and that no correlation can be made to SSR and positive, effective learning (NICHHD, 2000; Shanahan, 2006). From these conflicting verdicts, therefore, many teachers have been asking themselves, “Well, which is it?” (Chua, 2008; Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Reutzal, et al., 2008). To aid in answering this emphatically raised inquiry, current research needs to be thoroughly discussed.
Common Themes Found in SSR

Because Sustained Silent Reading has been a literacy practice in classrooms since the 1970s, the amount of research conducted in regards to SRR is quite vast. Within the expansive number of studies, common patterns and themes become noticeable. The themes of SSR can also be described as the “hot topics” that are most debated among researchers. These include: the varying goals of SSR; the effectiveness of SSR; and the structure/framework provided by SSR. On-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading, the main focus of this particular study, must take into consideration all of these themes that have sparked great controversy in academia.

Increasingly discernable is the resemblance between Sustained Silent Reading research themes, and balanced literacy instruction. While no consensus exists on what balanced literacy instruction specifically entails, the culmination of research suggests that balanced literacy instruction is the middle ground for allocating students with the “best of both extremes.” More specifically, balanced literacy involves providing classroom instruction that satisfies the diverse needs of students by supporting multiple, unique teaching and learning techniques along a spectrum of possibilities (Guthrie, Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley, 2007). Figure 2.1 outlines the balancing act in which teachers often find themselves trying to engage.

![Figure 2.1 Balanced Literacy Instruction (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007)](image-url)
Just like balanced literacy instruction, Sustained Silent Reading can also be categorized within the realm of balanced practice (see Figure 2). Some examples include: Using SSR for increased skills versus increased interest in reading; supporting SSR through teacher modeling versus teacher monitoring; tailoring an SSR program to fit non-fluent readers’ needs versus fluent readers’ needs; and choosing SSR books based on interest and authenticity versus difficulty levels.

As mentioned earlier, while some researchers prefer not to denigrate the traditional model of Sustained Silent Reading, others maintain that structure is a vital element if students are going to engage successfully in SSR (Chua, 2008; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Reutzell et al., 2008; Trudel, 2007). Apart from Chua (2008), who conducted a study of SSR and made recommendations to provide structure in future implementation to ensure effectiveness, each of the other research studies witnessed a problem with SSR in their classrooms, and developed a way of restructuring SSR to fit the needs of their students. The teachers became teacher-researchers, as in an action research project.

Figure 2.2 Balanced Sustained Silent Reading
To add, their outcomes were positive. Adding a constructive framework including student monitoring, assistance in book selection, various Sustained Silent Reading time rules (such as taking bathroom breaks only before and after SSR), mini-lessons on ‘good reading’ techniques, and supplemental student activities that help the students create authentic and meaningful experiences from SSR, significantly helped their students become engaged, skilled readers. The main success these researchers had was to create a literacy culture. Students were able to recognize their skills in reading, and it therefore became a socially acceptable practice. As Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2006) state, “We saw improved motivation in every child—from the hard-core book addicts to the most reluctant readers. Fake readers became engaged readers, and engaged readers became fanatics” (p. 155). Within this study and the others like it, simply providing a foundation and working framework for Sustained Silent Reading made an immense difference in its effectiveness at creating a positive literary environment that targets not only reading practice, but also increased reading attitude and interest.

One argument that is often posed by those advocating a traditional model of Sustained Silent Reading, however, is that teacher monitoring and structure inhibits students’ freedom of choice and decreases their ownership of their own learning (Gardiner, 2001, 2007; Krashen, 2005). However, this exact concern is addressed by Trudel (2007) when she recalls her restructuring of SSR to Independent Reading:

A colleague came up to me the other day concerned about the implementation of [Independent Reading]…. ‘Aren’t you taking the fun out of silent reading by requiring the students to do so much?’ she asked. I had that question racing through my mind during my silent reading trial….What I discovered was a group of active learners (at all different skill levels) who were eager to improve their reading skills and share their new
insights with one another and with me….Children need to see the purpose in what they’re doing….Our silent reading period became not just a time to practice reading (in that case, struggling readers continued to struggle) but an opportunity for students to recognize—and celebrate—their skills as readers and improve upon them with teacher support. (pp. 314-315)

In this example, Trudel found considerable success in a re-structured Sustained Silent Reading program that focused on monitoring all reading levels to facilitate the most success. While traditional Sustained Silent Reading advocates may argue that SSR should focus solely on reading for interest, not skill development, Trudel counters that skill maturation gives students the confidence they need to become interested in reading. If students believe they can do something, they will be more interested and welcoming of that activity. In other words, if students believe they are good at reading, they will be significantly more motivated to read. In this way, Trudel seems to be adopting Atwell’s 1980s reading research theory.

Another common area of interest in the studies mentioned above that examined restructuring Sustained Silent Reading time was the examination of the National Reading Panel Report (NIHDC, 2000). Each study mentioned the NRP report as a cause for concern, which acted as the catalyst, therefore, for evaluative measures of their respective Sustained Silent Reading programs.

National Reading Panel Report

Perhaps no other extensive study on teaching children to read has ignited so much controversy than that of the National Reading Panel report (NIHDC, 2000). This is especially interesting since the panel’s report did not actually explicitly state that independent, silent
reading should not be practiced in schools. It was, instead, the lack of “acceptable” research that planted a seed of doubt in the minds of teachers, administrators and parents.

Started in 1997 and finished in 2000, the NRP report on the highest quality, best-practice reading instruction strategies studied the topics of alphabetics, fluency, comprehension (including vocabulary, text comprehension instruction, teacher preparation, and comprehension strategies instruction), teacher education and reading instruction, and computer technology and reading instruction (NIHDC). Attitude, interest, and an aesthetic response to literature in regards to reading was not examined due to “the sheer number of studies identified by the panel staff as relevant to reading (more than 100,000 published since 1966 and more than 15,000 prior to 1966) that precluded an exhaustive analysis of the research in all areas of potential interest” (p. 3). However, reading motivation was identified as being relevant to improving reading achievement in children’s independent reading time. In the discussion of independent silent reading, though, no mention of motivation to read was found (NIHDC).

Sustained Silent Reading was not specifically addressed in the National Reading Panel report, but independent silent reading was discussed in reference to the examination of fluency. Ironically, after identifying independent silent reading as an instructional reading practice aligned with fluency, the NRP states “The studies did not directly assess fluency or the actual increase in the amount of reading due to the instructional procedures” (p. 12). Instead, vocabulary and/or comprehension skills were measured and identified as being more appropriately aligned with the topic of independent silent reading.

The NRP also commented that very few studies found on independent silent reading actually met the requirements of the methodological quality research criteria. The model used is discussed in the introduction of the NRP report and states that, “The evidence-based
methodological standards adopted by the Panel are essentially those normally used in research studies of the efficacy of interventions in psychological and medical research” (p. 5). While the NRP provides a very explicit defense of using this research methodology, other researchers have questioned if this model appropriately relates to the investigation topic of teaching children to read (Garan & DeVoogd, 2008).

The NRP admitted that widespread support exists for providing students with independent silent reading time. Their findings and determinations, however, state that, “a positive relationship between programs and instruction that encourage large amounts of independent reading and improvements in reading achievement, including fluency were not able to be found” (p. 12-13). This result was also in relation to independent silent reading time with nominal guidance or feedback. The National Reading Panel conclude their discussion of independent silent reading by stating, “In sum, methodologically rigorous research designed to assess the specific influences that independent silent reading practices have on reading fluency and other reading skills and the motivation to read has not yet been conducted” (p. 13). From this, the NRP suggests that since the studies investigated did not reveal a significant link, more research needs to be conducted using the methodological research designs utilized by the NRP report. Only then will the results be considered.

As if prophesying the firestorm this conclusion was about to unleash, the NRP report directly and explicitly states that this does not in any way mean that independent silent reading is an ineffective practice, or that it should not be conducted in classrooms. The NRP uses no absolutes. Instead they state:

It should be made clear that these findings do not negate the positive influence that independent silent reading may have on reading fluency, nor do the findings negate the
possibility that wide independent reading significantly influences vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Rather, there are not sufficient data from well-designed studies capable of testing questions of causation to substantiate causal claims. The available data do suggest that independent silent reading is not an effective practice when used as the only type of reading instruction to develop fluency and other reading skills, particularly with students who have not yet developed critical alphabetic and word reading skills. (p. 13)

In this way, the NRP tries to make explicitly clear that the findings should not necessarily cause reading teachers to eliminate independent silent reading time in their classrooms. It should also be noted from the statement above that the NRP does not recommend independent silent reading as the only method of reading instruction. This correlates directly to the earlier discussion of a balanced approach to literacy. Researchers have stated that no type of instruction in reading should exist solely on its own. This would be depriving students of a well-rounded educational career (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007).

Response to the National Reading Panel Report

The conclusions and findings of the NRP report have caused many educators, administrators, and other members of the academic community to question how independent silent reading, most often in the form of Sustained Silent Reading, is being used in classrooms. Perhaps the most critical response came from Krashen (2005) and Garan and DeVoogd (2008). Krashen (2005) bluntly claims that the National Reading Panel’s findings on independent silent reading are just plain incorrect. He publicly debates with one of the NRP subgroup members, Timothy Shanahan, in journals and research magazines on the effectiveness of SSR. Krashen (2005) claims that The National Reading Panel did not consider a significant number of studies
because they did not meet the research method criteria, which was not necessarily a positive practice. Garan and DeVoogd (2008) comment on this as well, stating “In their quest for scientific certainty, the panel chose to rely solely on a medical model, using experimental treatments and control groups, even though few education researchers adopted such a model” (p. 337). This decision severely limited the results that could be considered, and therefore negatively affected the considerations of Sustained Silent Reading according to these researchers.

Garan and DeVoogd (2008) also called the research methods of the NRP “simplistic” and “reductionist” (p. 338). Perhaps the most notable discussion of the NRP report from these researchers is the comparison used to describe the methodological research design choice used by the NRP. Garan and DeVoogd (2008) state:

Consider for instance, that to conduct an effective experiment on independent reading, researchers would need to establish a treatment group (one that reads independently) and a control group (one that doesn’t read). What’s more, the conditions imposed on these groups would need to be sustained over an extended period of time—the longer, the better. The amount of reading done by each group of students would have to be controlled as strictly as possible; the less reading done in the control group, the more accurate the results would be and vice versa. (p. 339)

This type of experimental study, according to Garan and DeVoogd (2008) is exactly what the NRP used as their criteria. When the NRP stated that more research had to be done before they would re-consider the effectiveness of independent silent reading, such as SSR, they were referencing a study that utilizes the above components. The only problem is that no parent, teacher, or school administrator would willingly deprive students of time and practice reading. The conclusion, therefore, among certain researchers is that the NRP cannot possibly expect to
ethically complete a study of this nature in regards to Sustained Silent Reading (Garan & DeVoogd).

In addition, Garan and DeVoogd (2008) explain that practice in any skill is important. As Farstrup and Samuels (2003) maintain, the primary goal of SSR is to increase the quantity of reading. This extended practice will help students to continually develop their reading skills. Using this statement in relation to the problem of research criteria in the NRP report, according to Garan and DeVoogd, either the NRP believe practice helps, or they do not. However, a contrasting argument is that if the instructional practice is not well designed, then it will not be effective. For example, if when practicing basketball, an individual only practices dribbling, it will not lead to being a better basketball player as a whole. It is better stated, therefore, that perfect practice makes perfect. Sustained Silent Reading may need to be restructured according to the needs of individual students, or groups of students to be considered perfect practice.

While many of the responses to the National Reading Panel report have been negative, researchers such as Farstrup and Samuels (2003) take a more practical stance. In their discussion of Sustained Silent Reading, they make note of the type of studies that were not included in the NRP report, and calmly state that the National Reading Panel is not recommending that Sustained Silent Reading be discontinued in classrooms. There is a key, and drastically vital component to the findings of the NRP report, according to Farstrup and Samuels, which is that SSR was found to be ineffective as the only type of reading instruction. This suggests, therefore, that if Sustained Silent Reading is used with other types of reading instruction, it may be very effective.
Summary

It seems that a consensus on Sustained Silent Reading cannot be attained. Research on Sustained Silent Reading has proven to be contradictory in nature. While one group of researchers claim that SSR in its traditional form is still effective (Gardiner, 2001; Krashen, 2005), another group states that SSR needs to be restructured to be a successful practice (Chua 2008; Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008; Trudel, 2007). Still another group of researchers conclude that SSR is ineffective as the only instructional model for reading (NIHDC, 2000; Shanahan, 2006). It seems no common ground can be attained in the research of Sustained Silent Reading and how it should be conducted, if at all. Perhaps the practice of Sustained Silent Reading needs to be studied according to individual need. In this way, teacher-researchers can assess what works best for his/her particular classroom, which will make the use of SSR the most effective.

One vital element of Sustained Silent Reading is motivation to read. The potential for independent silent reading practices, such as the one analyzed in this study, to significantly enhance students’ reading motivation is reason enough, researchers and authorities claim, to begin, or continue, implementing SSR in classroom instruction. While some classroom teachers have had to ignore their desire to create authentic, meaningful, and inspiring learning experiences with their students, Stairs and Burgos (2010) argue that independent reading can inspire students to be motivated to read. Their main argument is that, “literacy educators should keep independent, self-selected reading at the center of the middle grades language arts curriculum” because “It is clear that independent, self-selected reading is a research-based practice beneficial for all students” (p. 41-42).
If Sustained Silent Reading, however, should be used in general classrooms, it does need to be a part of a balanced literacy approach. As the National Reading Panel report found, the practice of independent silent reading is not effective if used as the only practice of reading instruction. Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007) make this vital assertion in their discussion of best practices in literacy instruction. Not only should SSR be used with other instructional approaches to reading, but it should also be balanced in and of itself. A successful SSR program recognizes that not all students may learn well without guidance. Structure may need to be given to those students who need it. How to select books may need to be communicated to students, as well how to engage in successful silent reading. Both struggling and non-struggling readers need to be taken into consideration no matter what instructional reading practice is being implemented, but especially when students are working independently.

Finally, while the NRP report may contain flaws in its research selection criteria according to numerous researchers (Chua 2008; Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Gardiner, 2001; Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Krashen, 2005; Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008; Trudel, 2007), it does contain the point that independent silent reading needs to be paired with other forms of reading instruction. It also concludes that more research needs to be conducted to form more quality driven decisions.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research indicates that Sustained Silent Reading may be useful to help develop both skills in reading, and an interest in reading. To accomplish this, however, research also states that Sustained Silent Reading needs to be given an increased amount of structure including: providing goals for students, monitoring student progress, aiding in the selection of books, making the reading purposeful, and developing a literary culture. The recommendations provided by researchers are based on the finding that too many students are not remaining on-task during Sustained Silent Reading due to a lack of a constructive and supportive framework. The specific purpose of this investigation was to determine whether eighth grade students in a Northwest Ohio middle school were participating in on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading, or a combination thereof and to ascertain whether a link existed between the findings and students’ motivation to read. To assess how this research relates to this particular study of Sustained Silent Reading, the nature of this investigation in terms of the research methodology and design needs to be addressed.

Methods

Research Design

The overall methods and techniques used in this investigation of Sustained Silent Reading follow more closely that of an action research methodology, although it must be made explicit that not all of the characteristics adhere to this framework. While traditional educational research uses a scientific method, quantitative research strategies, and non-experimental versus experimental research designs, action research uses a more reflective and inductive approach to answer questions (Mertler, 2009). Just as this study was developed due to an observable problem
in a classroom, educators can engage in action research in their own classrooms, which makes their findings extremely relevant.

Within the action research configuration, a mixed-methods research design was employed due to the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data. To effectively engage in a discussion of the research methods being used in this study, however, it is first imperative to define qualitative and quantitative data. Mertler (2009) states that qualitative research aligns itself with “the analysis and collection of narrative data” (p. 7). In other words, qualitative data is more aligned with information that can be observed, or spoken about. It relies on human subjects discussing their relevant viewpoints or engaging in the behaviors being studied. Qualitative research adds a personal element to the data collection. Maxwell (2005) distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative by stating of qualitative research:

The activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating and refocusing the research questions and identifying and addressing validity threats are usually all going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others. This process isn’t adequately represented by a linear model…because in qualitative research, there isn’t an unvarying order in which the different tasks and components must be arranged. (p. 2)

Qualitative data is always in flux. This does not mean that it is unorganized or unsystematic, but rather that qualitative data involves more variables that sometimes require a change in direction.

Quantitative research methodologies on the other hand, are more focused on numerical data. After the data are gathered, the numbers are examined to deduce meaning. The goal of quantitative research is to “describe or otherwise understand educational phenomena” (Mertler, 2009, p. 9). However, since this study used both qualitative and quantitative data, and was
designed with the more personal goal of improving educational practice in a specific classroom, the mixed-methods design within the action research construct was a more appropriate fit.

Since a mixed-methods approach was used in this study of on-task versus off-task SSR as related to reading motivation, specific research designs related to both quantitative and qualitative data need to be addressed. Both data collection methods contain within themselves varying frameworks that convey heightened meaning.

An observational case study was the qualitative research design being utilized in this specific investigation. Case studies in general are defined by Stake (1988) as “…special because they have a different focus. The case study focus is on a single actor, a single institution, a single enterprise, maybe a classroom, usually under natural conditions so as to understand it…in its natural habitat” (p. 256). Six students were randomly selected to be observed during Sustained Silent Reading time. All of the data collected from these students were separated from the rest of the class to create a portrait of these students as readers. When analyzing their results, patterns in their responses were of particular importance to the overall findings.

The quantitative research design implemented in this study draws from both a descriptive, and a correlational model. This is because distinct characteristics and instrumentation from both constructs were vital components in this investigation. More specifically, the survey research method within the descriptive research design and the correlational study embedded in the correlational design were utilized to deduce whether students were remaining on-task or off-task during SSR, and to what degree that was connected to motivation to read, if at all. However, it should be noted that correlations, to a point, are descriptive in nature. According to Shank and Brown (2007), “[Correlations] describe possible relationships, but they do not explain them. If you want to explain why…you need to do further
research. But knowing that there is a possible relationship in the first place is a valuable piece of information, so correlational research can be very important” (p. 172). It was the aim of this study to find a correlation between students’ perceptions of DEAR and their motivation to read.

Survey research, according to Mertler (2009), “involves acquiring information from individuals representing one or more groups—perhaps about their opinions, attitudes, or characteristics—by specifically asking them questions and then tabulating their responses” (p. 83). This is precisely one of the quantitative data collection methods used in this study. Students received a 10-question survey asking about their opinions, attitudes, and participation in their Sustained Silent Reading program (See Appendix A). The specific design of the survey will be discussed later in this chapter, but it addresses the ultimate goal of survey research, which was to learn more about the present standing of students, in this particular case, as related to their SSR program.

Correlational studies, the other type of quantitative research design being implemented in this analysis of SSR, are the actual statistical representations of the data collected comparing two or more variables. It answers whether or not a statistical interrelation exists, and to what degree (Mertler, 2009). The two variables under question in this specific study were students’ on-task versus off-task behavior and engagement in SSR (variable 1), as related to their motivation to read (variable 2). If these two variables are correlated, specific statistical patterns will result after data collection and analysis.

Dowling and Brown (2010) describe this as the coefficient of correlation. More precisely, the correlation coefficient exists when one variable increases while the other variable either increases as well, or decreases. If both variables increase, this is called a positive correlation. If one increases while the other decreases, a negative correlation results (Dowling & Brown, 2010).
However, even if a positive or negative correlation results from the collected data, significance must be identified as well. As Shank and Brown (2007) state:

> You need to realize that these correlations describe possible relationships. That is, a correlation is a probability statement. Correlations are indexes, so they range, in absolute terms, from zero to one. A zero tells you that the probability that these variables are related are vanishingly small, and a one tells you that it is very likely indeed that they are related. (p. 172-173)

Once the correlation between these two variables is found, significance must be pronounced as well. According to Pyrczak (2007), the correlation (r) is: (a) weak if it is less than .39, (b) fair if it is equal to .4-.59, (c) strong if it is equal to .6-.79, and (d) very strong if it is greater than .8. To describe how accurately a variable predicts another, then r must be squared. This is called the coefficient of determination. It must be noted, however, that correlations do not measure cause and effect. This study was not designed to determine whether on-task or off-task SSR was effecting reading motivation, but rather if a relationship exists.

**Participation**

Participants in this study of SSR included students in a Northwest Ohio middle school. Within this school, only one of the eighth grade language arts classrooms was used. No students were omitted based on gender, socio-economic status, race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Demographic data were not considered.

All students received a survey specifically asking about Sustained Silent Reading, and the reading survey within the Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher, Albright, DeLaney, Walker, Seunarinesingh, Mogge, Headley, Ridgeway, Peck, Hunt, & Dunston, 2007). Six students from the language arts block were originally interviewed; however, three were absent at subsequent
data collection times; therefore, only three student interviews were included in this study. The students were selected at random. If students were absent on any of the data implementation and/or data collection days, their responses were not considered. Overall, three students fit this criteria; however, none of these three students were a part of the six core sample of students. Therefore, out of 25 students in this particular language arts class, only 22 student responses were reviewed.

_Sustained Silent Reading Environment_

Walking into the language arts classroom under investigation, the first striking environmental element is the sheer size of the room. While not egregiously large, the panel of windows facing the door emit an inviting array of sunlight that seems to provide the classroom with an open, airy atmosphere. The walls are covered in vibrant posters that proclaim such sayings as: _Today is a great day to learn something new!_ or _The task ahead of you is never as great as the strength within you!_ The desks are positioned in circular groupings throughout the room, and while it is currently empty, this arrangement allows the imagination to easily envision students animatedly engaging in interactive learning experiences. Five more desks line the side wall, a computer sitting on each surface as if expectantly waiting for the next student to approach.

The teacher’s desk is placed in a corner at the front of the room by the windows. Behind her desk is a bookshelf that contains numerous teacher resources and lesson ideas. The position of her desk is in direct access to the dry erase board at the front of the room where a myriad of colorful dry erase markers litter the marker holder under the board. Students’ work is prominently displayed around the entire room, demonstrating a value for their creations and ideas. The whole classroom radiates a comforting and positive warmth.
Specifically regarding SSR time, a bookshelf on a side wall contains two shelves of books that students may choose from if they do not have their own book to read. Books are the only reading material permitted during SSR. The particular books on the shelf previously described are gathered from donations, store bought books, and remaining books from old text sets. There is no indication that these books are chosen and compiled based on bestseller or medal lists. SSR occurs in this classroom once a week, on Wednesdays, for twenty minutes at the end of the last period of the day. Students are expected to bring their own books of interest. If they forget, students are usually not allowed to retrieve one from their lockers, but instead either choose one off the shelf, or read a textbook of their choosing. From these descriptions, it is important to note that this is a typical SSR program based on the original design.

Instrumentation

Four different techniques were implemented to gather data. These were: (a) a survey tailored to questions about the specific use of this school’s SSR program called DEAR, (b) the reading survey within the Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher, et al., 2007), (c) interview questions pertaining to student profiles as readers and views/opinions of DEAR, and (d) formal observations, including field notes. The DEAR surveys and the reading survey within the Motivation to Read Profile were used to collect quantitative data, while the interviews and observations were utilized to gather qualitative data. Each method was unique and therefore, will be discussed thoroughly to procure an exact idea of how each functioned in this study.

According to Mertler (2009), “The term survey refers to a collective group of quantitative data collection techniques that involve the administration of a set of questions or statements to a sample of people” (p. 117). The surveys for this investigation were composed of two types of questions (See Appendix A). The first set were “yes” or “no” questions in which the participant
was asked to circle one or the other. The second set of questions used a Likert-type scale. This type of survey question provided a statement that the participant responded to using a list of numbers, usually ranging from one to five, to show frequency and occurrence (Mertler).

Depending on the specific question, the number one represented “Always” and the number five represented “Never,” or the number one signified “Very little” and the number five signified “Very much,” or the number one meant “Not at all” and the number five represented “All the time.” Each option was detailed on the survey questions so the students knew exactly what was being asked of them. Each DEAR survey consisted of 10 questions: five “yes” or “no” responses, and five Likert-type scale responses.

The other quantitative research tool, the reading survey within the *Motivation to Read Profile*, was administered to students as well (See Appendix B). This assessed students’ varying levels of interest, attitude, and motivation regarding reading in general. Both were included to examine the correlation in attitudes, interests and motivations towards reading in general to Sustained Silent Reading.

Adapted from the *Motivation to Read Profile* (Pitcher, et. al, 2007), the model used in this study consisted only of the reading survey. The original *Motivation to Read Profile* contained two separate sections, a reading survey and a narrative interview. A separate interview was developed outside of the *Motivation to Read Profile* so that it could explicitly address the DEAR program. Out of the entire *Motivation to Read Profile*, the reading survey specifically was described thoroughly by Pitcher (et. al) who stated:

The reading survey provides scores for both “Self-concept as a reader” and “Value of reading” and takes approximately 10 minutes to administer to a whole class. The multiple-choice format and easy to follow scoring sheet provide a practical instrument
that can be used with large groups of students. (p. 379)

In addition to practicality, and valid quantitative scoring, the reading survey within the Motivation to Read Profile worked in this study to assess any possible link between Sustained Silent Reading and an interest in reading. Interest has been shown to be a powerful tool in motivating students to learn to read, and this is precisely why students’ reading motivation should be carefully examined.

The first qualitative research technique used in this study was formal observations. Each eighth grader was observed during Sustained Silent Reading time. Three weeks of observations were allotted, totaling three weeks in the field. Ample field notes were taken of observable behaviors during Sustained Silent Reading of both teachers and students and put into a checklist of on-task and off-task behaviors according to the stipulations described above in the discussion of terms (See Appendix C). Since the students were sitting in their desks that were arranged in clusters, the formidable task of observing 25 different students was made much simpler. Within the twenty minutes of reading time for SSR, each cluster could be observed for approximately five minutes. Sitting at the front of the room to the side was also a convenience for observations because it provided a prime outlook of the classroom without being in a place of too much prominence.

The second qualitative research method used in this study was the interview. According to Mertler (2009), interviews are “conversations between the teacher-researcher and participants in the study in which the teacher poses questions to the participant” (p. 108). An interview guide was developed prior to giving the interview, and followed a semi-structured format (See Appendix D). This means that the interviewer (teacher-researcher) asked assorted foundational questions, with the option of asking follow-up questions to expand on the initial response given
by the interviewee (Mertler). Each interview consisted of 20 questions. The first 10 questions were adapted from the *BADER Reading and Language Inventory* (Bader, 2009) to gather information about the students as readers in general.

The importance of this inclusion is two-fold. First, when talking with students it is always a meritorious idea to build rapport before asking questions. If students feel comfortable and at ease with the person to whom they are speaking, their answers are more likely to be honest and descriptive. Second, getting background information on the students as readers aids in the ability to make connections to their opinions, interests, and attitudes regarding a specific aspect of reading. For instance, if Suzie (pseudonym) states that she cannot think about any time she gets excited to read (question 9 in the interview), and/or she does not know of anyone she sees reading (question 10 in the interview), connections and correlations between those responses can be made to Suzie’s perceptions of her SSR program DEAR.

The second 10 questions of the interview pertained to the students’ opinions and observations of Sustained Silent Reading. These questions concentrate on whether students fake-read and why or why not, if they think their DEAR program should be altered and in what way, and their overall feelings of DEAR. Combined, the interview functions as a window into these students as readers, creating a written portrait of their reading habits, interests, attitudes, opinions, and views.

**Procedures**

To effectively conduct this study of Sustained Silent Reading, numerous, detailed procedures were involved. The modus operandi included first contacting the Northwest Ohio middle school to confirm their willing participation and interest in this study. A formal letter explaining the components and aims of this study was sent to the school principal and
participating teacher (See Appendix E). Each communicated their ascent through email transactions.

Since students were observed during their SSR time each day, and asked questions containing their personal views, permission letters to parents were developed and sent home one week before observations began (See Appendix F). This helped to provide ample time for the permission letters to be returned and analyzed so that accommodations could be made for those preferring that their child or children not participate. However, this did not turn out to be the case. All permission letters were returned within the allotted time and all parents agreed to each part of the study. It was of high priority to ensure the permission letters also included an overview of the study, with its aims and courses of action clearly defined (See Appendix G).

Once school participation was confirmed and student permission forms were returned and analyzed, weekly observations began. The eighth grade language arts classroom was observed for three weeks, one day a week. During the course of the week, the data collection methods including the surveys, Motivation to Read Profile reading survey, and interviews were completed, respectively. All students were willing to participate and none expressed a desire to end their involvement, even though it was made explicitly clear that no consequences would be incurred by this decision.

According to Mertler (2009), an effective action research design sometimes involves a five step process (versus a variation that includes a nine step procedure) that comprises: (a) selecting an area to study based on observed need, (b) collecting data, (c) organizing data, (d) analyzing and interpreting the data, and (e) taking action. This process is visually represented in Figure 3.1 below. The examination of SSR in the selected middle school follows these five steps of action research.
First, the topic of SSR was selected partially due to an observed problem in the schools’ eighth grade language arts classroom. In this school, it was informally observed that approximately half of the students were not truly engaging in SSR, but instead exhibiting the following behaviors: passing notes to friends, chatting behind their books, flipping pages too early for appropriate pacing (i.e. every 30 seconds), repeatedly getting up to get a tissue or use the hand sanitizer, and staring at the clock more than actually reading the books in front of them. These initial informal observations acted a red flag that something was amiss, and not functioning as it should.

Second in the five-step process, data were collected through both qualitative and quantitative means. The qualitative data included interviews and formal observations through recorded field notes. The quantitative data collection involved that of a survey, which was tailored to asking about the students’ perceptions of DEAR, and the reading survey within a Motivation to Read Profile.

Third, the gathered data were organized according to student responses using Microsoft Excel and prepared for interpretation. This was highly crucial to the five-step process because the views of the entire class were not unanimous. Also, the correlations between the SSR survey and the Motivation to Read Profile reading survey were not always consistent. Therefore, separating the data according to the multiple varying responses allowed for all individuals being affected by the use of SSR and their corresponding motivation scores to be accurately represented.

Fourth, the data collected were analyzed and interpreted to ascertain whether students were, in fact, engaging in on-task or off-task SSR, and how these results related to their reading motivation scores on the Motivation to Read Profile reading survey. Fifth, suggestions and
recommendations were made to the classroom teachers and administrators involved in this study. A conference between the researcher, the principal, and the classroom teacher took place as an informal professional development session, where the results were communicated. Discussion included what the observable positives and negatives were, the reasons behind these results, and what subsequent steps could be taken to establish the most advantages from the DEAR program. Hopefully, the findings will be used to create a positive and proactive change in the use of SSR. This entire five-step process is shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 Five-Step Process for Action Research

Data Collection

While the data collection methods have been outlined earlier in the discussion of this study, a more encompassing examination needs to occur for the purpose of enhanced understanding. According to the action research model printed above in Figure 3.1, data collection transpired during the second step of the research process known as the acting stage.
(Mertler, 2009). Within the data collection category, both qualitative and quantitative data were accumulated to provide a balance as to the type of research involved. This can be seen in that the former applies to narrative and more personal relations of data, while the latter gathers numerical data. Exactly two qualitative and two quantitative measures existed in this study in the form of observations and interviews (qualitative) and surveys and a Motivation to Read Profile reading survey (quantitative).

Observations, the first qualitative data collection method to be examined, can be both formal and informal. For example, people informally observe certain human behaviors that do not have significant consequences or implications. As Mertler (2009) explains, “On a daily basis, we typically observe our surroundings in somewhat of a haphazard manner—something more akin to ‘watching’ than observing” (pp. 106-107). This study, however, collected data through formal observations that go beyond simply looking. The data collection methodology for the observations occurring in this study of Sustained Silent Reading required careful and systematic recordings of student and teacher behaviors. A semi-structured observation model, or observations that involve brief, but intense periods of observations and note taking, was used to collect the necessary data (Mertler). Afterwards, the notes were organized into a checklist of on-task versus off-task reading behaviors (See Appendix C).

To record the observations for data collection purposes, field notes were used. Field notes are simply observations that are written down as they are taking place (Mertler, 2009). The observations in this study addressed the behaviors of students and teachers within the eighth grade language arts classroom. Data were collected regarding the on-task vs. off-task behaviors of students during Sustained Silent Reading, as well as any monitoring, or lack thereof, that is
taking place on the teachers’ behalf. The data collected were used to shed light on what works well and is effective in regards to Sustained Silent Reading as well as vice versa.

The second qualitative data collection method was the student semi-structured interview. Each interview, regardless of the interviewee, consisted of 20 questions pertaining to the opinions, feelings, reactions, and viewpoints of Sustained Silent Reading. All of the interviews were conducted in a relatively private setting to decrease the probability of extraneous factors influencing the responses. The interview consisted of questions pertaining to how the individual student felt about SSR (does he/she like it, not like it, think it’s ok, etc.), what he/she sees as the benefits (or limitations) of SSR, if he/she is actually reading during SSR (if not, what is going on and why), and if SSR can or should be redone somehow.

The first quantitative data collection technique was the student survey asking about SSR. The surveys were administered to all students on the same day. No names were printed on the surveys, which were completed by hand. Every survey, regardless of the person completing it, consisted of 10 questions: five “yes” or “no” questions and five Likert-type scale questions. The data collected from these surveys provided a numerical representation of the perceptions of Sustained Silent Reading and its implementation in the classroom in terms of on-task versus off-task behaviors.

The second type of quantitative data collected was the Motivation to Read Profile reading survey. This was given to students to assess any potential link between SSR and a motivation to read. The scoring guide at the end of the reading survey was utilized to assess the value students assign to reading in general, and their self-concepts as a reader. The data collected from the Motivation to Read Profile reading survey was used to assess whether on-task versus off-task behaviors during SSR may or may not lead to increased or decreased motivation to read.
Data Analysis

The third step of action research (the acting stage) also contains a second integral element: data analysis. This vital process will help decrease the volume of data by organizing and processing the collected data into more reasonable groupings. Qualitative and quantitative data, however, have differing, unique steps within the dissection process, which need to be discussed.

Qualitative data analysis requires an inductive approach to the examination of collected data. This means that the data are combed for clear patterns or themes, which help create an explicit configuration of the findings (Mertler, 2009). A three-step process is identified by Mertler as being vital to this process. The three steps include: organization, description, and interpretation. Figure 3.2 describes these steps, by also aligning them with the specific data collection methods used in this study.

Figure 3.2 Data Analysis Steps

As seen above in Figure 3.2, the first step of the inductive analysis process entails the researcher organizing the potentially massive amounts of narrative data into categories. These categories can be developed to fit the specific parameters of the study. In the case of this study, the categories were divided between the observations, the MRP reading survey results, the SSR survey results, and the interviews.
Categories aligning with the qualitative data collection involved in the observations were as follows: On-task behaviors; off-task behaviors; unidentifiable behaviors; and teacher behaviors. The categories relating to the qualitative interviews consisted of the following headings: Opinions of the effectiveness of SSR; known behaviors during SSR; benefits associated with SSR; limitations of SSR; noted reactions towards reading during SSR and reading in general; possible improvements for SSR; and reasons behind any suggested improvements.

The second step in inductive analysis is to describe the data collected. To do this, connections must be made between the data collected and the original research questions (Mertler, 2009). The following question was asked to help discern the links between the data and the aims of this study: How does the information in this category aid in understanding the research topic (on-task versus off-task SSR) and help to answer the research questions (Why are students engaged or not engaged in their reading? What aspects of the SSR program being utilized can be remodeled to ensure students are gaining something? and How is SSR linked to students’ motivation to read?). In addition to answering these questions, this step in the inductive analysis process works to assist in recognizing how the data collected runs counter to the original research questions and/or hypothesis, if applicable.

The third and final step in the inductive analysis methods is to interpret the collected data that should now be more organized and comprehensible due to the siphoning that occurred in steps one and two. According to Mertler (2009), “The key is to look for aspects of the data that answer your research questions, that provide challenges to current or future practice, or that actually may guide future practice” (p. 144). This part of the data analysis procedure, therefore, functions in this study to help reflect on the data, ensuring that any conclusions remain unbiased
and objective. An open-minded perspective is adopted to provide more accurate interpretations that will effectively set a clear foundation for further implications.

Quantitative data analysis should be used for the following reasons according to Mertler (2009): For any value equal or greater than 10; providing dates, times, or ages; recording the number of participants; providing grade levels; and reporting scores ascertained on the instruments (i.e. surveys and Motivation to Read Profiles). This study of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading follows these guidelines.

Summary

This study of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading strives to be both effective and efficient concerning the implemented research methodology. While not identical, it closely resembles that of an action research plan for which Mertler (2009) recommends a five-step process: observe a potential problem, collect data, organize data, analyze/interpret data, and take action. The entirety of this Sustained Silent Reading study followed each of these five steps, with the goal of creating a foundation for the discussion of any results, and the subsequent implications of using Sustained Silent Reading in classrooms.

Specifically in relation to this study of SSR, the five-step process iterated above aligns in the following ways: (a) an observable problem in classrooms was the potential lack of on-task Sustained Silent Reading; (b) data was collected using a balance of qualitative and quantitative methods including interviews, systematic observations, surveys, and Motivation to Read Profile reading surveys; (c) data was organized according to a coding system using specific organizational categories to siphon the amount of information, especially that of the qualitative instruments; (d) data was analyzed and interpreted to make connections to the original research questions and potential problems identified at the beginning of this study; and finally, (e)
implications were made based on the analysis of the collected data to help fuel any potential need for keeping, remodeling, or eliminating Sustained Silent Reading from classroom use.

The use of Sustained Silent Reading, if not already eliminated from classrooms, may be merely hanging in the balance. The methods and procedures utilized in this study of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading operated as a relevant and valid foundation for any ensuing implications conjured by the results. These findings then help to emanate light on the controversy that is Sustained Silent Reading.
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The instructional practice of using Sustained Silent Reading programs has recently turned into a questionable literacy exercise among the academic community. The National Reading Panel Report (NICHHD, 2000), while not the only authority, is the main contender in this debate. The research studies that were considered by the panel for independent silent reading did not hold strong enough evidence to unequivocally support the use of SSR. While this does not mean that independent silent reading practices are ineffective, it does pose doubt as to whether SSR programs are successfully reaching their intended goals.

One such objective is aiding students in developing a motivation to read. Since one of the key characteristics of SSR is the ability for students to choose their own books to read, the implication is that this will help students develop a love for reading, resulting in greater motivation to engage in texts.

However, as previously discussed and made apparent in the formal observations soon to be discussed, various holes exist in the design and implementation of SSR, which may be causing students to remain off-task during their prescribed time to read. These include, but are not limited to: (a) little structure in the program, (b) little, if any, modeling of how to choose books of interest, (c) lack of access to books of interest, (d) zero discussions or sharing of the books students are reading, and (e) teacher modeling of reading being favored over teacher monitoring (Chua 2008; Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Gardiner, 2001; Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Krashen, 2005; Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008; Trudel, 2007). A literacy culture is not materializing, causing students to be unable to visualize the real worth of SSR. Instead, Sustained Silent Reading has become a purposeless, mindless function, reminiscent of busy work. Not only is this not producing an inherent motivation to read among students, but also,
somberly, reading motivation is becoming almost evanescent. The purpose of this study was to determine whether eighth grade students in a Northwest Ohio middle school were participating in on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading, or a combination thereof and to ascertain whether a link existed between the findings and students’ motivation to read. Chapter IV contains the results of the data analysis and a discussion of the results. The chapter will be organized by the data collected from the entire class and then move to a discussion of the three case studies. Once the data are reported, a discussion of the results will follow.

Data Analysis

Through the data collection methods including the formal observations, SSR survey, Motivation to Read Profile reading survey, and interviews, the majority of students revealed that SSR is not an engaging part of the school day. Most would prefer it not exist at all. Nevertheless, some students did reflect more positive dispositions to SSR, and interestingly enough, this corresponded to their motivation to read. All of the findings, however, need to be discussed thoroughly to discern what recommendations and implications exist in reference to Sustained Silent Reading and motivation to read.

Formal Observations

Three formal observations took place during the course of this study; one each of the three weeks in the field. Admittedly, this is not by any means an extensive amount of time. The findings, however, were consistent. The first day of observations (Wednesday, February 3, 2010), only 22 students were present out of 25. Their Sustained Silent Reading program, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), began at the beginning of eighth period, the last period of the day. After the bell rang for class to begin, the teacher instructed students to get out their SSR books and start reading. Almost immediately, a chorus of objections arose. One student shouted
unabashedly, “This is so dumb!” Another stated that he could not read because he forgot his book. A third, at the same time, asked if she could use the bathroom. And the expostulations continued for approximately five minutes, until the teacher addressed at first, each complaint, and then the entire class as a whole.

The teacher’s specific responses to the students went as follows: She did not respond to the student who stated that SSR was dumb. She told the student who forgot his book to get one off of one of the two shelves in her room that represented her classroom library. The third student, who had to use the restroom, was told she could do so after SSR was complete. To all the other objections, the teacher stated that if the room was not silent and everyone was reading by the time she finished her sentence, they could instead complete worksheets. Subsequently, the room became silent, but no less active.

Out of the 22 students “participating” in DEAR on the first day, seven were noted to be actually engaging in on-task behaviors. These included: maintaining an appropriate pace while reading; possessing observable emotional responses while reading; and having few, if any, visible distractions while reading. Out of these seven students, five also displayed off-task reading behaviors. Collectively, these included looking at the clock, getting up to get a tissue, getting up to sharpen a pencil, and staring off into space. The last characteristic was recorded as lasting for a minute with one student, to eight minutes with another. The two students who remained on-task for the entire SSR period (20 minutes) were not observed having any of the off-task behaviors. The books they were reading? *Twilight* by Stephanie Meyer and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows* by J.K. Rowling.

The other 15 students were observed as engaging in off-task behaviors including: non-appropriate pacing while reading (i.e. flipping pages after only a glance); observable indifference
to reading, such as blankly staring at a page with no observable eye movement; and many visible
distractions while reading (i.e. looking frequently at the clock or continuous attempts to get up
and move around). The checklist for these off-task behaviors encompassed five students
continuously getting up to blow their nose, use the hand sanitizer, sharpen a pencil, and look at
the bookshelves for a different book to read. Six students stared off into space and were not
observed to flip a single page the entire length of SSR. Of these six students, two were a part of
the group that continuously got out of their seat. Two students went into a corner of the room to
“read” and whispered to each other the entire time, and two played what this researcher coins as
“book hockey,” by shoving each others’ books back and forth to see whose would be knocked
off the table first. Out of these 15 students who were observed as being off-task during SSR, 14
were reading textbooks.

The teacher’s observed behavior during the length of SSR was mostly reading a book of
her own. She was sufficiently modeling the reading process to students. Only once did she stop
reading to get up. This instance was in response to a student she observed not reading. The
teacher and student went out into the hallway and had a conversation that was not heard by this
researcher. The student returned, but only to resume staring into space; this time, however, she
was at least looking at the book. The chart for day one of formal observations is provided in
Figure 4.1.

On the second day of formal observations (Wednesday, February 10, 2010), all 25
students were present. In addition, they did not have as many objections or complications before
starting to read. Noticeably, however, more students did not bring with them a book to class. The
classroom teacher directed all six of them to the two bookshelves previously mentioned. Instead
of searching for a book to read, however, the students mingled together as if on a forbidden break from work, uneasily shifting from side-to-side and whispering to one another. A couple

**Percent of Student SSR Behaviors**

Figure 4.1 Observed Behaviors: Day One

stole glances at the teacher, probably wondering how long they could get away with standing there. As the first minute passed, three students lost their nerve, grabbed a book from the shelf without looking at it, and went back to their seats. Only after the teacher looked up from her book approximately two minutes later did the other three grab a book, again without looking, and move back to their seats.

In the observational session for day two, the same seven students from the previous week were the only ones to engage in on-task behavior, with only four this time moving to off-task behaviors; one less from the last observational session. The same two students from the previous week were also among the only ones to remain on-task for the entire 20 minutes. Interestingly, both students seemed to be much farther ahead in their books than when SSR ended last week, suggesting that they had read outside of SSR time. The other student who was not observed engaging in off-task behaviors was documented as reading a Tom Clancy book.
Off-task behaviors covered the entire realm of possibility on week two, just as they did on week one. The distribution of numbers changed, however, from one activity to another. Eight students this week engaged in distracting behaviors, not including the six that were milling around the bookshelves at the start of SSR. Three got up to sharpen pencils; four went to get a tissue, and one walked over to use the hand sanitizer. Including the six students who did not have books, 14 students total could not sit still during SSR. Of the four other students who were off-task, all stared into space for an extended period of time and one flipped pages at an inappropriate pace: about every 10-30 seconds. This particular student was observed starting the book over again once all the pages had been flipped.

The classroom teacher was again observed reading her book of choice during the entire period. She displayed all the indicators of on-task reading. When a part in her book was sad, her eyes got misty, she only looked up from her book twice to quickly scan the room, and her pacing was normal. Figure 4.2 indicates the distribution of on-task versus off-task reading behaviors for day two.

**Percent of Student SSR Behaviors**

![Percent of Student SSR Behaviors](image)

Figure 4.2 Observed Behaviors: Day Two
The third week of observations (Wednesday, February 17, 2010) was, unfortunately, worse than the first two weeks in regards to off task-behaviors during SSR. Only four students were seen to be completely on-task during the 20 minutes of silent reading time. Again, this included the two on-task students from the previous two weeks. Both of these students demonstrated emotional responses to their books, remained completely engaged the entire 20 minutes (looking annoyed when the teacher asked everyone to stop), and read at a fairly fast, yet normal pace. The other two students in this grouping also remained on-task the entire time spent reading, but no emotional indicators were observed. This is not to say, however, that they did not occur at some point, either when this researcher was looking elsewhere, or they simply were not physically displayed.

Two students were perceived as being on-task readers, but also were engaged in off-task behaviors toward the middle and end of Sustained Silent Reading. The first student, after about 10 focused minutes of reading, began whispering to the person next to him. The second, after approximately 15 minutes of on-task reading, stared blankly into space for the last five minutes of SSR time.

Completely off-task reading behaviors were seen from 19 students on week three of formal observations. Of these 19 individuals, five (all sitting in the same cluster of tables) were discretely playing a game of “book hockey” as described above. Ten students were observed whispering to each other, and hurriedly looking back at their books, throughout the entire 20-minute reading period. Finally, four students continuously moved about the room, “looking” at books on the bookshelf, using the hand sanitizer, and getting tissues repeatedly. Every time one of these students would walk by a classmate he or she would engage in distracting behaviors that caused the other person to be even more off-task from silently reading.
During this SSR period, the classroom teacher read and then graded papers. She glanced up at the class more frequently while doing paperwork and therefore, was able to catch more students engaging in off-task behaviors. Ironically, the number of off-task students during this observed period of SSR was greater than the previous two weeks when the teacher had been entirely engrossed with the book she was reading. Figure 4.3 displays the percentages of students’ behaviors during SSR for week three.

The results of the formal observations of SSR indicate that a vast majority of students remain off-task while reading. Each day saw an increase in unengaged students.

**Percent of Student SSR Behaviors**

![Pie chart showing SSR behaviors]

Figure 4.3 Observed Behaviors: Day Three

*SSR Survey and Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey*

The Sustained Silent Reading survey and the MRP reading survey were given to students the first day of formal observations. It took the students approximately 30 minutes to finish both instruments. Each survey, when handed in, was marked with the student’s randomly assigned number for identification purposes for the researcher’s knowledge only, and stapled together. Once all the surveys were collected, the results were immediately put into categories according
to question type (yes/no or Likert-type scale for the SSR survey, and self-concept or value of reading for the MRP reading survey).

A correlational research design was used to assess whether the SSR survey and the MRP reading survey paralleled one another significantly. The SSR survey was a total of 31 points. The “yes” or “no” questions were worth one point for “yes” and zero points for “no.” Number five on the SSR survey was the only yes or no question that contained a possible response of ‘sometimes’ since students’ engagement in SSR was not always an absolute. This is apparent in the observational data, where a few on-task students also demonstrated off-task behaviors during the same SSR time. Question five on the SSR survey was, therefore, worth two points total: two points for “no,” one point for “sometimes,” and zero points for “yes.”

The Likert-type questions in the SSR survey were scored using a one to five grading scale. In all questions except for number six, the number on the Likert-type scale that was circled by the student was the same number of points that response was worth. For example, if a student circled the number one in response to how much time he or she enjoys SSR, then his or her response received one point. However, for question six, the scoring was recoded, or reversed, due to the nature of the question. In this case, an answer of one was worth five points, a two was worth four points, a three was worth three points, and so on. The specific questions in the SSR survey will be subsequently discussed, along with the numerical results, and the correlation certain individual question had to the overall score of the MRP reading survey. A copy of the scoring guide for the SSR survey is included as Appendix H.

The Motivation to Read Profile reading surveys (Pitcher, et. al., 2007) (See Appendix B) were scored according to the categories “self-concept as a reader,” “value of reading,” and “overall raw score.” The total number of points possible on the MRP reading survey was 80. To
get the final raw score, the scores from the “self-concept as a reader” questions (40 points possible) and the “value of reading: questions (40 points possible), were tabulated and added together. Pitcher (et. al., 2007) provided the scoring guidelines within the directions for administering the MRP reading survey. A copy of this scoring guide can be found in Appendix I.

To chronicle the correlation between the SSR survey and the MRP reading survey, particular questions of the former must be addressed due to the fact that certain questions on the SSR survey describe a specific aspect of Sustained Silent Reading. Student responses for the individual questions, therefore, were compared to the overall raw score on the MRP reading survey to identify what aspects of Sustained Silent Reading corresponded the most, and the least, to students’ overall motivation to read.

Question number one of the Sustained Silent Reading survey asked, “How much do you enjoy silently reading in your English class, where 1 = very little and 5 = very much?” Out of 22 students, eight, or 36%, indicated number one (very little), one, or 5%, circled number 2, (little), five, or 23% chose number three (average), two, or 9%, selected number four (somewhat), and six, or 27%, picked number five (very much). The identified percentages are indicated in the pie chart in Figure 4.4.

![Pie Chart](image)

**Figure 4.4 Percentage of Student Responses to Enjoyment of SSR**

When a correlation equation was administered on the same question using the equation “= correl” in Microsoft Excel, the result discerned a 68% link between students enjoyment of
Sustained Silent Reading, and their motivation to read. According to Pyrczak (2007), a correlation is strong if “r” (the relationship between the two variables) equals .6 - .79 (points in between -1 to +1).

The fourth inquiry on the Sustained Silent Reading survey administered to these eighth grade students asked, “How focused are you on your reading during Sustained Silent Reading, where 1 = not at all and 5 = all the time?” Again, there was a wide range of responses. Seven students indicated that they were not at all focused on their reading during SSR (choice number one). Three students stated they were rarely focused on their reading (choice number two). Seven students specified they were sometimes focused on reading during SSR. Four students marked that they were focused on reading almost all the time, and one student stipulated they were focused on reading during SSR all the time. The pie graph indicating these numbers is provided in Figure 4.5.

![Figure 4.5 Students’ Time Spent Focused on Reading During SSR](image)

When compared to the MRP reading survey, the correlation between students’ motivation to read and time spent actually reading during their SSR program DEAR, was .62, or 62%. Again, this indicates a strong correlation between motivation to read and students’ engagement in Sustained Silent Reading. On-task versus off-task behaviors are represented here as well. If the majority of students are not primarily focused on their reading (a marking of one to three on the actual questionnaire), then they are participating in off-task behaviors.
This is also corroborated in question five, which asks, “Do you ‘fake read’ at any point during Sustained Silent Reading? In other words, do you act like you are reading, but you are really not reading?” Fifteen students out of 22 answered yes to this question. Five answered no, and two stated sometimes. These responses reflect that 68% of students view themselves as fake-readers and therefore off-task during SSR. Another 9% indicate that they sometimes are off task, for a total of approximately 77% of students remaining off-task during SSR at any given time. The graph, representing question five, is provided in Figure 4.6.

**Do You Fake-Read During SSR Time?**

![Pie chart showing 68% Yes, 23% Sometimes, 9% No, and 1% No answer]

Figure 4.6 Fake-Reading During SSR

The correlation between on-task versus off-task behaviors and motivation to read proved to be the highest single correlation in this study, even above that of the overall correlation between the entire SSR survey and the MRP reading survey. The correlation coefficient for question five was $r = .78$ or 78%.

Before the overall results of the relationship between on-task versus off-task SSR and motivation to read can be effectively discussed, however, the *Motivation to Read Profile* reading survey (Pitcher, et. al, 2007) must be analyzed. Out of 22 students who took the MRP reading survey, 10 scored a 60% or below, and five more students scored below 70%. In sum, this indicated that 68% of students were recorded to have low and very low motivations to read. Four
students received scores within the average range from 71-78%. Only three students scored an 85% or higher on their Motivation To Read Profile. Consequentially, this suggests that merely 12% of students are highly motivated to read.

With all of the quantitative data analyzed, the key point is the evidential correlation between overall student perceptions and engagement in their Sustained Silent Reading program DEAR, and their motivation to read. As indicated in Figure 4.7, there exists a .71 or 71% correlation between these two variables, where $r = .6-.79$. This suggests that a strong relationship exists between students’ remaining on-task or off-task during SSR and their perceptions of SSR in connection to their level of reading motivation.

![Figure 4.7 Correlation Between SSR Survey and MRP Reading Survey](image)

Figure 4.7 Correlation Between SSR Survey and MRP Reading Survey

*Case Studies and Interviews*

As mentioned previously, three students were randomly selected to answer a set of 20 qualitative research questions, using an observational case study research design. The idea was to ensure that students were being represented personally and not being silenced behind a number. Also, while quantitative data can indicate numerical relationships, it cannot speak aloud to answer why such a relationship exists. The three students interviewed helped to ensure that this question does not go unanswered.
Timothy’s Interview

Timothy (all names are pseudonyms) was a timid looking young man, with a hint of rebellion in his demeanor. He approached the table to answer questions with a polite swagger. The last thing Timothy remembered reading was a book in his language arts class, to which he could not recall the title. He enjoys playing video games in his free time, only to be rivaled by going onto the computer to talk with his friends on social networking sites, in Timothy’s case, Facebook. When asked what he likes to read, Timothy listed anything that involves sports including football and basketball. In regards to his reading abilities, Timothy indicated that he thinks he can read “ok” because sometimes he does not know the words and struggles to figure them out. When Timothy does read, it is in his room when he is bored.

While Timothy stated that he does not enjoy Sustained Silent Reading in language arts, he also admitted that SSR helps him become a better reader because he is practicing more. However, when asked if he stays on-task during SSR, he responded in the negative. Reading for 20 minutes, according to Timothy, is just too long and he cannot remain focused. Instead, he whispers to friends to pass the time. From this, Timothy suggested that reading out loud with friends would make SSR more fun and engaging for him personally, but as of right now, it is boring.

Timothy’s SSR survey score was a 23% (or 7 out of 31 points), and his MRP reading survey score was a 53% (or 42 out of 80 points). Aligning with Timothy’s answers in his interview, his self-concept as a reader in the MRP turned out to be below 60% and his value of reading was even lower, at below 40%.
**Renee’s Interview**

Renee giggled her way out of the classroom and into the hallway where her interview awaited. After politely agreeing to answer questions, Renee revealed that she is currently reading the book *Eclipse* by Stephanie Meyer, the third installment of the *Twilight* series. She said that this book is one of her favorites and that in her free time, she most enjoys reading because of books with similar stories. Renee’s favorite subject in school is language arts, because they do a lot of fun things in class. She views herself as a “good” reader because she can comprehend everything she reads and understand everything.

In stark contrast to Timothy, Renee indicated that she likes SSR time, but thinks that it needs to be longer than the prescribed 20 minutes. “I do not get very far and then we have to stop,” she proclaimed in exasperation. While Renee stated that she thinks SSR has helped her become a better reader because she can practice and get interested in other books, she could not say the same for her friends. “They do not like it because they can’t read well and think it is boring, so they talk and do other stuff,” she revealed.

Renee’s SSR survey score was a perfect 100%. Her MRP reading survey results were the top score out of the entire class (and the only one in the 90s) at 95%. While Renee’s qualitative and quantitative data findings were just as consistent as Timothy’s, they reach to the other end of the reading spectrum, highlighting new issues to consider.

**Tristan’s Interview**

Tristan stumbled out of his language arts class after Renee, looking half asleep. His face was entirely expressionless, his eyes downcast, his mouth set in a straight line. Apathetically, he plopped into the chair on the other side of the table and began to answer questions in a very quiet voice that revealed the slightest hint of irritation.
Ironically, Tristan’s answer to the first question, “What was the last thing you read?” was the most detailed response of all. The book was divulged as *The Warrior Heir* about “this kid who was the last of a dying breed and had to fight in a tournament and he won.” Although highly evident, Tristan stated that he really liked this book. However, reading was not one of Tristan’s favorite activities. Instead, Tristan works most of the time to earn money for his family. When not doing that, he likes to play video games.

Tristan’s described his reading abilities as being perfect. Not only did he state that he can read fast, but he understands the words he reads as well. Sustained Silent Reading time is fun for Tristan, if he can remember to bring a book. When he finishes a book and forgets to bring another one, he is “forced to pick something off the shelf, which is usually uninteresting.” This is when he fake reads. While Tristan views SSR as being valuable “so you can get the job you want,” he does think it can be improved by having a longer time to read and a better collection of books from which to choose. Finally, Tristan claimed that his friends do not like SSR and do not read because they are not good at it. He stated, “I used to be the same way but that one book changed it. It was a long book, but I read it in a couple of days though.”

Tristan’s SSR reading survey score was a 45% and his MRP reading survey score was a 78%. While relatively low, the questions that Tristan scored the least number of points on, were the ones found to be least correlated to a motivation to read. He was the only student to write comments on the survey itself, as if having a conversation with the text, which is indicated by Tovani (2004) as being a strategy “good” readers utilize. For instance, Tristan indicated in question seven that he does not believe SSR is helpful to him because “I’m already an excellent reader.” He was also the only one to write something after the typed sentiment at the bottom of the survey that reads *Thank you for your input!* Tristan wrote, “You’re welcome.”
Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to determine whether eighth grade students in a Northwest Ohio middle school were participating in on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading, or a combination thereof and to ascertain whether a link existed between the findings and students’ motivation to read.

The formal observations indicate that more than half of the students remained off-task during Sustained Silent Reading, with 68%, 70% and 72% of students on observation days one through three being perceived as off-task for the entire duration of SSR. This does not include the percentage of students who exhibited both on-task and off-task behaviors. A vast majority of students remain off-task while reading. Each day saw an increase in unengaged students.

Some thought-provoking considerations of these results are: (a) the same two-students remained on-task during the entire silent reading time, suggesting that they like the books they were reading, and perhaps others would have been more engaged if they had been reading books of real interest (b) correspondingly, the majority of off-task students were either without a book, had picked a random book from the classroom library, or were reading a textbook (c) the off-task students tried to distract the on-task students from their reading, usually being successful and (d) the classroom teacher modeled positive reading practices the majority of the time, but when she did not, the students became more off-task.

This last observation is extremely intriguing since many researches (Chua, 2008; Garan & DeVoogd, 2008; Stahl, 2004; Trudel 2007) recommend that the teacher’s role during Sustained Silent Reading needs to evolve from modeler of positive reading habits to monitor of students’ reading practices. The fact that students were more off-task when the teacher was not modeling reading, however, suggests that modeling may be an effective practice during SSR.
Nonetheless, only observing this trend once for a 20-minute period hardly constitutes definitive results. Also, grading papers and completing other paperwork does not align itself with continuous and effective student monitoring. More research is needed to produce conclusive answers.

The SSR survey questions inquiring about the reality and frequency of fake reading showed that 68% of students fake read during SSR and approximately 64% admit to being somewhat, or less than somewhat, focused on reading. The MRP reading surveys also report that 68% of students have a low motivation to read. The link between students’ interest in their SSR program can, therefore, be deduced as having a strong correlation to their motivation to read. Consequentially, this means that within the range indicated above, students’ low motivation to read corresponded to their low enjoyment of SSR and vice versa. Strong quantitative evidence is illustrating that if students are not motivated to read, they are not going to enjoy their Sustained Silent reading time.

Finally while the qualitative interviews could not supply numerical data to emphasize a relationship between on-task and off-task behaviors during SSR and reading motivation, they do help to answer why this may be occurring. Timothy, Renee, and Tristan all brought unique, but equally vital, revelations about the implementation of Sustained Silent Reading, and reading in general. These discussions are central to the issues surrounding the use of SSR and the conundrum of helping students attain a motivation to read. Therefore, the implications of these results require extended exploration.

For instance, from the qualitative and quantitative results, perhaps Timothy could benefit from lessons on how to choose books of interest that are at an appropriate reading level, which could result in an increased self-concept as a reader. Also, providing interactive methods for
discussing and engaging in his SSR book may prove advantageous to hold Timothy’s thinking and increase his value of reading.

However, Timothy’s suggestion to read out loud with friends must be considered with caution since the possibility exists that this suggestion functions only as a method of being able to talk with friends more freely without drawing attention from the teacher. Also, while oral reading is important, for a truly balanced literacy program, both oral and silent reading should be practiced. With this in mind, if Timothy’s attitude and confidence in reading can experience even a little growth, his motivation to read and subsequent engagement during SSR could also lead to successful experiences.

In the case of Renee, it is intriguing that she thinks she is a good reader because she understands what she reads. This suggests that reading skills are of vital importance when developing a motivation to read. Just as Timothy did not like to read, perhaps because he felt he was not very good at it, Renee greatly enjoys reading, potentially because she is good at it. This relates directly back to Eccles (1983) definition of the Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation, where students who believe they can successfully do something, and that this “something” will hold at least minimal value, will be more inclined to engage in the task or activity. The implication, therefore, is that for Sustained Silent Reading to be effective, students need to perceive themselves as able to successfully and easily read.

Finally, Tristan’s interview sheds even more light on the connection between on-task versus off-task SSR and reading motivation. Without this qualitative element, it is arguable this revelation might have never arose. As if from a research article on reading motivation, Tristan maintained that he and his friends do not read sometimes, especially during SSR, because they are not interested in the book. Throughout the entire interview, interest was the main topic
repetitively discussed by Tristan. This strongly suggests that off-task behaviors during SSR can be significantly limited if students are actually finding and reading books they find interesting. Tristan even explicitly stated that he was a struggling, unmotivated reader at one time, but that this changed once he found a book that connected with him. Putting captivating and absorbing texts into students’ hands may be the first, integral step in shaping on-task, motivated readers.

Summary

From these outcomes, a strong argument exists that students’ on-task and off-task behaviors during Sustained Silent Reading quantitatively and significantly align with their motivation to read. If, then, SSR can be utilized successfully to fully engross students in reading, it’s suggestive that students’ motivation to read will increase. Appreciably, if teachers can motivate students to read, this opens numerous windows of opportunity for student growth and success in literacy development.

The qualitative measures of data collection and analysis also corroborate the finding that students tend to remain on-task during SSR if their motivation to read is high, and off-task if their motivation to read is low. Timothy’s, Renee’s, and Tristan’s interviews all contain integral contributions to corroborate these conclusions.

For instance, Timothy (an off-task reader, with a low motivation to read) stated that he struggles with reading the books he is presented with, and that he does not read books of interest during SSR. Renee (an on-task reader with a high motivation to read) shared that she greatly enjoys SSR and wishes it was longer because she is reading a book of high interest and feels she is a good reader, with high comprehension abilities. Tristan (a sometimes on-task, sometimes off-task reader, with a relatively high motivation to read) stated he is off-task during SSR only when he does not bring a book with him and has to pick one off the “uninteresting” shelf of
books in the classroom. He also described his reading abilities as being exemplary, and stated that his friends do not like reading, and do not read during SSR, because they are not good at it.

From the data collection and analysis, it is evident that if students are not interested in SSR and do not enjoy the program, they will most likely engage in off-task behaviors. To many, this may seem like common sense. However, other implications and consequences of significance result from this conclusion, such as students’ motivation to read. For instance, the lack of enjoyment students harbor for SSR unfortunately does not effect, or in fact decreases, their motivation to read. In contrast, to assume a positive position from these results, if students are interested in SSR and find the time spent reading pleasant, they will most likely engage in on-task behaviors and develop a strong motivation to read. Therefore, from these findings, definitive conclusions and recommendations need to be intricately discussed.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether eighth grade students in a Northwest Ohio middle school were participating in on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading, or a combination thereof and to ascertain whether a link existed between the findings and students’ motivation to read. On-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading was strongly correlated in this study to reading motivation. Chapter V will summarize the current study, discuss conclusions that may be drawn from the study, and provide recommendations that emanate from the study.

Summary

Harkening back to the first three chapters of this discussion on Sustained Silent Reading, it is important to recall that the National Reading Panel Report (NICHHD, 2000) did not find sufficient evidence that independent, silent reading held any benefit for students. Also, a discussion of reading motivation as related to any aspect of the reading process was scarce. As indicated previously, this is not to say that the panel did not “do their job” so to speak. Simply stated, it is outlandish to think that the NRP could possibly address all the associations and concerns surrounding reading development. In response to independent, silent reading, the panel reported that it may be a positive practice, but more research needs to be completed to conclusively ascertain how this exactly occurs and in what ways (NICHHD).

Many researchers, some in response to the NRP report (2000), found through their own independent studies, that Sustained Silent Reading was beneficial to their particular group of students (Chua 2008; Ermitage & Sluys, 2007; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006; Stairs & Burgos, 2010; Trudel 2007). However, most of these studies remodeled their SSR programs to contain more structure and student involvement with the books they were reading. The subsequent
student enjoyment and motivation to read produced by these restructurings of SSR was extraordinary. The conclusions and recommendations based on the results of this particular study of Sustained Silent Reading, specifically DEAR, reflect this same line of thinking.

From this study’s results of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading in relation to reading motivation, the data indicates that the majority of students who do not remain on-task during SSR are also the ones who have the least motivation to read. As previously indicated, this is evident in the qualitative formal observations where first 68% of students were observed as being off-task during the entire duration of SSR. This percentage only continued to rise on the succeeding days, increasing from 68% on day one, to 70% on day two, and 72% on day three perhaps due to an increased sense of comfort in front of this researcher.

The quantitative data also corroborate these findings when the SSR surveys were analyzed to reveal that approximately 77% of students remain off-task during SSR at any given time. The interrelationship between on-task versus off-task SSR and reading motivation turned out to indicate a .71 or 71% correlation between these two variables, where r = .6-.79. This suggests that a strong relationship exists between students’ remaining on-task or off-task during SSR and their perceptions of SSR in connection to their level of reading motivation.

Also conclusive from the results of this study, is the concept that if students do not value a reading program or practice, they are not likely to engage in it willingly. 64% of students indicated that their enjoyment of DEAR ranged from “somewhat” to “very little.” This corresponds to the finding that 68% of students fake read continuously during SSR, remaining off-task approximately 100% of the time. Also, the formal observations indicate that a majority of students constantly try to evade the teacher’s eye during SSR so they can talk with friends or escape having to read an uninteresting book.
This is additionally apparent in the MRP reading survey and the qualitative interviews. Timothy is the prime example here. Timothy’s MRP reading survey score was a 53% (or 42 out of 80 points). His self-concept as a reader in the MRP turned out to be below 60% and his value of reading was even lower, at below 40%. It is clear that since Timothy has a relatively low value of reading, he is not engaging in the practice.

This was apparent in Timothy’s interview as well. When asked about his self-concept as a reader, Timothy answered that he was an “ok” reader because he cannot comprehend the words he is reading most of the time. When subsequently asked whether he enjoys his Sustained Silent Reading Program DEAR, Timothy divulged that it was not a fun or interesting experience for him because he finds the books difficult and boring. Interestingly, during formal observations, Timothy was one of the student majority reading a textbook. How then, can teachers address the needs of students like Timothy?

Looking at another student’s interview may contain the answers. Consider Tristan’s responses to Sustained Silent Reading and his interest in reading. Tristan stated that he and his friends do not read sometimes, especially during SSR, because they are not interested in the book. Throughout the entire interview, interest was repetitively mentioned by Tristan. He precisely specified that he was a struggling, unmotivated reader at one time, but that this changed once he found a book that interested him. Tristan, therefore, is representative of the stepping-stone teachers need to get unmotivated students to become motivated readers. Putting captivating and engrossing reading materials into students’ hands may be the first, integral step in shaping on-task readers.

Many researchers discuss this exact connection between reader’s interests, and their actions. Shaw (2006) for instance, states, “Collectively, the research shows that students engage
with reading when it is meaningful” (p. 16). Unfortunately, this means that when students view a reading task as having little value, they are not likely to be motivated. The problem still exists, therefore, that without a motivation to read, students are not likely to be on-task during SSR, and therefore unable to reap any benefits from the experience.

If however, students can successfully find independent reading materials that are highly interesting to them, their motivation to read will greatly increase. This in turn, will cause their reading skills to rise as well, perhaps ensuring that as the difficulty of texts grows, they will be able to meet the demand. Interestingly, Ermitage and Sluys (2007) suggest that if the student is truly interested in the book he or she is reading, then low reading skills become nullified. For example, they state:

SSR…allowed students to interact with texts, even those that were beyond their independent reading levels, without worrying about mistakes. The high-interest text can hold the reader’s interest, and he or she is given an opportunity to comprehend a few key ideas rather than feel pressured to read the whole selection flawlessly. (p. 12)

If students can find, perhaps even a single book from within the endless shelves of possibility, that captivates their interest and collectively aligns itself with a positive reading experience, they have a fighting chance at developing a motivation to read, and building up their self-concept as a reader.

With this idea kept in the forefront of consideration, Gambrell, Palmer, Godling, and Mazzoni (1996) use the research of Ford’s (1992) motivational systems theory, which states that, “people will attempt to attain goals they value and perceive as achievable” (p. 519). Therefore, if students can read well, feel positive about their reading, and feel like they can accomplish any goals associated with reading, they will be more likely to engage in reading, specifically SSR,
and be motivated to read. Knowing this, teachers need to begin motivating students to read by making certain they are having positive reading experiences and perceive that they can attain any goals related to reading. The students’ self-concept is vital to their success in reading (Gambrell, Palmer, Godling, & Mazzoni, 1996). Students, therefore, need to develop their own identities as readers. The key, however, is that these associations need to be positive. Negatively aligning oneself with defeatist thinking only propagates the lack of enthusiasm and interest that is too often linked with reading.

Conclusions

From this study’s results of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading in relation to reading motivation, the data indicate that the majority of students who do not remain on-task during SSR are also the ones who have the least motivation to read. This is apparent in the qualitative formal observations where first 68% of students were observed as being off-task during the entire duration of SSR, increasing from 68% on day one to eventually 72% on day three. The quantitative data also support these findings in the SSR surveys where approximately 77% of students remain off-task during SSR at any given time. The interrelationship between on-task versus off-task SSR and reading motivation turned out to indicate a .71 or 71% correlation between these two variables. This suggests that a strong relationship exists between students’ remaining on-task or off-task during SSR and their perceptions of SSR in connection to their level of reading motivation.

Also conclusive from the results of this study, is the concept that if students do not value a reading program or practice, they are not likely to engage in it willingly. The Motivation to Read Profile scores demonstrate this concept since this instrument measured students apparent
value of reading. Compared to the SSR survey scores, those with a relatively low value of reading also indicated low enjoyment of their SSR program DEAR.

While still considering Timothy as an example, another supposition in this study is that students who do not have an interest in reading, or are struggling readers do not enjoy SSR, and think it is boring. Therefore, book selection is highly important in an SSR program. Within the group of students that were interviewed, all who said they liked SSR and wanted it to be longer had at one point in time enjoyed reading and found it valuable. These students named specific books they had liked reading.

This is also true of the formal observations where most students reading textbooks were significantly more off-task than the students who were reading a book of their choice. It is also important to consider Tristan’s interview, which revealed that while Tristan liked reading, once he finished a book, it was difficult for him to get started on another book of choice and make that needed transition. He therefore chose one off the shelf, which was uninteresting to him, and succumbed to off-task behaviors because of this.

Recommendations

With the summary and conclusions of this study kept in mind, it is now crucial to consider what can be done in response to the findings. It is safe to deduce from this particular study that traditional Sustained Silent Reading methods are not effective for the majority of students. The question, therefore, is what should be done in response? Is SSR a worthwhile practice at all? While the SSR program DEAR was not entirely effective for the specific sample of students in the Northwest Ohio middle school examined, the answer drawn from this study is that SSR still has its benefits. However, recommendations need to be addressed regarding how
the results of this study are applicable to teachers, administrators, teacher preparation programs, and for further research.

For Teachers

Sustained Silent Reading needs to be restructured to encompass more students who can profit from its use. To accomplish this goal, numerous helpful characteristics of successful SSR programs can be articulated for incorporation into specific classroom SSR programs. First and foremost, students need to be exposed to books that interest them. Since in this particular classroom, students often did not bring books of interest with them, and therefore chose one off the “boring” shelf of books or read a textbook, it is suggested that a compilation of books that students find more appropriate be provided. This does require the classroom teacher to keep him or herself updated on the latest trends in reading for their respective grade levels. The advantages, however, will definitely be worth the time spent researching and remaining current in knowledge and practice.

Stairs and Burgos (2010) suggest first gathering evidence about what students like to read. This can be done through an interest inventory, much like the one used in the qualitative interviews (questions 1-10) that were adapted from the BADER Reading and Language Inventory (2009). Interest is the main component here.

Another way to put the right book into the hands of students is to make sure that the reading level is at least somewhat appropriate. While research indicates that students can sometimes read beyond their independent level if the book is interesting enough (Ermitage & Sluys, 2007), consideration should still be given to this vital aspect of SSR. How can students’ reading levels be figured out? Try utilizing a reading assessment protocol such as the BADER Informal Reading Inventory (2009) or the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory (2007). An
extremely useful resource is the article, *A Critical Analysis of Eight Informal Reading Inventories* (2008) by Nina Nilsson. After choosing an informal reading inventory and collecting results, specific books can be looked up on websites like Scholastic.com, which provide the reading levels for thousands of books. Other suggestions include, “…attending professional development conferences, checking resources through the International Reading Association and National Council for Teachers of English websites, and reading book reviews published online” (Stairs & Burgos, 2010).

Admittedly, this particular recommendation may sound like more trouble than it is worth to many educators. This is understandable. Teachers are extremely busy during their lively school days, and time is a precious commodity. However, it does remain a suggestion nonetheless. Students deserve to be given opportunities to be matched up with a text that is well suited for them. While arguable, the benefits greatly outweigh the cost.

A second key recommendation is that students be allowed to discuss their books with their peers and engage in authentic activities using their silent reading books. Literature circles, book clubs, and writing workshops that provide personally relevant writing opportunities for an authentic audience are all fantastic ways to get students engaged in their independent reading. One specific example that this researcher would use to accomplish this goal would be to initiate book talks that students could participate in every couple of weeks. To get students more involved in their learning through book talks as well, it is recommended that innovative models for book talks be considered. One example is to allow students to create an ABC book using PowerPoint that discusses the particular book of interest they want to share with the class.

As Stairs and Burgos (2010) report, “When students were provided time in school to chose books, read them, and reflect on them, they became more interested in reading and
connected characters and themes in their favorite texts in meaningful ways” (p. 46). By engaging in authentic responses to literature, teachers are creating a student culture where reading can be a fun “cool” practice that is more socially acceptable. If students remain isolated in their reading, and no real purpose is provided, however, the likelihood that they will find SSR, or independent reading of any kind, an enjoyable practice quickly diminishes.

This also relates to the previous discussion of adapted SSR programs such as Scaffolded Silent Reading (Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008) and Independent Reading (Trudel, 2007). In ScSR, a program specifically designed to remodel traditional SSR to fit the concerns of the NRP report (NICHHD, 2000), “[Students are provided with] the necessary support, guidance, structure, accountability, and monitoring so they can transfer their successful oral reading skills to successful and effective silent reading practice” (p. 196). Specifically, students set personal goals for reading and complete projects in response to their reading. This makes reading during SSR purposeful and establishes a reading culture through the sharing of books. Independent Reading, or IR, uses a similar framework to ScSR that includes students reflecting on what they read, rating the books they read in a reading log, and sharing their perceptions of the book with other students (Trudel, 2007). Both of these frameworks for a revitalized SSR program help students to feel their reading has a purpose, and that their opinions are valuable.

Students need to be taught effective reading strategies that use their own personal reflections (metacognition) to gain meaning. Trudel (2007) states that, “…students tend to be more engaged during reading time when they provide reflections on what they have read” (p. 310). A hesitation to this idea is that it sounds a lot like the tedious task of summarizing. However, consider that if students are actually interested in what they are reading, they want to talk about it with other people. In Renee’s interview for example, she could not express enough
how much she liked the book *Eclipse* by Stephanie Meyer, and how she could not wait to read the next book in the series. Students like talking about the books they are interested in. If teachers would provide opportunities for this, perhaps they would be more inclined to read independently, not only remaining on-task during SSR, but also developing a motivation to read.

Also, it is important to monitor student behaviors during SSR and be aware of various “red flags” that may indicate off-task behaviors. For instance, some key signs that students are not engaged in their reading or are unmotivated to read are: (a) they constantly look up from their book to look around the room or stare off into space (b) no eye movement is happening while they are reading (c) they constantly get up and move about the room (d) they are whispering to friends (e) they are absent-mindedly flipping the pages of their book in rapid succession or checking to see how many pages are left till the end (f) they object to silent reading time repetitively or on a regular basis or (g) they engage openly in playing various games while they are supposed to be reading or try to distract other students from their own reading. In addition, struggling readers are often off-task during SSR because they find reading difficult. When participating in an SSR program, therefore, it is important to pay particular attention to these students and provide extra support.

Finally, it is suggested that teachers adapt an SSR program to fit the specific needs of their students. One model for SSR is not necessarily the best for all teachers, students, and school communities. While it may take some initial trial and error, it is important to consider that the same method exists for even creating the recurrent lesson plan. Most teachers have the experience of a lesson plan that did not go as expected and “bombed” so to speak. However, these lesson plans do not simply get thrown out, but rather are remodeled based on the evaluation of what went wrong. The same can be said for an SSR framework. Teachers are encouraged to
study various forms of Sustained Silent Reading programs, choose one that best fits the perceived needs of their students, and tailor it further based on what works well and what does not.

For Administrators

The results of this study suggest that SSR does benefit a minority of students. While this does not sound encouraging, the problems with SSR mainly exist because students are not motivated to read and have low values of reading in general. Apparent from the formal observations and interviews, the students within this investigation who were actually reading books of interest, and/or had high perceptions of their reading skills greatly benefited from SSR. The issues related to SSR, therefore, can most likely be fixed by utilizing what has been shown to work through research, which will offset and replace the components that caused the initial off-task behaviors.

With this in mind, it is recommended that ample analysis of SSR be conducted by administrators to assess the positives and negatives that could potentially occur when utilizing an SSR program. Professional development sessions for administrators and teachers are also a vital consideration because they will aid in the acquisition of strategies that are indicative of successful SSR programs.

It is suggested that administrators become very knowledgeable of what goals they plan to align with the implementation of an SSR program, especially since different school communities have distinct needs. However, if it is decided that SSR would best be used to develop a skill, such as fluency or comprehension, it is vital to keep in mind the findings of this study that indicate students’ motivation to read is related to their behaviors during SSR. A strong recommendation, therefore, is that the main goal of SSR be to increase students’ interest and
motivation to read. Research indicates that if students enjoy and find value in a given practice, they will be more likely to successfully engage in that practice. Sustained Silent Reading will not be useful for any goal if the students are not on-task and involved in their reading.

Finally, if a Sustained Silent Reading program is going to be successful, administrators need to be unwavering in its use and provide support for both teachers and students. A literacy culture, where reading for pleasure is highly valued, should be substantiated by the entire school community. Just as a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, administrators need to be the pillar of support that fortifies the entire structure of SSR. If teachers and students feel that a Sustained Silent Reading program is not valued by the administration, they will not think highly of the practice either.

For Teacher Preparation Programs

Sustained Silent Reading is still widely taught in teacher preparation programs as being a useful practice to increase students’ motivation to read, aesthetic response to literature, and skills in fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary prowess. However, due to the fact that Sustained Silent Reading has the potential to be ineffective due to a number of administrative components, future educators should be exposed to the potential shortcomings of SSR so that they may be fully prepared to utilize such a program.

While highly controversial, the National Reading Panel Report (NICHHD, 2000) should be a main text that is read and thoroughly discussed. Both what the NRP says, and does not say, is of vital importance. Future educators also need to read the literature regarding SSR with a speculative and questioning methodology. If every piece of work discussing SSR is read authoritatively, and students simply agree with whatever the author is asserting, then it is likely they will become overwhelmed and confused. When studying Sustained Silent Reading as a
potentially beneficial teaching practice, future educators need to ask questions, and have conversations with the information they are reading, to fully assess how to make a Sustained Silent Reading program their own; one that fits their particular classroom needs.

It is recommended that since a relationship was found in this study between on-task and off-task reading behaviors during SSR and students’ motivation to read, that future teachers be made aware of a potential link in their own future classrooms. Monitoring student engagement and progress, while also modeling how reading is valued in society will be a useful lesson in teacher preparation programs. Balance is key. Future educators need to be aware of both the positives and negatives associated with Sustained Silent Reading, so that they may decide for themselves where an SSR program may best fit in their curriculum, if at all.

For Further Research

Extensive research involving the link between on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading and motivation to read still needs to occur. The scope of this particular investigation is not nearly wide enough to be considered definitive proof that students will remain on-task while reading if they are motivated to read. While this study does have its merits, it is suggested that future investigations of SSR be completed over an extensive period of time. Students do not progress so rapidly overnight that a measurable result is apparent the next day. Time is of vital importance when analyzing students’ behaviors during SSR and assessing the development in their motivation to read.

Future research should also consider varying school communities. Finn (1999) asserts that depending on the socioeconomic status and demographics of a particular school, educators’ instructional methodology and values greatly differs, along with student response to school. It is
recommended that future research take these distinct characteristics into account when examining the SSR program at that particular school.

Summary

While this study’s results reflect that on-task and off-task Sustained Silent Reading is strongly correlated to students’ motivation to read, further research needs to be conducted in order to gain better insight into this relationship. The NRP report (NICHHD, 2000), also points out this necessity. It must be noted that this study of Sustained Silent Reading as related to reading motivation does not align itself with the type of study the NRP values. This investigation was not experimental, and since correlation does not indicate causation, more definitive results must take place to gain true insight into independent reading in relation to reading motivation.

Nonetheless, this study does indicate within the range of its virtue, that students who are not on-task during SSR are also not motivated to read. While this seems like common sense to many, it also aligns itself with the idea that if teachers can motivate their students to read, Sustained Silent Reading could become a wonderfully effective practice, the benefits of which are innumerable. Student’s value of reading, their confidence in reading, their skills as readers may all be positively affected by the successful use of SSR. While this claim may seem audacious, it is a wonder how educators can resist at least trying a structured form of SSR to attain this ideal. Sustained Silent Reading, arguably, has the extraordinary potential to create a strong community of readers and learners. Just visualizing motivated students (some of whom have actually been encountered in reality) who greatly enjoy reading is enough to inspire hope that Sustained Silent Reading can conclusively be proven a worthwhile practice.
REFERENCES


adolescents’ motivation to read. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 59*, 378-396.


APPENDIX A.

Student Survey
Silent Reading Survey
Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. Your responses will in
NO WAY affect your grade in any class, so please be honest. Please do NOT put
your name on this paper to ensure that responses remain completely confidential.
In NO way will anyone be able to identify you according to your answers to these
questions.

1. How much do you enjoy silently reading in your English class, where 1= Very little
and 5= Very much?
1 2 3 4 5

2. Is the book you are reading during Sustained Silent Reading time one you chose?
(please circle one)
YES   NO

3. How much do you like the book you are reading during Sustained Silent Reading
time, where 1= Very little and 5= Very much?
1 2 3 4 5

4. How focused are you on your reading during Sustained Silent Reading, where 1= Not at all and 5= All the time?
1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you "fake read" at any point during Sustained Silent Reading? In other words, do you act like you are reading, but you are really not reading? (please circle one)
YES   SOMETIMES   NO

6. How often do you stop reading during Sustained Silent Reading time, where 1= Never and 5= Always?
1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you feel Sustained Silent Reading is helpful to you?
   YES  NO

8. How much has Sustained Silent Reading helped you become more interested in reading, where 1=Very little and 5= Very much?
   1  2  3  4  5

9. Do you use your SSR book to complete other class activities such as projects, tests, presentations, etc.?
   YES  NO

10. Do you talk about your SSR books in class?
   YES  NO

Thank you for your input!
APPENDIX B.

Motivation to Read Profile
Motivation to Read Profile: Reading Survey

Please read each statement carefully and check the answer that most relates to YOU. There is NO WAY to identify you based on your answers, so please be as truthful as possible. Remember not to put your name on this paper. You may stop at any time with no consequences. Thanks!

1. My friends think I am ______________.
   ☐ a very good reader
   ☐ a good reader
   ☐ an OK reader
   ☐ a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do ______________.
   ☐ Not very often
   ☐ Sometimes
   ☐ Often

3. I read ______________.
   ☐ not as well as my friends
   ☐ about the same as my friends
   ☐ a little better than my friends
   ☐ a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is ______________.
   ☐ really fun
   ☐ fun
   ☐ OK to do
   ☐ no fun at all

5. When I come to a word I don’t know, I can ______________.
   ☐ almost always figure it out
   ☐ sometimes figure it out
   ☐ almost never figure it out
   ☐ never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.
   ☐ I never do this
   ☐ I almost never do this
   ☐ I do this some of the time
   ☐ I do this a lot
7. When I am reading by myself, I understand ______________.
❑ almost everything I read
❑ some of what I read
❑ almost none of what I read
❑ none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are ______________.
❑ very interesting
❑ interesting
❑ not very interesting
❑ boring

9. I am ______________.
❑ a poor reader
❑ an OK reader
❑ a good reader
❑ a very good reader

10. I think libraries are ______________.
❑ a great place to spend time
❑ an interesting place to spend time
❑ an OK place to spend time
❑ a boring place to spend time

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading ______________.
❑ every day
❑ almost every day
❑ once in a while
❑ never

12. Knowing how to read well is ______________.
❑ not very important
❑ sort of important
❑ important
❑ very important

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I ______________.
❑ can never think of an answer
❑ have trouble thinking of an answer
❑ sometimes think of an answer
❑ always think of an answer
14. I think reading is ______________.
❑ a boring way to spend time
❑ an OK way to spend time
❑ an interesting way to spend time
❑ a great way to spend time

15. Reading is ______________.
❑ very easy for me
❑ kind of easy for me
❑ kind of hard for me
❑ very hard for me

16. As an adult, I will spend ______________.
❑ none of my time reading
❑ very little time reading
❑ some of my time reading
❑ a lot of my time reading

17. When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I ______________.
❑ almost never talk about my ideas
❑ sometimes talk about my ideas
❑ almost always talk about my ideas
❑ always talk about my ideas

18. I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes ______________.
❑ every day
❑ almost every day
❑ once in a while
❑ never

19. When I read out loud I am a ______________.
❑ poor reader
❑ OK reader
❑ good reader
❑ very good reader

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel ______________.
❑ very happy
❑ sort of happy
❑ sort of unhappy
❑ unhappy
APPENDIX C.

Formal Observations Checklist of Behaviors
Observational Notes

On-Task Behaviors

☐ Appropriate pacing while reading

☐ Emotional reaction to reading

☐ Not distracted/Focused on reading

☐ Other: _____________________________________

☐ Number of students observed:

Comments:

Off-Task Behaviors:

☐ Non-appropriate pacing

☐ Distracting behaviors

☐ Indifference to reading

☐ Other: _____________________________________

☐ Number of students observed:

Comments:
APPENDIX D.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions
Sustained Silent Reading Interview

**Read:** I have questions about you and the independent, silent reading you do in English class. Please understand that your answers to these questions will not be discussed with anyone at your school, nor can they affect your grade in anyway. Your identity will not be revealed, and you do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with. There is no risk involved to you responding to these questions. Do you understand these explanations? Do you agree to participate in this interview?

1. The last thing I read was:

2. In my free time, I most enjoy:

3. The kinds of things I like to read are:

4. If I could read about anything it would be:

5. If I could write my own story, it would be about:

6. My favorite subject in school is:________because:

7. I think my reading abilities are:____because:

8. My favorite place to read is:_______________because:

9. I get excited to read or write when:

10. The person or people I see reading the most is/are:

11. What do you think about Sustained Silently Reading in your English class?
12. Do you think that Sustained Silent Reading helps you be a better reader? Why or why not?

13. Do you think Sustained Silent Reading helps you become more interested in reading? Why or why not?

14. Why do you think a person might pretend that they are reading, when really they are not reading? [If they say yes and something to the effect of “because the book is uninteresting” ask Do you ever feel this way?]

15. Do you think that reading is important? Why or why not?

16. Tell me about the book you are reading for Sustained Silent Reading. [Follow up questions, such as Do you like it? How did you choose it? What drew you to that book? Etc.]

17. What do you think Sustained Silent Reading could be useful for? [Do you use them for project, papers, tests, etc? What about your future? How do you feel about this?]

18. What do you think could be done to improve Sustained Silent Reading? What would you like to see happen?

19. How do you think your friends feel about Sustained Silent Reading? Why?

20. Do you think your friends actually read during Sustained Silent Reading? Why or why not?
APPENDIX E.

Letter to Principal
December 2, 2009

Dear [Name]:

My name is Ashley Cipiti and I worked at [School Name] under the mentorship of [Mentor's Name] in my professional year at Bowling Green State University for my Methods and Student Teaching semesters. I also substituted at [School Name] periodically for six months after graduation. Currently, I am a full-time graduate student at BGSU and am developing a study that will help me attain my Masters of Education in Reading. I am writing to ask for your assent in regards to collaborating with [School Name] in the investigation of on-task versus off-task Sustained Silent Reading in [Grade] 8th grade language arts classroom.

From both my time in the field and also completing research about Sustained Silent Reading, I have become increasingly fascinated with how SSR is being utilized in middle school language arts classrooms. The thesis I am writing will discuss how students are engaging in Silent Reading. Specifically, I will be, with your assent and support, observing students in [School Name] 8th grade language arts classroom for three weeks. Students' behaviors during SSR will be observed and recorded using a checklist of on-task and off-task behaviors. I am also seeking to administer a short, ten-question survey and a Motivation to Read Profile to this specific group of students to assess their opinions about SSR, the self-awareness of their behaviors during SSR, and how SSR may be addressing any interests in reading, or perhaps developing a motivation to read. Finally, I am hoping to also interview six students concerning their views and use of Sustained Silent Reading time.

All research methods pose zero risk to participants. The data collected will only be published in my thesis and nowhere else. All names, including that of the school, will not be provided, ensuring complete anonymity. Should you have any other questions or concerns about participant rights in this study you may contact the Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu).

As I am sure you are well aware, the National Reading Panel report has led to increased inquiry concerning the practice of independent silent reading (NHDIC, 2000). It is my hope that a more accurate picture of Sustained Silent Reading can be portrayed for the benefit of all interested.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the chair of my committee, Dr. Cindy Hendricks at 419-372-7341 (cindyg@bgsu.edu). I look forward to your response in regards to this request. Thank you for your time and assistance in this study.

Sincerely,

Ashley Cipiti
419-367-2965
acipiti@bgsu.edu
APPENDIX F.

Letter to Parents
Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s):

My name is Ashley Cipiti, and I am a full-time graduate student at Bowling Green State University, developing a study that will help me attain my Masters of Education in Reading. I am collecting data for my thesis at your child’s middle school and I am asking that your child participate in my research examining his or her thoughts, feelings, and experiences while independently and silently reading during the school day. The purpose of conducting this study is to see if students are or are not remaining on-task while silently reading. Once this question is answered, this study’s aim is to see if students are more motivated to read in reference to their silent reading habits. The benefits of this study include: helping researchers learn more about how independent silent reading time may or may not help your child, how independent silent reading may or may not help motivate your child to read, aiding your child’s English teacher in discerning what teaching methods do or do not work best, and helping your child feel in control of his or her learning experiences through their input and opinions.

Participation in my study will involve your child completing a one-time only survey, interview, and Motivation to Read profile during his or her school day that will take about 30 minutes total. I will also be observing your child’s behavior during the time he/she is silently reading in his/her language arts class. The survey, interview, Motivation to Read Profile, and observation is voluntary and your child does not have to participate if he or she does not want to. Not participating will have no impact on your child’s grades or standing at his or her school. There are no anticipated risks of participating in this study. If you or your child chooses to not participate, he or she will spend the time it takes the other students to complete the survey, interview, and Motivation to Read Profile doing a task assigned by his or her teacher. If your child wants to withdraw at any time he or she will be free to do so, with no consequences imposed on him or her. Your child’s responses will remain completely confidential. Your child will not write his or her name anywhere on these documents and will not be asked any personal information that could identify him or her, their families, or their school. I am interested in the responses of students as a group. The observational notes and other response documents will remain entirely confidential and will be destroyed immediately after the data is collected and analyzed, within four months of this study.

I am excited about administering the survey, interview, and Motivation to Read Profile in your child’s school. When I compile the results, I will prepare a report that may be shared with you by the school. Please let me know if you are willing or not willing to allow your child to participate in this study by returning the attached form to your child’s school. If you have questions about the study, you can email or contact my advisor Dr. Cindy Hendricks, at 419-372-7341 (cindyg@bgsu.edu) or the principal of your child’s school. You may also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University, at hsrb@bgsu.edu, (419) 372-7716 with any comments, questions, or concerns about this study or about participant rights.

To indicate whether or not you want your child to participate in this study, you must return the attached form by **February 8, 2010 to the middle school’s Main Office.** Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I hope you will allow your child to participate in this important research. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Ashley Cipiti
Bowling Green State University
Department of Education
Sustained Silent Reading Permission Form

I have read the letter about the study being conducted by a graduate student from Bowling Green State University at my child’s middle school. I acknowledge that this study is being done in order to see if my child is or is not remaining on-task during his or her independent, silent reading time. I understand that the benefits of this study include: helping researchers learn more about how independent silent reading time may or may not help your child in regards to being motivated to read, aiding your child’s English teacher in discerning what teaching methods do or do not work best, and helping your child feel in control of his or her learning experiences through his or her input and opinions. Finally, I am aware that my child is free to withdraw at any time during this study and that there is no requirement for his or her continued participation if unwanted for any reason.

Name of Student: ____________________________

_____ I do NOT allow my child to complete:

☐ a survey about his/her thoughts about independent silent reading
☐ an interview about his/her thoughts about independent silent reading
☐ a Motivation to Read Profile about his/her thoughts about reading

_____ I DO allow my child to complete:

☐ a survey about his/her thoughts about independent silent reading
☐ an interview about his/her thoughts about independent silent reading
☐ a Motivation to Read Profile about his/her thoughts about reading

Parent or Guardian Signature ____________________________ Date ____________

Printed Name ____________________________ Email address ____________________________

Phone number ____________________________

Thank you again for your time!
APPENDIX G.

Overview of Study
Details of Study Form for Students

This is a copy of what I will be doing for the next three weeks in your English class. Please read through the following items carefully. If you have any questions about anything you read please ask me. When you have finished reading this form and all questions have been answered, please sign your name at the bottom to let me know that you ARE OK with participating in this study. In other words, if you sign your name at the bottom you are letting me know that you are WILLING to participate in ALL the items listed below. If you do NOT want to take part in this study, please DO NOT sign your name at the bottom. Please understand that if at ANYTIME you would like to stop participating in this study that is OK. You can stop at any time and for any reason, without explaining. Thanks!

1. I will be coming in during the time you silently read for DEAR just to take a look around at what is going on. I AM NOT grading you on what you are doing during this time. Please do what you would normally do during DEAR.

2. The reason I am coming in while you silently read is to see how you are silently reading. I also want to get your opinions and views of what you think of silent reading during DEAR. Finally, I would like to understand if you like reading and are interested in reading and why or why not.

3. Me coming in will help with the ability to make sure what you are being taught is helpful to you. This study is a chance for you to voice your opinions about DEAR and reading. Your opinions and feedback will help you be more involved in what you do or do not do in your English class.

4. I will be asking you to take a survey about what you think of DEAR. In NO WAY will you be identified according to your answers. You will NOT be asked to write down your name on the form. No one will be able to know who said what, besides me, and I will NOT share what you wrote with ANYONE, including your classroom teacher.

5. I will be asking you to take a Motivation to Read Profile. This is a list of multiple-choice questions that ask you about reading. In NO WAY will you be identified according to your answers. You will NOT be asked to write down your name on the form. No one will be able to know who said what, besides me, and I will NOT share what you wrote with ANYONE, including your classroom teacher.

6. I will ask about six of you to answer some questions in a one-on-one interview with me about your feelings of DEAR. I will pick six people from your class randomly. Your responses will NOT be shared with ANYONE.

If you do NOT want to participate in this study, that is OK. You will not be punished for not participating. Mrs. Bazzoli will give you something to work on during the time others are completing the survey and Motivation to Read Profile. Also, remember that you can stop participating in this study at ANYTIME with NO consequences.

If you DO want to participate in this study please print and sign your name below. Thanks!

Printed Name: _______________________     Signature:___________________________
APPENDIX H.

Scoring Guide SSR Survey
Scoring Rubric: Sustained Silent Reading Survey

1. How much do you enjoy silently reading in your English class, where 1 = Very little and 5=Very much?

   1 = 1 point  
   2 = 2 points
   3 = 3 points  
   4 = 4 points  
   5 = 5 points

2. Is the book you are reading during Sustained Silent Reading time one you chose? (please circle one)

   Yes = 1 point  
   No = 0 points

3. How much do you like the book you are reading during Sustained Silent Reading time, where 1= Very little and 5= Very much?

   1 = 1 point  
   2 = 2 points
   3 = 3 points  
   4 = 4 points  
   5 = 5 points

4. How focused are you on your reading during Sustained Silent Reading, where 1= Not at all and 5=All the time?

   1 = 1 point  
   2 = 2 points
   3 = 3 points  
   4 = 4 points  
   5 = 5 points

5. Do you “fake read” at any point during Sustained Silent Reading? In other words, do you act like you are reading, but you are really not reading? (please circle one)

   Yes= 0 point  
   Sometimes = 1 point  
   No= 2 points

6. How often do you stop reading during Sustained Silent Reading time, where 1=Never and 5=Always?

   1 = 5 point  
   2 = 4 points
   3 = 3 points  
   4 = 2 points  
   5 = 1 point

7. Do you feel Sustained Silent Reading is helpful to you?

   Yes = 1 point  
   No = 0 points
8. How much has Sustained Silent Reading helped you become more interested in reading, where 1=Very little and 5=Very much?

1 = 1 point  
2 = 2 points 
3 = 3 points  
4 = 4 points  
5 = 5 points

9. Do you use your SSR book to complete other class activities such as projects, tests, presentations, etc.?

Yes = 1 point 
No = 0 points

10. Do you talk about your SSR books in class?

Yes = 1 point 
No = 0 points
APPENDIX I.

Scoring Guide Motivation to Read Profile
**Motivation to Read Profile Scoring Guide**

Recoding scale  
1=4  
2=3  
3=2  
4=1

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<th>Value of reading</th>
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<td>*recode 18. _____</td>
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<td>19. _____</td>
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SC raw score: ______/40  
V raw score: ______/40  
Full survey raw score (Self-concept & Value): __________/80

Percentage scores  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-concept</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Full survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>