

BIBLIOTHERAPY AS INTERVENTION FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIALLY
AGGRESSIVE GIRLS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL SETTING: A CASE STUDY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe how bibliotherapy among adolescent African American females in urban middle schools served as an intervention for female social aggression, or the mean girl syndrome. At this stage of the research, bibliotherapy was defined as the use of literature to support positive socio-emotional health and prosocial behavior. The theory guiding this inquiry was Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. It stands to reason that if there is indeed a transaction between the reader and the text; bibliotherapy could impact the attitudes, perceptions, and behavior of socially aggressive females. The central research was: What characteristics of bibliotherapy contribute to its mitigating impact on female social aggression? The research design was the collective case study. The case study primarily dealt with people and programs. This design was appropriate for this study because it explored the notions of how and why bibliotherapy [program] serves as an appropriate intervention for female social aggression [people]. The participants were comprised of 11 socially aggressive, African American females between the ages of 11-14. The setting for the study was an urban middle school in a Midwestern region of the United States. The data collection process initially entailed recommendations from administrators, and/or counselors which served to identify potential participants. The three modes of collection were semi-structured interviews comprised of open-ended questions, a focus group, and letters that participants wrote to literary characters. The data analysis entailed that all interviews, focus group discourse, and letters were transcribed verbatim. Each text was analyzed for themes and coded accordingly. Lastly, themes, namely, *the imagination station*, *the aggressor syndrome*, and *the power of the narrative*, were interpreted for the purpose of depth of understanding of the characteristics of the case.

Key words: adolescents, mean girls, bullying, bibliotherapy, transactional theory of reading

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who was a guiding force throughout this journey. As I explored the notion of bibliotherapy and the power of “words,” my appreciation for the “Word Made Flesh” has increased in breadth, length, and depth. I also dedicate this work to my two children, Aria and Anthoney, who have always collectively been a source of inspiration for me in every endeavor in my life. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my husband, Anthoney Charaman who flew with me to Washington and drove me to Virginia for all my hybrid courses. I appreciate how he hung out in the hotel all day and then picked me up after classes and took me to dinner. Throughout the dissertation journey, my hubby’s homemade chai tea also helped me stay energized and motivated especially during the grueling process of Chapter Two and its infamous Literature Review. We have the greatest love affair. Thank you for your unconditional love and continued support.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

School districts have generally determined that there has been a disproportionate use of school suspensions as disciplinary recourse for unacceptable behaviors (Fisher, Frey, & Smith, 2016; Gray, Sirinides, Fink, Flack, DuBois, & Morrison, 2017; Heilburn, Cornell, & Konold, 2018; Massar, McIntosh, & Eliason, 2015; McBride, Chung, & Robertson, 2016). In recent years, many school districts across the country have made shifts in how they deal with problematic student behavior. These districts have now become the proponents of non-punitive measures for the purpose of proactively building positive school culture (Fisher et al., 2016; Gray et al., 2017; Heilburn et al., 2015; McBride et al., 2016) and reducing the incidents of inappropriate school conduct (Fisher et al., 2016, Gray et al., 2017; Massar et al., 2015; McBride et al., 2016). Punitive measures such as in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and detentions oftentimes have no rehabilitative value (Fisher et al., 2016; Gray et al., 2017; Heilburn et al., 2018; Massar et al., 2015; McBride et al., 2016) and are considered temporary fixes that simply remove students from vital academic instruction. As educators are seeking out preventive measures for dealing with inappropriate social interaction and behaviors among students, bibliotherapy presents an alternative strategy that serves to promote pro-social behaviors (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; Heath, Smith, & Young, 2017; Shem, 2016) rather than punish anti-social ones. Furthermore, the nature of bibliotherapy may serve as either an intervention after perpetual misbehavior occurs or as a strategy that may support the preventative paradigm of character education. There is a great deal of literature that supports the use of this strategy. Nevertheless, there is a gap in the literature regarding bibliotherapy as an intervention for female social aggression, particularly amongst African American adolescents. This qualitative collective

case study will bridge the gap in investigating bibliotherapy intervention in three urban middle schools located in a Midwestern region in the United States. Chapter One includes the problem's background, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study. In addition, the research questions are identified and substantiated. Lastly, the summary is included.

Background

This section provides a three-pronged foundation for the use of bibliotherapy as the primary focus for this study. First, the historical perspective traces the origin of the phenomenon and its various uses and stages of progression. Secondly, the social aspect of this topic addresses how this construct impacts the lives of students and educators in academic settings, and the lives of patients in clinical settings. The former is called developmental bibliotherapy and the latter is categorized as clinical. Lastly, the theoretical framework is highlighted which provides a brief exploration of the theory that is at work in the manifestation of the study's phenomenon.

Historical

Bibliotherapy first appeared on the scene when Crothers (1916) used the term to describe the implementation of books to provide insight for patients regarding their respective physical conditions. Crothers (1916) not only viewed books as a tool to expose a new realm of knowledge for individuals, but also to bring about healing for the mind and the body. The term *bibliotherapy* is derived from the combination of two Latin words, namely, "biblion" (book) and "therapeo" (healing) and reflects the change in the behaviors and attitudes of people after being impacted by the material that has been read (Akgün & Belli, 2019; Altunbay, 2018). Throughout the early 1900s, medical librarians began compiling lists of written material (Guha & Seale, 2015; Jack & Ronan, 2008; Levin & Gildea, 2013; Perryman, 2006; Warner, 1980) for therapeutic use. As

ailing individuals would read self-help and literary texts, there would be changes in thought patterns and behaviors. These libraries primarily were implemented in psychiatric and medical clinics (Guha & Seale, 2015; Jack & Ronan, 2008; Levin & Gildea, 2013; Perryman, 2006; Warner, 1980) in order to address psychological, and emotional health issues.

In instances whereby self-help texts are implemented, they are oftentimes referred to as sources of cognitive bibliotherapy. On the other hand, literary texts are used for the purpose of creative bibliotherapy. The cognitive or self-help texts primarily appealed solely to intellectual processing; whereas the creative bibliotherapy provided for affective or intuitive engagement.

A psychodynamic framework of bibliotherapy had been proposed (Bohning, 1981; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson, Wan, Templeton, Graham, & Sattler, 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950) which entailed three progressive stages, namely, *identification*, *catharsis*, and *insight*. The identification stage (Bohning, 1981; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950) occurs when the readers position themselves in the place of a main character. At this stage, engagement is manifested because readers are able to identify similarities that are situational or relational. Catharsis (Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Heath et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950) takes place when the reader is able to experience some form of relief simply by sympathizing or empathizing with characters or situations within the milieu of the text. In essence, this phase speaks to the notion of the therapeutic aspect of bibliotherapy because the reader is afforded some level of comfort, support, or release as a result of textual interaction. Insight (Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Heath et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950) is the stage whereby the reader begins to understand the psyche, motivations, and actions of the protagonist. This component could

possibly provide a framework for addressing issues that arise in the future that may be congruent to those experienced by the literary character. In some cases, researchers have added one additional stage which is referred to as *universalism* (Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Heath et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950). Universalism transpires when the reader makes a connection between what has taken place in the text and how it relates to the world at large. In essence, the reader identifies with the issues of the character and finds ways to provide solutions.

Social

Bibliotherapy in a small group or classroom setting lends itself to a guided reading experience that can assist the reader in discovering solutions to problems, reducing aggression, and developing empathy (McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013; Sheckman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016). This treatment can also be explored through self-help books. Some professional counselors and doctors have used bibliotherapy to assist patients with coping with pain, mental disorders, and even cancer. Hence, bibliotherapy not only deals with analytical and thematic applications in conjunction with literary elements, it can also be implemented in texts that directly and overtly address the issues impacting the lives of its readers.

Bibliotherapy may be categorized as clinical or developmental (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016). As a clinical intervention, it is administered by certified psychiatric counselors or medical practitioners. The developmental branch of bibliotherapy (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016) is generally used by school counselors and/or educators in a school setting. The latter is clearly applicable in the case of this study. Developmental bibliotherapy (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016) enables teachers and/or school counselors to work in small group

settings with students who are struggling to engage in healthy social interactions, cultivate societal values, and achieve emotional well-being or any combination of the aforementioned. Russell and Shrodes (1950) conveyed the idea that “all teachers must be aware of the effects of reading upon children and must realize that, through literature, most children can be helped to solve the developmental problems of adjustment which they face” (p.335). Within the academic context, the facilitators of bibliotherapy sessions select appropriate self-help or literary texts that will engage students. The facilitator also engages the readers in guided reading which may involve journaling, reflecting, questioning, and responding all in an effort to bring students to a culminating experience of revelation, analysis, application, and resolution. The reading sessions are framed after the similitude of therapy conducted by licensed practitioners in the fields of psychology or social work. It must also be noted that the notion of providing texts for the purpose of therapy also calls into question ensuring a level of text appropriation. In other words, the selected literature should be age appropriate and high-interest. Furthermore, it would be futile to present literature to young people who are struggling readers. Hence, a suitable lexile level must also be a strong consideration when selecting a text.

Bibliotherapy has been associated with the diminution of aggressive behaviors (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013; Shem, 2016). It has also been linked to intervention and prevention for bullying behaviors especially among adolescents (Heath, Moulton, Dyches, Prater, & Brown, 2011; Sheckman & Tutian, 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). School teachers, counselors and administrators have found that bibliotherapy has been instrumental in diminishing the occurrence of bullying behaviors in some cases, and preventing these behaviors in others. The bullying scenario entails the bully, the victim and the bystanders; hence, the act of bullying always involves several individuals (Bowser, Larson, Bellmore, Olson,

& Resnik, 2018; De Wet, 2017; Forsberg, 2017; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). This type of misappropriated behavior in schools produces feelings of hopelessness and anxiety in those who are not identified as the actual bully. Nevertheless, bibliotherapy is linked with the increase of prosocial behavior (Elley, 2014; Heath et al., 2017; Schectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016) and the reduction in aggressive or bullying behavior among young people (Schectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016; Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015).

Theoretical

The phenomenon of bibliotherapy sets forth the idea that somehow reading can impact one's life dramatically. It may be implemented as a form of intervention and may serve to modify behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, bibliotherapy suggests that the use of books can be appropriated in the lives of those who need support in overcoming a variety of issues. In this context, bibliotherapy may be compared to the use of pharmaceutical drugs, physical therapy, or psychoanalysis.

The concept of bibliotherapy is founded in Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. Rosenblatt asserted that there is a transactional relationship between the reader and the text. In addition, Rosenblatt (1992) claimed that not only is there a transaction which represents a two-way process, but also that the reader generally approaches the experience of reading with the idea that some type of inspiration, empowerment, or enlightenment will occur as a result. In other words, readers generally clearly expect to be on the receiving end of this literary exchange. Rosenblatt used the term "efferent" to describe this phenomenon when the reader takes away information from the text. On the other hand, the theorist described the "aesthetic" experience of reading whereby readers may interpret information primarily based upon their own social, psychological, and intellectual states in order to assign value and interpret the meaning of what is

being transmitted through the process of reading.

Rosenblatt (1982) supported the idea that all reading or literature teachers should seek to cultivate aesthetic reading which is characterized by open-ended questions so that students would engage the richness of the literary experience. The theorist recognized that as children get older, their interaction with literature is crafted by the efferent paradigm whereby questions are text-dependent only and tend to have only one correct answer. In essence, the efferent purview provides literary parameters that are limit the reader's experience to literal interpretation. According to Rosenblatt (1982), aesthetic reading not only enables the reader to infuse kinesthetic, stream of consciousness, and psychological inner-workings into the context, it also engenders the ability on the part of the reader to apply the experiential dialogue to impact future literary and sociological encounters.

Hence, as the readers partake in the reading experience, they are impacted by the words. As the text is presented, readers, in turn, filter through their own sentiments, emotions, experiences, and schemata to bring meaning and richness to the text. Whether efferent or aesthetic reading takes place in theory, bibliotherapy potentially has the power to bring about change in attitudes, perceptions, and the behavior of individuals.

Situation to Self

I became interested in studying bibliotherapy as an intervention for female social aggression because I had witnessed countless situations in which girls had caused a great deal of disruption to the learning environments. I have taught adolescents for most of my career and have been befuddled by the volatile dynamics that exists and is perpetuated amongst the female students. I had even been exposed to a host of instances whereby groups and/or individuals had been involved in longstanding feuds and grudges. Interestingly, the majority of these young

ladies were repeat offenders. They would be suspended several times throughout the school year without the desired outcome of rehabilitation. As I saw a need for alternative strategies that would deal with troubled and aggressive females, I decided to spearhead a mentoring program at one of my schools. The group met weekly for lunch. We collectively read a novel that introduced several characters as they dealt with issues of social aggression. The girls and I were able to discuss the characters and how we all could relate to mean girls and the concepts of acceptance, respect, and identity. I saw changes in the girls' attitudes and behavior even within the scope of the brief period of the sessions that I now have come to understand are coined "bibliotherapy."

I am cognizant that I am operating from an axiological assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018) whereby I believe that values come into play in this study. For instance, I believe in the notion that people should automatically treat one another with respect. For this reason, from my perspective, it is paramount that all individuals be equipped with the tools that will promote and maintain a prosocial climate in any given community. In addition, I believe that we all have a responsibility to assist in helping to rehabilitate those who are struggling with socio-emotional issues. Moreover, I wholeheartedly espouse the notion that the learning environment should be free of disruptions such as social aggression so that all students can feel safe and at ease. Furthermore, if students fail to experience a warm and inviting academic climate, academic achievement may be impeded.

In addition, the ontological assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018) perspective also impacts my research. This assumption speaks to the idea that there are multiple realities that frame research. In this study, there are three different modes of data collection, namely, interviews, focus groups, and letter analyses. Furthermore, the perceptions of various participants within the school setting will be examined. Hence, multiple realities are pursued to provide an authentic,

dependable, and credible representation of the investigation's findings.

The methodological assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018) is also an integral facet of this study. This assumption speaks to the idea that the researcher deals with details and particulars prior to establishing generalizations. The methodological assumption reflects inductive reasoning patterns. For instance, as participants respond in individual as well as group settings, the researcher identifies and analyzes themes, or recurrent ideas. In addition, the qualitative methodologist is also flexible enough to revise and reframe questions as needed.

The epistemological assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018) represents another aspect of my research study. This paradigm supports the notion that the researcher must rely on information from subjects as evidence to provide insight into the phenomenon. In addition, the researcher should also be sure to leverage proximity for the purpose of truly acquiring knowledge regarding the participants and their experiences. I recognize that responses that my subjects provide are purely subjective, based upon how they perceive the world around them. It must also be noted that within the scope of this assumption, it is paramount that I conduct my research in the context that is most familiar to the participants which is a school setting and amongst peers.

In addition, I find myself as the researcher, identifying with a social constructivism (Creswell & Poth, 2018) interpretive framework. My approach to inquiry is demonstrated in a literary style whereby reality is discovered or constructed based upon the experiences of participants. The social constructivist recognizes that the essence of what is deemed as true is determined by how the world is interpreted, not merely by causal or correlational dynamics. I espouse the idea that as a researcher, I am able to gain insight regarding the lives of others through data collection methods such as interviews, focus groups, and text analysis. Moreover, I employ inductive reasoning strategies that lead me to draw some conclusions based upon

emerging themes.

Lastly, as this study explores the female social aggression amongst African Americans, two marginalized groups have been identified. These two groups are: African Americans and females. There are clearly some implications when dealing with these minority groups. First, there is the feminist theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Krumer-Nevo & Komem, 2015) that is underlying in this investigation. In reference to the feminist theory, it may be theorized that women adopt certain attitudes and behave in certain manners primarily due to a sense of powerlessness in male-dominated society (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Krumer-Nevo & Komem, 2015; Martin & Beese, 2016). Similarly, those who are categorized as minorities based upon race or ethnicity also may espouse certain ideologies based upon the fact that society in general may be viewed as one that is dominated by the Caucasian race. This type of purview is characterized by what is called the critical race theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Problem Statement

The problem is the exploration of how and why bibliotherapy serves as an intervention for socially aggressive young people. In addition, the problem extends to the need for an intervention as many adolescent females, specifically in the African American community, are oftentimes engaged in socially aggressive behavior. This type of behavior not only hinders the academic of achievement of the perpetrators, but also disrupts the learning environment for the educators and peers as well. Furthermore, young people should be encouraged to demonstrate prosocial behaviors which would support their ability to serve as productive citizens in society. For this particular study, African American adolescent females in urban middle schools will be highlighted. A vast array of literature introduces how bibliotherapy has been implemented to minimize bullying behavior among adolescent children in schools (De Wet, 2017; Sheckman &

Tutian, 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). The literature also sets forth the idea that bibliotherapy promotes pro-social behavior (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; Shem, 2016) and serves to instill values in young people. Bibliotherapy has also been associated with curbing nighttime fears in young children (Lewis, Amatya, Coffman, & Ollendick, 2015), assisting patients in dealing with the emotional trauma (Betzael & Shechtman, 2017; De Vries, Brennan, Lankin, Morse, Rix, & Beck, 2017) such as depression or anxiety, and providing support for those who are plagued with the challenges of dealing with chronic or terminal illnesses (Roberts & Lee, 2016; Tavallaei, Rezapour-Mirsaleh, Rezaieamaram, & Saadat, 2018). Hence, bibliotherapy is clearly a current phenomenon of interest that has been addressed empirically.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe how bibliotherapy among adolescent African American females in an urban middle school served as an intervention for female social aggression, or the mean girl syndrome. At this stage of the research, bibliotherapy was defined as the use of literature to support positive socio-emotional health and prosocial behavior. In addition, mean girl was a reference to girls who engage in socially aggressive behavior toward their gender peers for the purpose of establishing domination. The theory guiding this inquiry was Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. Rosenblatt (1969) sets forth the idea that the relationship between the reader and the text can be described as a form of transaction. In essence, this theory suggests that a reader brings experiential knowledge and perception to the reading activity, and the text impacts the reader psychologically, cognitively, and emotionally. Hence, it stands to reason that if there is indeed a transaction between the reader and the text, bibliotherapy would most likely impact the attitudes, perceptions, and behavior of socially aggressive females.

Significance of the Study

As bullying behaviors and social aggression have become more prevalent in today's schools (Bowser, Larson, Bellmore, Olson, & Resnik, 2018; Forsberg, 2017; Jenkins, Tennant, & Demaray, 2018; Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Wang et al., 2015), educators and administrators are faced with the challenge of finding ways to not only punish these behaviors but also provide a remedy. Current literature presents bibliotherapy as a possible and viable intervention for bullying in schools (De Wet, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). This case study explored bibliotherapy as intervention specifically for African American adolescent girls in urban school settings. The participants were those who had been identified as socially aggressive or mean girls. This category will represent girls who have been documented as repeat offenders who demonstrate behaviors such as bullying, berating, and antagonizing their peers.

The phenomenon of bibliotherapy is potentially a highly substantial representation of the inner workings of Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. As bibliotherapy is deemed a viable intervention for socially aggressive girls, then it is probable that there must be a transaction between reader and the text so that behavior and attitude modification can transpire. In other words, bibliotherapy engages the reader in conjunction with her experiences, emotions, and cognitive schemata in a manner that evokes a response to the text. This response may indeed result in not only transaction, but transformation. Furthermore, in accordance with demand for interventions that are rehabilitative and restorative, this transformation could potentially improve the way the subjects view themselves and others, culminating in prosocial attitudes and behavior.

This study was particularly beneficial for educators who serve in urban communities because this academic milieu has been deemed as underperforming and riddled with behavior

issues and excessive suspensions (Fisher et al., 2016; Gray et al., 2017; Heilburn et al., 2015; Losen & Martinez, 2013; McBride et al., 2016). Hence, all stakeholders would benefit from an intervention that could bring about rehabilitation which could, in turn, minimize suspensions and disruptions to the learning environment. Furthermore, female social aggression, in general, has been on the rise (Evaldsson & Svahn, 2017; Forsberg, 2017). Moreover, the adolescent child is more susceptible to engage in or become the victim of social aggression or non-physical bullying (Pattiselanno, Dijkstra, Steglich, Vollebergh, & Veenstra, 2015; Valiūnė, 2017; You & Kim, 2016; Yun & Graham, 2018). It would be helpful for any academic setting to implement bibliotherapy as an intervention. Schools should be aware of the resources that are at their disposal which could possibly bring about great transformation in the lives of their students. Interestingly, these readily available and accessible resources are the teachers and the texts. Any educator may serve as a developmental bibliotherapist (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Shem, 2016). The bibliotherapist in the school setting need not be an expert, just a yielded vessel with an appreciation for books and passion to see change in the lives of the students. Every educator has access to books. This study could help to encourage dedicated teachers to look inside themselves and the pages of books to find some remedy for the behavioral issues that plague today's schools.

Research Questions

This section introduces the research questions for this qualitative study. The questions are distinguished from the purpose statement and provide a roadmap for the inquiry approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). The crafting of robust research questions may be a difficult task (Stake, 1995) because it involves the skill to adequately explore a concept and the flexibility to modify questions when necessary (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). The

qualitative research questions are few in number, and typically commence with words such as *what* and *how* (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This interrogative technique allows for open-ended, non-directional, and evolving questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995) that will explore a depth of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of a qualitative study.

The qualitative study consists of a central question (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which reflects the overarching purpose of the inquiry. The central question steers the path of the investigation. The sub-questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018) serve as scaffolding which will allow the researcher to build a foundation upon which he or she may address the central question. The research questions for qualitative studies do not seek to establish causal relationships. Their purpose is to explore the depth of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995) as viewed by multiple realities.

Central Question

What characteristics of bibliotherapy contribute to its potential for mitigating female social aggression?

Sub-questions

1. What metaphors, examples, or personal scenarios do the participants employ to describe the experience of reading?
2. What type(s) of emotions, memories and/or perceptions do the aggressors describe when they read about mean girls?
3. What words or phrases do the participants use to depict the actions of other real-life or fictional mean girls?
4. What value do the participants assign to bibliotherapy as an intervention in their lives?

Definitions

1. *Bibliotherapy* - The use of literature in the treatment of individuals suffering from mental problems with the aim of producing solutions (Altunbay, 2018).
2. *Mean Girls*—Females who display long-term relational aggression (Bethune & Gonick, 2017)
3. *Bullying*- Behaviors comprised of systematic long-term interpersonal aggression behavior (Sedivy-Benton, Strohschen, Cavazos, & Boden-McGill, 2015)
4. *Adolescents*- The period between the onset of puberty and the achievement of relative self-sufficiency (Blakemore & Mills, 2014).

Summary

Chapter One provided a strong foundation for this study. First, bibliotherapy has been established as a phenomenon that is of empirical and current interest in the fields of psychology, medicine, and education. Bibliotherapy has been implemented as treatment for a variety of socio-emotional issues and has also been linked to the improvement of behavior and attitudes. It has also had historical, social, and theoretical significance. Bibliotherapy has its foundation in Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading whereby the act of reading is a form of transaction between the reader and the text. Hence, it can be deduced that reading can indeed be viewed as therapeutic given the appropriate texts, circumstances, and guided reading protocols. The purpose of this case study was to investigate the characteristics of bibliotherapy as intervention for socially aggressive females. The study was significant because there is a gap in literature when it comes to empirical studies involving bibliotherapy and African American adolescent females in urban school settings. This study could also provide insight on how to promote pro-social behavior in adolescents and possibly mitigate social aggression. It can

provide educators, social workers, and counselors with tools to deal with some of the behaviors that plague schools and disrupt the learning environment particularly as they relate to adolescents, African American girls, and the urban school milieu.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Two is to highlight the theoretical framework that serves as the foundation of this research study. This framework has been identified as Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. In addition, the literature review segment of this chapter presents the various themes that are prevalent throughout the empirical research that address the problem or phenomenon. In addition, within the scope of this discourse, the cross-sectional, overlapping facet of the themes and trends will also be highlighted. This chapter also encompasses the literature that addresses the various components of the study, namely, bibliotherapy, adolescents, and mean girls (gender-related social aggression or bullying). This chapter also demonstrates how the literature is nestled within the scope of the theoretical framework. Moreover, Chapter Two presents an argument for the significance of the study and the presence of the literature gap.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework which serves as the foundation for bibliotherapy is Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. Rosenblatt (1938) introduces and establishes the foundation for her theory upon the premise that there are intrinsic aspects of both the act of educating students as well as the reading of a text that pose some inevitability. In reference to the role of teachers, it is impossible to separate the engagement in education without addressing behavioral and social conditioning, constructs, and expectations. A teacher cannot expect to impact the lives of students cognitively without creating an atmosphere in which the process of learning and teaching can flourish. This involves addressing and establishing parameters that promote a healthy and thriving environment. Similarly, as a reader engages a text, it is inevitable that certain aspects of societal theories and ideologies are embedded within the pages of the

literature. All human beings, authors included, have all been impacted by their own experiences, the world around them, and the ethical and moral implications that have been dictated by members of society. Hence, Rosenblatt (1938) purported that literature intrinsically and unavoidably tends to address human relationships while the reader is bringing his or experiences in the world within the scope of the act of reading which primarily is reflected by the nature of his or her human relationships. Rosenblatt (1938) even concluded that literature is deemed valuable, forceful, or powerful primarily due to the degree that the text interacts with the reader on the cognitive and emotive spectrum. Moreover, according to author, many readers engage texts for sheer satisfaction some of which exist on conscious or subconscious levels. The texts enable the readers to be comforted or amused; they may induce laughter, thinking, weeping, or dreaming. In addition, perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of how reading impacts the human soul is that readers may find themselves identifying with characters which may, in turn, result in empathy or even a change of heart. In essence, books oftentimes serve as emotional outlets (Rosenblatt, 1938).

Rosenblatt (1969) clearly viewed the relationship between the reader and the text as a form of transaction. In essence, the reader does not merely bring the ability to encode and decode symbols and words to a reading experience; he or she brings past experiences, perceptions, socialization, cognition, and prior knowledge. The reader draws from an experiential reservoir even in the simplest reading. Rosenblatt explained the transaction between reader and the text:

The reader, we can say, interprets the text. (The reader acts on the text.) Or we can say, the text produces a response in the reader. (The text acts on the reader.) The transactional view of the reading process not only frees us from notions of the impact of distinct and

fixed entities, but also underlines the essential importance of both of the elements, reader and text, in the dynamic reading transaction (Rosenblatt, 1969, p.47).

The reader will internalize and interpret the text in a manner that far exceeds comprehension alone. Rosenblatt (1969) claimed that the text engages the reader in a manner that leads to the ordering of the reader's past experiences. The theorist also asserted that "it is equally necessary to say that the reader is dependent on past experience, both linguistic and life experience, for the sense of possible modes of order that he brings to the text" (p. 42).

Rosenblatt (1969) also highlighted that there is an element of this theory that is steeped in psychoanalysis, whereby an individual is afforded the opportunity to analyze thoughts, emotions, images, and perceptions. This implies that a metacognitive process is inherent in the act of reading and that readers are not merely seeking a surface interpretation of the text; they innately make connections and reposition themselves in order to make sense of the information that is being presented. The researcher held that "the transactional view is especially reinforced by the frequent observation of psychologists that interest, expectations, anxieties, and other patterns based on past experience affect what an individual perceives" (Rosenblatt, 1969, p. 44).

Rosenblatt (1969) spoke to the idea that as the reader engages a text, there must be some form of response. In essence, it is as if the relationship between the reader and the text can be compared to that of an exchange between two human entities. If this is true, it stands to reason that just as an individual perhaps receives insight, encouragement, or instruction from a family member, friend, confidante, or licensed professional; he, too may be able to benefit from the interplay with an engaging, dynamic text. Upon perusal of the juxtaposition of Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading and bibliotherapy, it should behoove any bibliotherapist to be very strategic and intentional when preparing to assign texts. The bibliotherapist must be

culturally sensitive to the readers and knowledgeable about literary context and content. If indeed the reader-text relationship is analogous to the person- to- person relational paradigm, context and prior knowledge must be taken into consideration in order for any relationship to produce favorable outcomes. Furthermore, another major consideration would be the Lexile of a text. It would be virtually impossible for effective communication to transpire between two people who speak different languages (without the aid of an interpreter, of course). Therefore, selection of text must not only be one that reflects cultural responsiveness; it must also represent reader interest and be crafted at the appropriate reading level for the reader as well. Hence, the connection between bibliotherapy and the transactional theory of reading is delineated. If reading is indeed a transactional process, then embedded within this process is the possibility or even probability of transformation.

Related Literature

The current literature that addresses the bibliotherapy phenomenon produces various themes. These themes reflect a diversity of contexts. Bibliotherapy has been implemented in clinical as well as developmental settings. In other words, it has been used by licensed professionals for the sake of treating issues such as mental illness, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, it has been implemented in academic contexts by educators and guidance counselors as an intervention for students who struggle with cultivating healthy and productive relationships with authority figures and their peers. Furthermore, within the scope of this review, there is also the inclusion of studies regarding adolescents and mean girls which represent vital facets of the investigation. It is apparent that the central phenomenon of bibliotherapy is one that is of great interest to various types of practitioners seeking to remedy some of the pervasive socio-

emotional, mental, and physical health concerns that greatly impact the lives of many in today's society.

Clinical Bibliotherapy

Some licensed professionals such as counselors and doctors have used self-help books to assist patients who are seeking to cope with various disorders. These clinical issues may include chronic pain (Tavallaei, Rezapour-Mirsaleh, Rezaemaram, & Saadat, 2018), mental disorders (Jacob & De Guzman, 2015; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Taleban, Zamani, Moafi, Jiryae, & Khadivi, 2016; Yuan, Zhou, Zhang, Pu, Yang, Liu, Jiang, & Xie, 2018) and even coping with cancer (Körner, Roberts, Steele, Brosseau, & Rosberger, 2018; Maich, Belcher, Sider, & Johnson, 2016; Roberts, Lee, Anang, & Korner, 2016; Schneider, Peterson, Gathercoal, & Hamilton, 2015). In the clinical sense, bibliotherapy is usually accompanied by pharmaceutical interventions as well. However, many clinicians have understood the benefits of educating the patients so that they are required to face the fears that oftentimes accompany the lack of knowledge regarding physical issues. In essence, as patients educate themselves about their current physical ailments, there is a sense of empowerment. In addition, clinicians provide exposure to self-help manuals and brochures that support a balanced and positive emotional state for those dealing with physical challenges.

Hence, bibliotherapy not only deals with analytical and thematic applications in conjunction with literary elements (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016). It can also be implemented in texts that directly and overtly address the issues impacting the lives of its readers (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016). In other words, in a clinical context, the intervention primarily employs informational or expository reading material. These types of texts are not necessarily entertaining

or amusing; they simply serve to provide insight and strategies for mitigating the emotional malaise that stems from dealing with mental or physical disorders. As a clinical intervention, bibliotherapy is administered by certified psychiatric counselors or medical practitioners (Canty, 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016).

Developmental Bibliotherapy

The developmental branch of bibliotherapy is generally used by school counselors and/or educators in an academic setting and is clearly applicable for this research study. Developmental bibliotherapy enables teachers and/or school counselors to work in small group settings with students who are struggling with engaging in healthy social interactions, cultivating societal values, experiencing emotional well-being or any combination of the aforementioned (Heath et al., 2017; Shem, 2016). Russell and Shrodes (1950) conveyed the idea that “all teachers must be aware of the effects of reading upon children and must realize that, through literature, most children can be helped to solve the developmental problems of adjustment which they face” (p.335). Interestingly, many educators, particularly those who teach subjects that fall under the category of the humanities naturally address issues of morality and societal ethical expectations within the scope of content instruction.

In the academic context, the facilitators of bibliotherapy sessions select appropriate self-help or literary texts that will engage students (Ford, Walters, Byrd, & Harris, 2019; Heath, 2017). The facilitator also engages the readers in guided reading which may involve journaling, reflecting, questioning, and responding (Elley, 2014) all in an effort to bring students to a culminating experience of revelation, analysis, application, and resolution (Elsenman & Harper, 2016). The reading sessions are framed after the similitude of therapy conducted by licensed practitioners in the fields of psychology or social work. Bibliotherapy in a small group or

classroom setting lends itself to a guided reading experience that can assist the reader in discovering solutions to problems, reducing aggression, and developing empathy (Heath et al., 2017; Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016). Laypersons can be just as equipped as licensed professionals to implement bibliotherapy effectively (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016).

Bibliotherapy and Elementary Students

Bibliotherapy as treatment for elementary children with socio-emotional challenges (Betzael & Shechtman, 2017; Elsenman, & Harper, 2016; Heath et al., 2017; Lewis, Amatya, Coffman, & Ollendick, 2015; Wang et al., 2015) has been explored throughout empirical literature. In the early childhood stages, many young students experience trauma for a variety of reasons. These young people oftentimes find it difficult to manage their emotions when there has been some traumatic experience that has impacted their lives. Some children deal with the emotional turmoil of an incarcerated family member (Ford et al., 2019). Moreover, bibliotherapy has also been deemed an effective intervention when treating young children with nighttime fears (Lewis et al., 2015) and has been touted to diminish the need of fearful children to sleep with their parents at bedtime.

Elementary school-aged children positively respond to bibliotherapy as an intervention that would modify physically and socially aggressive behavior (Heath et al., 2017; Betzael & Shechtman, 2017; Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Wang et al., 2015) as well. Many school districts have implemented character-building and value-laden programs (Elley, 2014) with the use of bibliotherapy in an effort to combat behaviors such as bullying (Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015) and other forms of socially unacceptable behavior. Young children who have also dealt with anger, depression, and anxiety over loss of a parent due to

death or absenteeism are positively impacted by bibliotherapy (Betzael & Shechtman, 2017). Literature that deals with superheroes is particularly impactful for the aforementioned especially because these superhuman characters have one common denominator. This common denominator is the loss of a parent which provides the impetus for the sense of purpose. Young boys, particularly, identify with this sense of purpose and feel empowered by it (Betzael & Shechtman, 2017). Lastly, there is the claim that young children who are coping with the emotional turmoil of dealing with chronic diseases have seen positive results with the implementation of bibliotherapy as an intervention (Maich, Belcher, Sider, & Johnson, 2016; Schneider, Peterson, Gathercoal, & Hamilton, 2015). Books have been used to provide strategies for supporting emotional health while dealing with physical challenges. For young children dealing with cancer (Schneider et al., 2015) and other chronic diseases, bibliotherapy has offered some support so that coping skills are gleaned from texts.

Pro-social Behavior and Adolescents

Bibliotherapy has been touted to bring about noteworthy positive social change in the lives of adolescents (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016). Adolescent children oftentimes are the primary perpetrators of counterproductive behaviors as this stage of development for adolescents can be challenging as this demographic is faced with the onset of the conscientiousness of adulthood, autonomy, self-image, and peer acceptance (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Burckhardt, Manicavasagar, Batterham, Hadzi-Pavlovic, & Shand, 2017; Dray, Bowman, Wolfenden, Campbell, Freund, Hodder, & Wiggers, 2015; Hovland, 2016). Bibliotherapy has been used as intervention for young people particularly in school settings to promote prosocial behavior (Heath et al., 2017; Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016; Tijms, Stoop, & Polleck, 2018; Wang et al., 2015).

The use of bibliotherapy among both educators and counselors for troubled students may produce desirable outcomes as facilitators seek out age-appropriate and high interest texts (Ford et al., 2019; Heath et al., 2017) that will afford these students the opportunity to identify with the characters and gain insight (Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Heath et al., 2017) that may impact future behavior. Bibliotherapy has also been implemented outside of the academic or clinical context. This intervention has also been associated with behavior modification within the context of correctional facilities (Adeyeye & Oyewusi , 2017). Bibliotherapy has been deemed an effective intervention in promoting attitude and behavior modification in the lives of females who experience this treatment with the aid of empathetic and warm facilitators (Adeyeye & Oyewusi , 2017).

Bullying

Within the last decade, negative behaviors that have been categorized as bullying have been at the forefront of school issues (Bowser, Larson, Bellmore, Olson, & Resnik, 2018; Jenkins, Tennant, & Demaray, 2018; Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015). This issue of bullying has garnered attention not only a national scale, but also global; especially as there has been an increase in cyberbullying with the advent and subsequent growing popularity of social media. Bullying can be described as behaviors such as teasing, taunting, and assault that are executed in an effort for the bully to establish and exert his or her control over the one who is being bullied (Jenkins et al., 2018; Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

Bibliotherapy has been linked to intervention for bullying behaviors especially among adolescents (Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). School teachers, counselors and administrators have found that bibliotherapy has been instrumental in diminishing the occurrence of bullying behaviors in some cases and preventing these behaviors in others. The bullying

scenario entails the bully, the victim and the bystanders; hence, the act of bullying always involves several individuals (Bowser, Larson, Bellmore, Olson, & Resnik, 2018; De Wet, 2017; Forsberg, 2017; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). This type of misappropriated behavior in schools produces feelings of hopelessness and anxiety in those who are not identified as the actual bully. Nevertheless, bibliotherapy has been found to encourage empathy in bullies and the bystanders as it relates to the victim. It is also linked to the increase of prosocial behavior and the reduction in aggressive behavior among adolescents (Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Tijms et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2015). Many schools have implemented bibliotherapy as a form of an anti-bullying program (Heath et al., 2017; Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Wang et al., 2015). Both elementary and secondary students have benefitted from this type of intervention.

Emotional and Mental Health

Bibliotherapy has been heralded to provide support for individuals suffering from grief (Betzael & Shechtman, 2017) and emotional trauma (Canty, 2017; De Vries et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2015). The aforementioned emotional and mental issues oftentimes plague young people. Many students attend school and bring with them a plethora of socio-emotional issues. There are those who are battle anxiety (Chavira, Camacho, Bustos, & Garcia, 2017; Wootton, Steinman, Czerniawski, Norris, Baptie, Diefenbach, & Tolin, 2018; Yuan, Zhou, H. Zhang, Y. Zhang, Pu, Yang, Liu, Jiang, & Xie, 2018) and depression (Brière, Rohde, Stice, & Morizot, 2016; Gualano, Bert, Martorana, Voglino, Andriolo, Thomas, Siliquini, ; 2017; Jacob & De Guzman, 2015; Taleban, Zamani, Moafi, Jiryae, & Khadivi, 2016; Yuan et al., 2018) in the adolescence stage and beyond.

Moreover, other children come to school who have dealt with traumatic experiences (Betzael & Shechtman, 2017; De Vries, Brennan, Lankin, Morse, Rix, & Beck, 2017) which

may oftentimes result in anxiety and depression. Hence, classrooms are often inundated with children who disrupt the learning environment by demonstrating behaviors that may prove to be quite cruel to their peers and even sometimes to adults due to unresolved emotional issues.

The treatment of emotional disorders such as anxiety and aggression as a result of parental loss certainly does not reflect the entire spectrum of the benefits of bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy has been used as intervention for Filipino adolescent females who suffer from depression (Jacob, & De Guzman, 2015) and hail from middle-class families. It has also been associated with bolstering the low self-esteem of college-aged Iranian females (Salimi, Zare-Farashbandi, Papi, Samouei, & Hassanzadeh, 2014) who were pursuing degrees in the field of medicine.

Many believe that books possess healing and therapeutic properties which promote a sense of well-being in the readers (Bate, 2016; Canty, 2017; Gordon, 2016; Hodge, 2016; McLane, 2017). Moreover, if bibliotherapy is appropriated, it may bring about a change for the better in suffering or struggling individuals (Betzael & Shechtman; 2017; Canty, 2017; De Vries et al., 2017; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Hazlett-Stevens & Oren, 2017). Bibliotherapy has also been touted as treatment for coping with chronic pain (Gordon, 2016; Roberts & Lee, 2016; Tavallaei, Rezapour-Mirsaleh, Rezaieamaram, & Saadat, 2018). It has been used to treat both male and female adults as well as children and adolescents who are trying to cope with chronic or even terminal illnesses (Roberts & Lee, 2016; Tavallaei et al., 2018).

Bibliotherapy and Classroom Management

The classroom setting has always been replete with its own set of challenges. One of these major challenges is that some students are seemingly not equipped to interact with others in a healthy manner (Fisher et al., 2016; Gray et al., 2017; Heilburn et al., 2018; Massar et al., 2015). Educators have perpetually sought to explore strategies that support classroom

management and assist students in healthy interaction with their peers (Elley, 2014; Elsenman, & Harper, 2016; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016; Tijms et al., 2018).

Bibliotherapy has been associated improved behavior and attitude among young people (Lewis et al., 2015; Montgomery & Maunders, 2015; Salimi et al., 2014; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016). It has also been successfully used as a tool for classroom management (Lewis et al., 2015; Salimi et al., 2014; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016) in both elementary (DeWet, 2017; Elley, 2014) and secondary settings (Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016). Young children and adolescents alike who exhibit aggressive behaviors in the school setting have been treated with bibliotherapy (Heath et al., 2017; Betzalel & Shechtman, 2017; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Wang et al., 2015) so that teachers may deliver instruction with minimal distractions as well as encourage pro-social behaviors (Elley, 2014; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Montgomery & Maunders, 2015; Nguyen, Lyons, Gelfer, Leytham, Nelson, Krasch, D., & O'Hara, 2016; ; Tijms et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2015).

Bibliotherapy and Math Students

For countless students in elementary to post-secondary learning environments, the content area of mathematics has been a source of angst (Furmer, 2017; Kulkin, 2016; Wilson & Raven, 2014). Bibliotherapy has been touted as a support for students as they encounter math education (Furmer, 2017; Kulkin 2016; Ogbeide & Adomeh, 2019). Some students simply view math as an insurmountable obstacle that cannot be overcome. Moreover, even those who have been endowed with innate mathematical acumen also often suffer because there are those who seek to stereotype the aforementioned as “nerds” or “geeks.” Hence, the mere notion of being mathematically gifted now has become stigmatized (Furmer, 2017). Students who are uncomfortable with their mathematical prowess will oftentimes seek to minimize or “dumb-

down” their abilities in an effort to be socially acceptable by their peers. This phenomenon could possibly cause some emotional distress and serve to negatively impact a child’s level of achievement. Whatever the case may be, in order for students to approach mathematics in both a sociologically and psychologically healthy manner, there is great need for intervention (Furmer, 2017). Bibliotherapy has been used in an effort to provide such support to those who are either struggling (Kulkin, 2016; Wilson & Raven, 2014) or gifted math students (Furmer, 2017). Children's and adolescent literature has now been accepted strategy for providing meaningful mathematics instruction. In the case of mathematics, stories are implemented to make the mathematics concepts relevant and accessible for students. They are also used to allow students to explore the emotions that are associated with math. Furthermore, bibliotherapy is also used to provide support for those who may be frustrated with being bullied for math giftedness or anxiety (Furmer, 2017).

In order for students to become comfortable and confident in their approaches to math, there must be opportunities to reflect upon how they are feeling about the content area (Furmer 2017; Kulkin, 2016; Wilson & Raven, 2014). It is imperative that teachers veer away from merely teaching the content without allowing students to explore the emotions that are associated with it (Furmer, 2017; Kulkin, 2016; Wilson & Raven, 2014). Hence, it is also essential that math instructors be equipped with the tools that will enable them to meet those needs of their students (Furmer, 2017; Kulkin, 2016). They should be able to effectively engage bibliotherapy in order to prevent students from failing to meet their full potential as a result of peer pressure.

Socio-Emotional Support for Gifted Black Girls

It is apparent that no single piece of literature can capture the essence and lived experiences of a cultural group; nevertheless, the integration of bibliotherapy for gifted Black

girls may be quite beneficial (Ford, Walters, Byrd, & Harris, 2019). Bibliotherapy can be used to assist Black girls in developing self-esteem and positive self-efficacy. When literature is examined that supports one's ability and course of action especially in a culturally responsive framework, it may serve as the impetus for pursuing excellence and believing that success is attainable (Ford et al., 2019). The promotion of racial identity and self-esteem is especially vital in modern society as the gifted Black female has seemingly become merely a footnote in the classroom (Anderson & Martin, 2014; Evans-Winter, 2018; Ford et al., 2019). Bibliotherapy affords Black girls the needed support to persevere in the midst of negative peer pressure to underperform as a means of cultural identity and the threat of social isolation (Ford et al., 2019).

Black girls face a plethora of challenges as they internalize and accept the label of "gifted" (Anderson & Martin, 2018). These gifted Black females grapple with the notion of perfectionism. They may experience the overwhelming need to consistently perform at a level of perfection at all times. This type of rumination may clearly engender angst. First, there is the notion that blacks and females, in general, (Broome, 2017) have been perpetually underrepresented in gifted programs and are viewed as intellectually and socially inferior to the white male (Anderson & Martin, 2018; Evans-Winters, 2014; J.L Young , J.R. Young, & Ford, 2017). Hence, the Black female may wrestle with the idea that her intellectual capabilities are always under scrutiny which at times has even caused some to veer away from advanced placement or accelerated academic programs due to the fear of failure (Anderson & Martin, 2018). This demographic is not only critiqued by those who represent diverse racial or ethnic groups, the gifted Black female may also feel unsupported because educators, in general, may view them as self-sufficient and resilient (Anderson & Martin, 2018). In other words, even educators may be desensitized to the authentic needs of gifted students, unable to recognize that

these students still have deficits. Perhaps a student is highly gifted in math; however, this does not automatically or intrinsically negate the fact that perhaps this student struggles with language arts or vice versa. Moreover, any type of misappropriated response by teachers merely serves to further perpetuate stereotypes and the notion of Black girl perfectionism. It is imperative that general and gifted education practitioners pay attention to gifted Black girls (Ford et al., 2019; Young et al., 2017) by cultivating safe academic contexts that enable students to thrive, take risks, develop a positive self-concept, and increase their self-efficacy (Anderson & Martin, 2018; Evans-Winters, 2014; Ford et al., 2019; Young et al., 2017).

Alcoholism and Bibliotherapy

Many young people are forced to deal with alcoholism as they are exposed to this issue because of an addicted parent (*National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 2012). Even though there is no evidence of emotional problems being a byproduct of the exposure to addicted parents, it should be noted that these children could be at greater risk for depression (Haverfield & Theiss, 2015; Lacy, 2015; Tinnfält, Fröding, & Larsson, 2018), cognitive issues, parental abuse, and anxiety disorders (Lacy, 2015). In addition, both young and adult children of alcoholics tend to be stigmatized (Haverfield & Theiss, 2015) which also leads these victims to practice avoidance behaviors whereby they tend to pretend as if this conundrum is non-existent for the sake of coping (Tinnfält et al., 2018) or avoiding ridicule (Haverfield & Theiss, 2015). Moreover, they are also four times as likely to develop alcohol addiction as well in their adult lives (*National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 2012). Upon consideration of these bleak observations, it is apparent that there is a dire need for intervention for children of alcoholic parents (Lacy, 2015; Tinnfält et al., 2018). Moreover, it seems obvious that there would be the composition of various literary works that would address these issues for young people.

However, unfortunately, most novels depicting children of alcoholics were either literary works meant for adult readers or informational texts written from a didactic perspective with the purpose of educating children and adolescents about the hazards of alcohol use (Lacy, 2015). Much of American contemporary literature on the topic of alcoholism has been primarily marketed toward adult audiences and written by licensed practitioners and academicians rather than fiction writers. Hence, these discourses are devoid of complex, well-developed and believable characters that would appeal to the young reader (Lacy 2015). Literature that is engaging may be used as bibliotherapy for young people coping with alcoholic parents (Lacy, 2015).

One of the primary elements of literature that would serve to provide intervention for the reader is humor (Lacy, 2015). Humor allows the reader to mitigate fear and anxiety and foster positive emotions. Authors Twain, Paulsen, Alexie, and Robbins all invoke humor in their storytelling. These authors all masterfully engage a light-hearted tone in order to present and confront very challenging subject matters. Moreover, their protagonists all offer a variety of responses to their difficulties which also allows for the reader to identify with these characters, which, in turn, may empower the reader to embrace new coping strategies (Lacy, 2015). Even though children of alcoholics, as children, may feel powerless in terms of changing their current situation, they may begin to experience hope for the future.

Bibliotherapy has also been associated with having a positive impact on dealing with addiction to alcohol whereby heavy drinking days and frequency of drinking is greatly reduced (Connors, Walitzer, Prince, & Kubiak, 2017; Gonzalez & Dulin, 2015). Patients who are seeking to overcome certain addictions may even view bibliotherapy as a cost-effective method that also empowers the recipient to feel as if he or she is taking an active role in rehabilitation which may

devoid of the pervasive stigmatization of conventional intervention (Cannon, 2018).

Interestingly, within the scope of the use of bibliotherapy for the treatment of addiction, patients relate to a variety of textual genres in different ways (Cannon, 2018; Rus-Makovec, Furlan, & Smolej, 2015). For instance, some patients may respond to fiction without any type of identification or cathartic response because perhaps the narrative may conjure up feelings of despair or regret, simply reminding the patient of his current state of struggle. On the other hand, one may view a fictional text with which he can identify as a source of reflection and healing. The latter may either identify with a character or perhaps rewrite the story as a source of transformational closure. Moreover, some patients simply prefer self-help informational texts that address the addiction issues in a straightforward, didactic manner (Cannon, 2018).

The act of becoming acquainted with literary texts and engaging in the reflection that is triggered by them is a way of reviving the higher cognitive functions—a more spiritual and transcendent facet of the patients (Cannon, 2018; Lacy, 2015; Rus-Makove et al., 2015). It must also be noted that there are several variables that come into play when it comes to the impact of bibliotherapy on those who are dealing with alcoholism. The demographic, social, cultural and health circumstances, as well as reading habits, may serve as predictors of the respondents (Rus-Makove et al., 2015). Moreover, the genre and the connotations of how the alcoholism is presented textually were other components that impacted the nature of the bibliotherapy intervention. In general, the results showed a more positive response from educated participants who possessed established reading habits (Rus-Makove et al., 2015). On the contrary, the participants manifested a highly negative response to the literature when alcohol consumption was presented with a positive slant (Rus-Makove et al., 2015). Hence, even short passages from

literary works, appropriately and masterfully differentiated, served to trigger or reinforce a spiritual response that was self-reflective, confessional, contemplative and emotionally colored.

Social Acceptance of Children with Disabilities

The inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms serves not only as a way to boost academic and social development for those with disabilities, but also for children who are developing in the typical manner (McGrail & Rieger, 2016). Various types of communities are increasingly becoming more diverse and require that individuals recognize the value of acceptance when it comes to personal differences (Gilmore & Howard, 2016; Kingsley, 2017; McGrail & Rieger, 2016). Hence, in reference to the classroom setting, variegated perspectives and abilities bolster empathy, creativity, and understanding amongst all learners (McGrail & Rieger, 2016; Mehdizadeh, & Khosravi, 2018). Furthermore, inclusive classrooms ensure that all children have the right to a quality education which is not necessarily the case in separate facilities. Global best practices highlight the notion of a strength-based rather than deficit-based paradigm in reference to those with disabilities. As more districts are adopting the inclusive classroom model, it stands to reason that the general education population would need support in relating the students who learn differently (Gilmore & Howard, 2016; Kingsley, 2017; Łaba-Hornecka, 2017). McGrail & Rieger, 2016).

As bibliotherapy has been attributed to the cultivation of healthy socio-emotional development (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016), it is specifically linked to fostering empathy (Gilmore & Howard, 2016; McGrail & Rieger, 2016; McNicol, 2017; Mehdizadeh, & Khosravi, 2018) and acceptance of the learning disabled (Gilmore & Howard, 2016; Kingsley, 2017; McGrail & Rieger, 2016). Unfortunately, many young people through social conditioning have developed an unhealthy fear of the learning

disabled (Kingsley, 2017) viewing them as deviants. Nevertheless, one particular genre of literature that has been associated with this type of intervention is the comic book (McGrail & Rieger, 2016; McNicol, 2017). The comic book not only offers humor, but also both male and female as heroic protagonists (McGrail & Rieger, 2016). Comics also provide both visual and linguistic facets (McGrail & Rieger, 2016; McNicol, 2017). Moreover, the simplistic nature of the language appeals to students with or without disabilities. In addition, the characters are presented in a humoristic manner which allows all readers to feel less intimidated or uncomfortable with diversity (McGrail & Rieger, 2016). As teachers increase all student participation and comprehension, inclusion and acceptance are the natural byproducts (McGrail & Rieger, 2016). Teachers also use bibliotherapy as a means of normalizing the issue, analyzing the characters, and affording students with disabilities the platform to contribute to the conversation and assisting in providing healthy perceptions of learning differences (Kingsley, 2017; McGrail & Rieger, 2016; Mehdizadeh, & Khosravi, 2018).

Treating Eating Disorders with Self-Help Books

Eating disorders are disabling and negatively impact quality of life (Taylor, Ruzek, Fitzsimmons-Craft, Graham & Balantekin, 2018). They are also comorbid with other issues and follow a chronic course (Taylor et al., 2018). Two of the most common types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, which is reflected in one's inability to eat which usually results in dangerously low body weight and malnutrition; and bulimia, which could be considered as binge-eating. Both of these disorders are quite cumbersome and the former may even result in death.

As books have been commonly prescribed for the treatment of a host of emotional and mental disorders (Canty, 2017; DeVries et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2015; Popa & Porumba, 2017;

& Yuan et al., 2018), eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia certainly fall under this particular category (Troscianko, 2018). Bibliotherapy provides an intervention that can be cost effective and easily accessible (Taylor et al., 2018). As books are introduced to assist in minimizing and even eradicating eating disorders, both the approach and genre selection seems to be quite relevant (Troscianko, 2018). While it has been held that the process of bibliotherapy entails the three phases of identification, catharsis and insight (Elsenman & Harper, 2016), there are those who have suffered from eating disorders who have found certain types of literature to be detrimental, not beneficial. Surprisingly, fiction about the disorders was perceived by some as lowering morale, self-esteem, perceptions regarding body image and exercise habits (Troscianko, 2018).

Sleep Therapy

Bibliotherapy has been used as an intervention for those who suffer from sleep disorders such as insomnia (Kaldo, Ramnerö, & Jernelöv, 2015) and nighttime fears (Lewis et al., 2015; Rafihi-Ferreira, Silvaes, Asbahr, & Ollendick, 2018). It must be noted that sleep disorders are generally classified as a form of anxiety which stems from a psychological construct. Treatment for these types of disorders may implement creative bibliotherapy, which reflects literary texts, or cognitive bibliotherapy, which generally assumes the form of self-help or informational books. Even though bibliotherapy is deemed as an effective treatment for sleep disorders, one of the major components that positively impact results is the presence of a therapist (Kaldo, Ramnerö, & Jernelöv, 2015) or guide (Lewis et al., 2015).

In the case of insomnia involving adults, the patients seem to engage on a much deeper level when there is a therapist who is involved in the process. Perhaps this type of involvement supports the notion of the significance of positive interaction as well as accountability (Kaldo,

Ramnerö, & Jernelöv, 2015). In the case of young children, bibliotherapy was useful in decreasing separation anxiety (Lewis et al., 2015; Rafihi-Ferreira et al., 2018) whereby young toddlers were uncomfortable with sleeping alone when they had previously been in the presence of parents or a parent at night. In addition, fear of the dark was also diminished after the treatment (Lewis et al., 2015; Rafihi-Ferreira et al., 2018). Nevertheless, of course, young children who engaged in bibliotherapy were unable to read; hence, a parent read creative bibliotherapy texts which addressed the nighttime fears to their children. Once again, there is the presence of a mediator of sorts in which the human instrument facilitates the intervention. Moreover, a therapist (Kaldo, Ramnerö, & Jernelöv, 2015) or parent (Lewis et al., 2015) is likely to be an individual that is quite trustworthy in the eyes of the recipients of the treatment.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Bibliotherapeutic Intervention

The name of obsessive-compulsive disorder or (OCD) originates from the symptoms of the disease (Kropotov, 2016). This disorder is a form of anxiety whereby the sufferer has an overwhelming compulsion to repeat behaviors in an effort to defuse the angst that is associated with obsessive thoughts (Kropotov, 2016). These repetitious behaviors may include hand-washing, checking locked doors, hoarding, obsessing, and cleaning. These behaviors are intrusive and inappropriate. Moreover, they may be a source of great and anxiety or distress as the actions of the sufferer dictates a level of rigidity and rules. The cause of OCD is unknown, but may be the byproduct of genetic, environmental, and neurodevelopmental factors (Kropotov, 2016).

Bibliotherapy in the form of self-help books are associated with mitigating adult (Dèttore, Pozza, & Andersson, 2015; Moritz, Hauschildt, Murray, Pedersen, Krausz, & Jelinek, 2018 and juvenile (Krebs & Turner, 2019) obsessive compulsive behaviors especially in conjunction with

other forms of therapy such as metacognitive which addresses the notion of thinking about one's thinking (Moritz et al., 2018). It is also considered very accessible to those who are classified as low or middle income because it is relatively inexpensive (Moritz et al., 2018; Wootton et al., 2018). Moreover, even when a therapist is not available, self-help texts may offer low intensity treatment (Krebs & Turner, 2019; Wootton et al., 2018) even though in some cases, there is the need for follow-up and continued support in order to maintain positive impact of the intervention (Dèttore et al., 2015). Furthermore, bibliotherapy in conjunction with cognitive behavioral therapy (Dèttore et al., 2015; Krebs & Turner, 2019; Wootton et al., 2018) has not only been effective in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorders, but it should also be noted that those who have been treated with the intervention have expressed satisfaction with the treatment itself (Dèttore et al., 2015; Moritz et al., 2018).

The Mean Girl Syndrome

Initially, bullying had been identified as a male-oriented behavior. Nevertheless, in recent years, bullying among girls has become both prevalent and pervasive (Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Ewaldsson & Svahn, 2017; Gholson & Martin, 2014; Sanders, 2015; Xi, Owens, & Feng, 2016). Moreover, this particular phenomenon has become so widespread that females who exhibit social aggression have been coined *mean girls* (Artz, Kassi, & Moldenhauer, 2013; Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Ealdsson & Svahn, 2017; Gholson & Martin, 2014; Morawitz, Lewallen, & Miller, 2016; Partridge & Knapp, 2016; Sanders, 2015).

Bethune and Gonick (2017) described the concept of mean girls as being “tied to a discursive legacy of ideas shaping and constructing our understandings of femininity, girlhood, and women's relationships to each other. There are political implications of these regulatory discourses for girls, for the project of feminism, and for educational policy” (p.400). Hollywood

and the entertainment industry at large perhaps predicted or perpetuated this syndrome in works such as *Gossip Girl*, *DeGrassi*, *Mean Girls*, and *Pretty Little Liars*. In these dramatizations, girls vie for popularity stakes and the attention of the opposite sex. In essence, female peers are not embraced as trustworthy individuals, but rather perpetual rivals (Sanders, 2015). Whether art was imitating life or vice versa, it is apparent that this phenomenon has become quite a conundrum in society at large and particularly in academic settings.

Girls tend to be socialized in a manner that fosters a great deal of emphasis on popularity and peer acceptance (Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Evaldsson & Svahn, 2017; Gholson & Martin, 2014). There also seems to be some key sociological factors involved in the mean girl syndrome. For the most part, girls have been conditioned to believe that they are less powerful than their male peers, they must establish themselves as domineering, and that they must vie for the attention of the opposite sex (Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Evaldsson & Svahn, 2017; Gholson & Martin, 2014). Hence, a prolific, mean girl would do whatever it takes to establish and maintain her position of dominance while subordinating others. This act of subordination or subjugation manifests itself in behaviors such as name-calling, berating, gossiping, and sometimes physical aggression. Even though females are viewed as less physically aggressive than males (Forsberg, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2018), many girls and even women have felt the need to exert social aggression to mark territory as males have originally been known to do with the use of physical force.

The adolescent female is particularly susceptible to the mean girl syndrome. Forsberg (2017) claimed that “bullying was constructed as a gendered phenomenon where normative identity constructions emerge and affects the girls’ social relationships in school and perspectives on bullying. The struggle to fit in to these identity constructions can affect whether girls report or

define incidents as bullying or engage in bullying” (p. 43). Partridge and Knapp (2016) proposed that anytime females are grouped together, there is bound to be conflict and drama because of the various psycho-social constructs that exist among females. During the adolescent stages of development, a child is grappling with issues of peer relationality and independence from parental guidance. At this stage of life, young people begin to question and challenge the values that had been imparted to them in their formative years. Blakemore and Mills (2014) defined “adolescence as the period between the onset of puberty and the achievement of relative self-sufficiency” (p.187) Moreover, “the beginning of adolescence is largely defined by a biological event, whereas the end of adolescence is often defined socially” (Blakemore & Mills, 2014, p.187).

Bibliotherapy and the Human Instrument

While Rosenblatt (1969) seemingly implied that the act of reading alone is sufficient to elicit and confirm the transaction between the reader and the text, this investigation clearly supports the notion that an external human instrument is a monumental factor in this interface especially if the end goal is some form of an epiphanous transformation. Within the scope of this theory of reading, it is also paramount that the reader be questioned either from an external source to cultivate a deeply meaningful interpretation and internalization of the text. Otherwise, the transaction merely remains an event that may not necessarily be impactful for future reference or analysis.

Whether in a clinical or developmental setting, the presence of a guide, facilitator or navigator of sorts seems to be an integral and crucial component of the experience. In Sheckman and Tutian’s (2016) study, the teachers served as the bibliotherapists for students with aggressive behavior. The teachers engaged in teacher training sessions regarding how to build relationship

with children prior to conducting the bibliotherapy sessions. Each session would commence with an icebreaker before reading and discussing the text. One of the findings of this investigation was that there was a positive correlation between teacher empathy and the desired outcomes in students. Similarly, in the previously mentioned study conducted by Lewis et al. (2015), which involved children who experienced severe phobias of the dark and fear of sleeping alone, it is highly probable that the success of the bibliotherapy intervention was also based on the fact that the mother of each child conducted the reading sessions and subsequent activities that followed. The children had already developed strong relationships of trust with the ones who would conduct the intervention. Lastly, the investigation mentioned earlier about the female correctional facility in Nigeria also supports the idea that the human element in bibliotherapy is vital. Adeyeye and Oyewusi (2017) created an environment of support for the young ladies who were residents of a correctional facility. The teachers were encouraged to create a positive climate of acceptance and understanding. Moreover, the girls engaged in a focus group which added an additional element of peer support to the equation.

It seems that bibliotherapy is transformative when the facilitator establishes healthy rapport with those who will be the recipients of the intervention. It is important for individuals to feel comfortable in order to for them to demonstrate transparency about those thoughts, misgivings, emotions, analyses, and experiences that Rosenblatt (1969) deemed are always present in the reading transaction. The bibliotherapist is, in essence, the human instrument and the catalyst of change. Whether the bibliotherapist is a counselor, a parent, a teacher, or licensed professional, the establishment of trust between the supporter and the recipient is paramount.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Bibliotherapy

Throughout this study, it is apparent that there is indeed a connection between cognitive behavior therapy or CBT and bibliotherapy. Cognitive behavior therapy has its roots in psychoanalysis which addresses the manner in which therapists analyze a patient's thoughts (Cluley & Desmond, 2015) in order to determine why he or she is dealing with psychological, emotional, and /or social issues. CBT expounds upon this premise in that it seeks to not only analyze these troubling thoughts, but also connect these thoughts to behaviors while simultaneously providing an avenue to alter thought patterns (Pontoski-Taylor, Cunningham, Schultz, Jager-Hyman, Sposato, Evans, Beck, & Creed, 2016). As thought patterns are altered, positive behavior modification should be the outcome.

CBT is a structured time-limited treatment that focuses on building skills to solve the problems that occur in the lives of individuals (Pontoski-Taylor et al., 2016). In essence, cognitive theory is founded upon the idea that an individual's interpretation of a given situation engenders certain emotions and behaviors. Moreover, an inaccurate or skewed interpretation may produce undesirable actions. CBT providers use cognitive and behavioral strategies in order to assist patients in analyzing their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Once this analysis transpires, the provider presents protocols that will assist the struggling individual in leading a more productive and fulfilling life (Pontoski-Taylor et al., 2016).

As this description of CBT is delineated, the juxtaposition of this form of therapy with bibliotherapy is quite salient. As bibliotherapy has its foundation in Rosenblatt's (1969) previously discussed transactional theory of reading, this theory along with the components of CBT and bibliotherapy converge as the elements of emotions, cognition, and behavior are examined in each of the aforementioned. In essence, individuals who have problematic emotions,

cognition, and behavior, may be so inclined with the support of a facilitator or therapist, to interact with a text or (form of therapy) and enable it to begin a healing process that has its origins as an intrinsic entity and finally manifests itself externally through positive behavioral outcomes.

Summary

Within the scope of this literature review, a diversity of themes has emerged. Moreover, there is an overlapping, cross-sectional, intersectional convergence of research. For example, in the segment that deals with elementary children, bibliotherapy is applicable in both a developmental and clinical context. Not only are young children exposed to bibliotherapy as intervention for socially unacceptable and inappropriate behavior, but also in the milieu of coping with emotional distress that accompanies chronic pain, disease and even terminal diagnoses. Similarly, the idea of clinical and developmental bibliotherapy is also applicable in the cases of adolescents and adults as well.

Furthermore, the construct of adolescence intersects with this notion of coming to terms with issues such as impending adulthood, self-esteem, and peer acceptance. Hence, throughout this stage of life, this demographic is quite likely to grapple with socio-emotional challenges while navigating through the nuances of adolescence. Adolescence may be viewed as an unusually turbulent segment of an individual's life. In addition, this stage of life oftentimes makes young people more susceptible to experiencing bullying whether assuming the role of bully, victim, or bystanders. Furthermore, girls, in particular who may view themselves as marginalized and powerless in a society whereby males are deemed possessing more power, authority, and influence than their female counterparts, tend to wrestle even more throughout the stages of adolescent development.

The literature even presents yet another outgrowth regarding the notion of females and education especially as it relates to African American gifted students. As it has been stated before, as females have been categorized or deemed as having less power than their male contemporaries, the Black female seeks to overcome additional barriers aside from the gender identification. There are sociological and cultural identifiers that impact how Black gifted girls are viewed. In addition, Black gifted females also struggle to embrace a sense of self-worth and the external expectations that have been superimposed upon them. Hence, bibliotherapy is viewed as one avenue that would serve to meet these idiosyncratic needs of this demographic.

Another cross-sectional aspect of bibliotherapy has lent itself to the intervention of students as they encounter the content area of math. The students may be male, female, Black, white, American or African. In addition, the math student may be categorized as elementary or secondary. The literature suggests that there is a dire need to address both math anxiety and math giftedness. Regardless of whether a student identifies with the struggling with or mastering mathematical concepts, studies have suggested that practically all math students require support. Bibliotherapy could provide the support needed to address the emotional responses to math, enabling students to come to terms with how the feelings that are associated with this oftentimes elusive content area. Furthermore, another intersection is derived as the gifted Black girls are often overlooked in programs that promote mathematics, science, and STEM careers.

As the literature has indicated, bibliotherapy has also been linked to providing support for the alcoholic and the children of alcoholic children. Those who are suffering from the addiction have found solace in the pages of literature that has been appropriated for the reader based on his or her background and the connotation surrounding the presentation of the phenomenon. In addition, the children of alcoholics have found that literature that is engaging and humorous may

allow its readers to experience hope for brighter future and deal with the stigmas attached to the addictive behaviors of their parents.

There is yet another commonality within the literature as bibliotherapy relates to young people and the classroom setting. As society has become increasingly supportive of diversity and inclusiveness, this trend is quite prevalent in academia. Students with disabilities are now encouraged to be exposed to the level of academic rigor that is afforded those who are placed in general education classrooms. As young people oftentimes succumb to the proverbial peer pressure and the angst of relating to those who are viewed as less powerful or different from them, it is paramount that support is offered so that a healthy social environment is promoted. Hence, bibliotherapy is useful in fostering empathy which could likely maximize acceptance and minimize bullying behaviors.

Another issue that tends to find its way in the lives of young people and females, in particular, is the notion of the eating disorder. As established earlier in this study, females not only grapple with adolescence from the standpoint of embracing a healthy self-perception while in the throes of peer pressure, the concept of healthy body image also poses a problem for many young women. Once again, bibliotherapy has been offered as an intervention for this emotional disorder. The research does not necessarily support identification with a character as therapeutic; it does however suggest that with the guidance of a coach and the discriminate assignment of texts, self-help books may serve to mitigate eating disorders.

The relationship between bibliotherapy and young children surfaces yet again. Not only is this intervention beneficial in the classroom in reference to the mitigation of bullying behaviors and the promulgation of prosocial behaviors, it is also useful in treating nighttime fears in children under the age of four. When children are exposed to literature that addresses their

anxieties regarding fear of the dark and separation from parents at bedtime, the emotional distress is greatly diminished.

Bibliotherapy has been used in a clinical context to assist both children and adults in another specific form of anxiety. It has been helpful in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorders especially in relation to those cases whereby the condition is not severe. As OCD has been oftentimes treated with cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), bibliotherapy provides an additional support for CBT as well as presents an exclusively independent self-help option for those sufferers who do not have access or the finances that would allow them to leverage the former.

The empirical studies on the topic of bibliotherapy are extensive. First, the topic is associated with prosocial behavior both in elementary and secondary classrooms. In addition, it has been used to treat a host of psychological and socio-emotional disorders in both clinical and developmental settings. For instance, bibliotherapy has been used as treatment for anxiety, depression, and grief in clinical settings. Moreover, bibliotherapy has been linked to the diminution of aggressive behaviors amongst adolescents in developmental settings. Lastly, it has been implemented in an effort to inculcate empathy and values in young children.

It must also be noted that most literature involves participants who are primarily Caucasian or Latino young people from either middle class or rural communities. In other cases, the participants are from territories outside of the United States such as Israel, Sweden, and Nigeria. Lastly, most empirical studies surrounding this problem do not adequately address bibliotherapy as a viable intervention particularly in the cases of female social aggression with respect to African American adolescents. In the case of African American girls, the studies

primarily address how academic needs can be supported. It also highlights how African American gifted females may find bibliotherapy beneficial.

Bibliotherapy will perhaps easily lend itself to the context of group sessions with girls. Girls tend to be more communicative than boys. As girls are seemingly becoming more socially aggressive, intervention is crucial. In the cases of adolescent girls who are essentially in the process of coming to terms with self-image, autonomy, and relationships (Blakemore & Mills, 2014); it is paramount that the issue of how females interrelate be addressed so that these young ladies are afforded the opportunity to become socio-emotionally healthy adults. There is indeed research that suggests that bibliotherapy is a viable intervention for bullying behaviors particularly among Caucasian, Asian, and Latino youth (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; De Wet, 2017; Heath, 2017; Shem, 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Wang et al., 2015). However, the research is sparse in reference to this issue specifically in urban schools involving African American, adolescent girls.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Qualitative research, in general, explores how participants experience a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). It does not provide empirical evidence supporting causal or correlational instances or relationships. This type of research involves inductive reasoning whereby generalizations are established based upon the themes that emerge from data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). More specifically for this investigation, the type of qualitative research design that was selected was the collective case study. The collective case study paradigm provided for the study of one phenomenon in multiple settings or multiple programs or sessions in a single site (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). For this type of study, the latter was implemented. A single academic setting was utilized; however, there was three separate small groups that engaged in the bibliotherapy program. Moreover, the case study is characterized as “instrumental” because it was developed from the need to explore a particular issue, rather than “intrinsic” which arises out of necessity (Stake, 1995).

The Case Study

The case study is one of the designs that is characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). The case study in accordance with the nature of qualitative research lends itself to an in-depth study of any specific case. Hence, it is reflective of one of the various categories of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). The case study can be loosely defined as the close examination or scrutiny of people or programs (Stake, 1995). The case study is to provide a patient, reflective, non-interventional, and empathic approach (Stake, 1995) to interpreting how people and/or programs function. In the case study, the researcher is interested in the stories that shape the uniqueness of each case. The case could be identified as a child, a classroom of young children, or the professionals that study the conditions surrounding

childhood (Stake, 1995). In essence, the case is “a specific, a complex, functioning thing” (Stake, 1995, p.2). The case is a comprehensive and multi-faceted system in that it carries with it layers of constructs. In the case with any system, there is a multitude of moving parts and levers that emerge within the milieu of the mere functioning of that system. Moreover, whenever there is humanity involved, there are sure to be unpredictable and interesting incidents and revelations.

Stake (1995) distinguished between the intrinsic and instrumental case studies. The intrinsic case study represents a study that arises out of the necessity to find meaning in a particular situation. For instance, as a teacher seeks to learn about a student who is struggling or when an administrator finds the need to evaluate a program (Stake, 1995), these cases are pursued out of obligation; not the need to learn about other cases or a general problem. The instrumental case study reflects an inquiry that arises out of the desire to gain an understanding and insight into a particular case (Stake, 1995). This type is inclusive of a research question and perhaps the presence of puzzlement. Furthermore, a subcategory of the instrumental case study may be the collective case study whereby more than one context or participant is included. A collective case study may also be designed for the sake of representation. However, the primary focus of the case study is the maximization of what is learned keeping in mind that the objective is particularization, not generalization (Stake, 1995). The qualitative researcher who implements the case study design must be meticulous in his or her ability to differentiate between the “issue” and the “case.” Stake (1995) sets forth the idea that with the instrumental case study, the case plays a dominant role; whereas, with the intrinsic case study, the issue takes preeminence. There will be issues that arise within the milieu of the instrumental case; nevertheless, the researcher must be cognizant of the purpose and objective of the investigation.

Stake (1995) highlighted the primary distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research. The purpose of the research questions for qualitative research has a totally different end in mind than that of quantitative research. The quantitative researcher pursues the relationship between variables (Stake, 1995); however, the qualitative researcher seeks to describe or explain patterns within relationships (Stake, 1995). Moreover, quantitative researchers seek to find the answers as to what interventions are linked to outcomes; qualitative researchers provide robust descriptive interpretations of the experiences of the participants surrounding a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995).

Lastly, Stake (1995) outlined the various components of suitable data collection for the case study design. First, the typical types of data for the case study are the interview, field notes, and document review. In addition, the data should be triangulated; in essence, there should be multiple forms of data to ensure credibility (Stake, 1995). Moreover, the data analysis and interpretation are achieved through the establishment of themes and patterns. The role of the researcher is multi-faceted as he or she serves as teacher, advocate, evaluator, biographer, and interpreter (Stake, 1995). The researcher thoroughly and gingerly studies transcripts or notes from observations and earmarks those repeated patterns, categorizing them into codes that are to be interpreted. The researcher will then report his or her findings in the form of a rich, descriptive format that authentically and objectively reflects the experiences of the participants.

The Appropriate Design

The collective case study was appropriate for this research because it examined the “how” and the “why” of bibliotherapy [program] as an appropriate intervention for female social aggression [people]. Moreover, the case study is usually implemented in the fields of business, social work, medical sciences, and education (Arseven, 2018; Cakmak & Akgun, 2018) and

seeks to explore and describe a phenomenon rather than provide an assessment of it (Arghode, Wang, & Lathan, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). The study is instrumental in nature (Stake, 1995) because the investigation did not arise out of necessity; it is a byproduct of the researcher's inquiry into the inner-workings and nuances of a bibliotherapy program. Moreover, this investigation employed the collective case study model because one program was selected; however, there were multiple cases that illustrated the particulars of that program (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). In accordance with the collective case study model, the research explored bibliotherapy which is identified as the phenomenon or problem of empirical significance in the context of three small groups within a single urban school. Hence, there is the justification for selecting the paradigm of the collective case study; one phenomenon was selected, yet there were three cases that implemented the bibliotherapy program.

Research Questions

Central Question

What characteristics of bibliotherapy contribute to its potential for mitigating female social aggression?

Subquestions

1. What metaphors, examples, or personal scenarios do the participants employ to describe the experience of reading?
2. What type(s) of emotions, memories and/or perceptions do the aggressors describe when they read about mean girls?
3. What words or phrases do the participants use to depict the actions of real-life or fictional mean girls?
4. What value do the participants assign to bibliotherapy as an intervention in their lives?

Setting

Qualitative research required that a setting or site be utilized for the purpose of conducting the investigation. Securing a site entailed gaining the appropriate permission (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For instance, to conduct a study in an academic setting, a district administrator had to be contacted as well as building level leadership. I introduced the purpose of the study (in letter form) and any other pertinent details thereof. I also described what the participants would be required to do as well as if any incentives would be associated with the study. In addition, I strongly conveyed the notion that participants' involvement would be completely voluntary and that they may discontinue their participation at any given time for any reason, or perhaps no reason at all.

The setting for this case study involved three groups within a single urban school that engaged in bibliotherapy as an intervention for socially aggressive girls. I wrote the bibliotherapy modules and facilitated the sessions prior to engaging in the actual research of the case study. The urban school that was selected for the research was called Cadillac Middle School, located in a mid-western region in the United States. The population is comprised of students in the sixth through eighth grades. The academic institution has a population of approximately 400 students. The overall proficiency of all students according to state standards is a meager 14%. The administrative team of Cadillac Middle School consists of a principal and assistant principal. The cultural and disciplinary vision is centered around restorative practices which is founded upon the premise of minimizing suspensions and opting for restoration among staff and students. Hence, this paradigm is in accordance with the notion of bibliotherapy which is also non-punitive, but restorative, therapeutic, and healing in nature. The focus of the study involved only social aggressive girls between the ages of 11-14.

The site was selected based on the notion of convenience. I had access to the site due to a relationship with the assistant superintendent of the school district. The principal of the school was also interested in the impact of bibliotherapy on students and the prospect of continuing this type of program at the school, even perhaps engaging the young males as well. Moreover, the site was also easily accessible because I serve as an administrator of an elementary school within the same district. The selected site represented a school that is densely populated with African American students. Hence, this site easily lent itself to the study of the African American adolescent female.

Participants

The participants for this study were comprised of 11 African American females who had been categorized as socially aggressive. This quantity was selected because research shows that the engagement of at least 11 participants presents sufficient information for a qualitative study (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The sample pool was established based upon recommendations from parents, counselors, educators, and administrators. The girls were between the ages of 11-14 during the period of the study. The girls engaged in bibliotherapy sessions for a six-week period. Each session lasted for one hour and took place once a week. In addition, each session was comprised of small groups of three to five girls. Three modes of data collection were implemented in this study, namely, interviews, a focus group, and letter writing. Eleven girls were involved in the interviews. For the focus group, there was a sample of one girl from each of the three groups. Lastly, 11 girls responded to the bibliotherapy texts by crafting letters to the designated protagonist. In addition, purposeful sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was also utilized in that the study deliberately sought to target only African American socially aggressive girls in a middle school setting who are involved in a bibliotherapy program.

Procedures

The first step was to secure approval from the Institutional Review Board (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research investigation could not be pursued without gaining the approval of the IRB. After IRB approval was issued, I obtained approval and permission from the sites and consent from all participating parties (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this specific study, both consent and assent forms were required. The participants were all be under the age of 18; hence, parents were required to offer consent in conjunction with the participants' offering of assent. The superintendent and school administrators were the contact persons who issued permission for the use of the site.

The process of soliciting participation was first to contact administrators, counselors, teachers, and parents for their recommendations for the study. The criterion for prospective candidates was documented repeated socially aggressive behavior. The bibliotherapy schedule was also highlighted as a prerequisite for participation in the study. Teachers and counselors were asked to consider behavior records and referrals as foundations for submitting names of prospective volunteers. Once the students' names had been entered into the prospective pool of participants, each of the participants and their parents were contacted via email or phone regarding their willingness to participate in the case study. Once enough participants had been secured, I held a virtual meeting with parents and participants to review the facets of the research and the bibliotherapy schedule. Once the bibliotherapy sessions had been completed, I set up schedules for interviews and the focus group session. Then, all participants were asked to submit the letter responses.

Each bibliotherapy session took place on a Friday for one hour during a six-week period. Group A met from 11:00 -12:00 pm, Group B met from 12:00-1:00pm, and Group C met from

1:00-2:00pm. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, each session was held virtually with the use of the Google Meet platform. This schedule was quite convenient because the schools were closed on Fridays due to the COVID-19 deep cleaning protocols. Students worked asynchronously each Friday.

Once the bibliotherapy modules were completed, the interviews were then scheduled. The interviews were held at different times based upon each participant's schedule. Some of them were held virtually, whereas others were conducted on site in a private office. For the most part, each interview was conducted after 2:00pm and lasted for approximately 20 minutes. I had allotted an hour for each interview; however, most of the young ladies were very succinct in their responses. By the time that the bibliotherapy modules were completed, some of the students opted to attend school on site as the school district was offering hybrid learning models.

The next mode of data collection was the focus group which was comprised of three participants representing the different bibliotherapy groups. The focus group took place in a virtual setting and lasted for approximately 30 minutes. Each participant was given the opportunity to answer each focus question and/or connect to the thoughts or sentiments of another participant.

The final phase of the data collection process was the letter writing. Students were contacted via email regarding this submission. Some of them were comfortable with creating a document and either sharing or emailing it to me. Others preferred to hand-write the letter. In the cases of the latter, I met the students at their school to pick up the documents.

The Researcher's Role

I recognize that I am indeed the human instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in this study. In the role of the researcher, I may be viewed as teacher, advocate,

evaluator, biographer, and interpreter (Stake, 1995). In essence, as the primary custodian, designer, and driver of the research, I am not only held responsible for ensuring that the objective of the research is realized, but that I also maintain the integrity of the researcher's role. I am the instrument that chooses data collection methods, the design of the study, participants, and the setting. Even though I am compelled to engage in bracketing or *epoche* whereby I separate myself from my biases and preconceived notions (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I recognize that it is impossible to fully disengage myself from the assumptions and values that have become a part of my psychological and ideological profile. I understand that as an urban educator, I have had experiences with uncooperative and virtually illiterate students. I must not allow the preconceived notions regarding how students have held exceptionally low regard for literacy and self-discipline to cloud my judgment throughout this investigation. I am committed to bracketing myself to the absolute best of my ability. I also affirm that I have no authority or influence over the participants. I have had no contact with the young ladies prior to the research study. I have not served as their teacher, administrator, or any other capacity as a person of influence.

I have had some experience with bibliotherapy because I had been involved in a mentoring program a couple of years prior to my interest in this phenomenon as a dissertation topic. I wholeheartedly believe that bibliotherapy is an intervention that is beneficial from an academic and socio-emotional perspective. In other words, bibliotherapy promotes literacy and prosocial behavior. I am also quite vested in this research because I am also the designer and creator of this bibliotherapy program that was customized to meet the needs of African American adolescent females.

I am cognizant that I must not skew interview questions to lead participants to a desired outcome. Moreover, I endeavored to present myself with neutrality and impartiality. I also

ensured that the participants were aware that their involvement in this investigation was completely voluntary, and that participation may be discontinued at any given time for any reason without any obligatory rationale or explanation. In addition, regarding data analysis, I was careful to remove my passion for this topic from what the data may reveal. In essence, I charged myself with the task of interpreting the data without skewing it with my hopeful expectations.

Data Collection

Research is prohibited without the approval of the Institutional Review Board (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once this approval was established, I obtained approval and permission from the sites and consent from all participating parties (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since participants for this study were all under the age of 18, parents offered consent in conjunction with the children's offering of assent. The superintendent and school administrators were also contacted for permission for the use of the site.

The pool of students for the study was recommended by faculty, counselors, administrators, and parents. These students were candidates for intervention due to repeated socially aggressive behavior. Behavior records and referrals were considered when submitting names for the prospective sample. Once the students' names had been entered into the pool of participants, each of the participants and their parents were contacted via phone or email regarding their willingness to participate in the case study. Parents and participants were notified that each participant will be required to engage in a six-week bibliotherapy as a major facet of the study. Once all participants had been secured, the researcher held a virtual meeting to review the bibliotherapy schedule and the facets of the research study. Once the bibliotherapy sessions had been completed, I set up schedules for interviews and a focus group meeting. The letter response was the last form of data collection.

Data collection in a qualitative study should entail triangulation, or the use of multiple modes of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pourtoussi, Ghanizadeh, & Mousavi, 2018; Stake, 1995) for the purpose of adding credence to the study. For this case study, interviews, a focus group, and letter writing analysis were implemented. The responses from interviews and focus group was digitally recorded with the use of two devices. The documents for the analysis were comprised of letters written to fictional characters. The interviews and focus group responses were transcribed verbatim.

Interviews

Interviews are considered one the major modes of data collection for the case study design of qualitative research (Arseven, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dowling, Lloyd, & Suchet-Pearson, 2016; Stake, 1995). After the bibliotherapy sessions were completed. The next step were the interviews. There were 11 participants in the interview process. The purpose of the interviews was to give the researcher the opportunity to get to know the participants and build a mutual capacity for trust. Interviews were conducted with open-ended, semi-structured questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dowling et al., 2016; Oktalia & Drajati, 2018; Stake, 1995). In other words, the questions never yielded a binary response such as “yes” or “no.” The questions were framed in a manner that would require that the respondents present descriptive discourse. Each of the 11 participants were required to answer approximately 12 questions. The questions were customized in a manner that would reveal the nature of the experience of the bibliotherapy module for socially aggressive youth.

The face-to-face interviews were scheduled in advance in order to accommodate the participants' schedules. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some interviews took place for the students who had opted for virtual learning, and others who were in-person students had their

interviews at Cadillac Middle School in a private, enclosed room in the office of the behavior interventionists which served as a familiar and comfortable setting for the participants. Each interview was completed in one session only. Prior to the interviews, the researcher described the procedures and reiterate the purpose of the study and that participation in the study is completely voluntary. Each interview was digitally recorded on two devices and later transcribed verbatim.

Standardized Interview Questions for Bibliotherapy Recipients

1. Introduce yourself and provide any interesting facts that you would like to share about yourself, your family, your personality, school activities, hobbies, and aspirations for the future.
2. What are some of the emotions you feel about being involved with research?
3. What are some of the challenges that you experience being an adolescent?
4. How do most adolescent girls relate to each other?
5. How do African American adolescent girls relate to each other?
6. How do you engage your imagination when you are reading?
7. What are some of the benefits of reading?
8. How would you describe what you feel during the process of reading?
9. What kinds of behavior are exhibited by bullies?
10. What makes females bully each other?
11. What is the difference between how females bully each other as opposed to males?
12. How do you think female bullies feel about what they do to others?
13. How do you feel about female bullies?
14. What advice would you give to a female bully?

Questions one and two serve to build rapport between the interviewer and interviewee (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These inquiries will break the ice and afford the researcher the opportunity to demonstrate concern for the participant as an individual and not just as a mere subject. It is vital that the interviewee feel comfortable in the setting of the investigation so that there will be openness and authenticity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Questions three, four, and five address the issues that encompass adolescence.

Adolescence is oftentimes a challenging stage for young people as they are coming to terms with their identities as well as relationships with authority figures and their peers (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Burckhardt et al., 2017; Dray et al., 2015; Hovland, 2016). Moreover, during adolescence, females particularly fall prey to social aggression (Artz et al., 2013; Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Evaldsson & Svahn, 2017; Gholson & Martin, 2014; Morawitz et al., 2016; Partridge & Knapp, 2016; Sanders, 2015) and other forms of bullying behaviors (Forsberg, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2018). Girls, in particular, engage in social aggression because of how they have been socialized as the inferior gender, yet they find themselves vying for the attention of the opposite sex (Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Evaldsson & Svahn, 2017; Gholson & Martin, 2014).

The next three questions (six, seven, and eight) address the transactional relationship between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1969). These questions allow the participants to express not only how they feel about reading, but also “what” and “how” they feel during the reading process. The theoretical framework suggests that there is an exchange between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1969) that is inevitable due to the nature of humans’ inability to separate themselves from their identities, perceptions, and experiences. Moreover, bibliotherapy also suggests that books may be used as therapy (Bohning, 1981; Crothers, 1916; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950) which

would yield desirable outcomes for those who find it challenging to exhibit prosocial behaviors (Elley, 2014; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Wang et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2016). Hence, these questions assist in capturing the experience of the phenomenon of bibliotherapy which is rooted in the transactional theory of reading (Rosenblatt, 1969).

Question nine deals with bullying. The last five questions (10, 11, 12, 13, & 14) address bullying from the female perspective. These questions allow participants to analyze bullying behavior especially within the context of adolescent females. Bibliotherapy has been used as an intervention for bullying. As the assigned bibliotherapy text addresses social aggression among African American female students, the questions are posed so that the participants will draw upon the text by making some personal connections (Bohning, 1981; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950) and engaging in self-reflection. In essence, within the scope of the stages of bibliotherapy (Bohning, 1981; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950), the reader should be able to internalize the contents of the text and make decisions that would engender positive behavior and attitudes (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016).

Focus Group

The next step in the data collection process was the focus group. The focus group is a small informal group that is usually homogenous whose purpose is to generate emotions, perceptions, and attitudes surrounding a particular phenomenon (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). The focus group is a commonly used mode of data collection for the qualitative research context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; McLaurin-Jones et al., 2017).

A sample of the participants from each of the three bibliotherapy groups was given the

opportunity to share their sentiments in a cohort group setting. There was one focus group comprised of three participants comprised of individuals from the various bibliotherapy groups. The focus group took place after the bibliotherapy six-week session had been concluded. The setting for the focus group was in a virtual setting due to COVID-19 restrictions which provided privacy and a minimal probability of distractions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The group session lasted for approximately 30 minutes which afforded ample time for the engagement of discourse.

I provided at least five questions that governed the discussion for the open forum. At the beginning of the session, I reiterated the purpose of the study and that participation was completely voluntary. I also established the norms of the meeting and encouraged participants to speak freely as they introduced ideas, agreed, disagreed, or added to what had already been spoken. The session was recorded on two devices stationed in different areas of the space (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The responses were transcribed verbatim for the purpose of data analysis.

Standardized Focus Group Questions for Participants

1. What characteristics constitute the “mean girl?”
2. How would you describe what happened to you internally as you read about the mean girls?
3. What are some words or phrases you would use to describe the relationship between you and the text?
4. How would you describe your experience with the bibliotherapy sessions?
5. What impact has the bibliotherapy session had on you as an individual?
6. How do you think bibliotherapy could help “mean girls?”
7. How did bibliotherapy help you deal with some of your emotions toward bullies?

Question one enables the participant to analyze and conceptualize the mean girl (Artz et al., 2013; Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Evaldsson & Svahn, 2017; Gholson & Martin, 2014; Morawitz et al., 2016; Partridge & Knapp, 2016; Sanders, 2015).. The participants themselves had been identified as socially aggressive or mean girls. Hence, these questions are framed so that the participants would be able to not only identify those characteristics of mean girls, but also come to the realization that these features may also be associated with their own behaviors (Bohning, 1981; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950),

Questions two, three, four, and five seek to capture the essence of the visceral and internal experiences of the participants as they read the texts. The purpose of these questions is to move the reader away from merely analyzing the text, directing their attention to the phenomenon of reading itself. Once again, the marriage is established between Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading and the stages of bibliotherapy, namely, identification, catharsis, and insight (Bohning, 1981; Elsenman & Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950). In essence, as the transaction takes place between readers and the texts, the participants are inevitably drawn into the stages of bibliotherapy which could positively impact their attitudes and behavior.

Questions six and seven lead the participant to make a connection between the bibliotherapeutic process and socially aggressive girls. As bibliotherapy has been touted to minimized bullying behaviors (Sectman & Tutian, 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015, these inquiries may lead the participants to examine the behavior of others, and possibly, in turn, recognize themselves as the bullies that they are examining through textual analysis. Lastly, these questions reflect the last stage of bibliotherapy which is insight (Bohning, 1981; Elsenman

& Harper, 2016; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Russell & Shrodes, 1950).

Insight allows for the readers to gain understanding about a phenomenon as they place themselves in the context of the narrative. Subsequently, the insightful participant should then be able to recognize that there are implications for their own behaviors and how they may yield more desirable attitudes and behavior in the future.

I did provide \$25 gift cards to participants at the conclusion of the study. The participants were reminded that participation is indeed voluntary and that they are free to opt out at any given time. I stored all electronic data on a password protected computer. All participants and the site were assigned pseudonyms for the sake of anonymity. Lastly, all data and materials will be stored in a secure location for five years.

Letter Responses

After the interviews and focus group had taken place, the last step was the letter writing and analysis phase of the data collection process. All 11 of the interviewees engaged in the letter responses as well. Document analysis is another prominent common form of data collection for the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). In this study, the documents that were analyzed consisted of letters that were written in response to the text that was assigned to the participants. The assigned text is entitled, *The Skin I'm In* by Sharon G. Flake. It addresses the various issues that are oftentimes encountered by African American adolescent girls. It covers themes such as bullying, colorism, self-esteem, self-image, and the power of words. Each participant was required to write a letter to one of the characters from the text. Each letter either reflected an apology to a bullied character or a letter of encouragement to the bully. Each letter also addressed the prosocial ways to engage in interpersonal relationships.

Data Analysis

The data analysis portion of the study reflected standard qualitative protocols. The processes of coding, organizing themes, representing data, and interpretation were implemented (Arseven, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). This type of processing enabled me to analyze and sort data in such a manner that highlighted repetitive words, statements, and ideas that reflected observable patterns which led to emerging themes. In essence, I implemented inductive to deductive reasoning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1994) in which generalizations were formed once themes and interpretations were established. This process is called *memoing* (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The memos coupled with reflections and summaries over time led to the identification of codes or categories. The codes were then developed into themes. I then interpreted the themes so that propositions were presented. It must be noted that I was looking to identify the common constructs, metaphors, themes, or categories that emerge across all modes of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). Lastly, there was a visual representation of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These findings were presented in the form of a matrix or model.

First, all interviews were recorded on two digital recorders. The responses were transcribed verbatim. I engaged in listening and reviewing the information multiple times. The purpose of repeated reviews was to ensure that I may begin to engage in the coding process of the information. Within this protocol, repeated phrases or ideas were extracted and labeled which allowed me to identify emerging themes that prevailed in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After all themes had been identified, the results of the study were visually represented by a graph.

The focus group was recorded on two digital recorders. All discourse including questions, answers, and commentary were transcribed verbatim. I then listened to and read the transcripts multiple times to delineate any repeated words, phrases, or expressions. Then I categorized or coded the various repeated concepts. These concepts were then analyzed in a manner that highlighted any emerging themes from the study. Once the data was compiled, the results were represented graphically.

Lastly, the letter responses (document analysis) underwent a process that was similar to the one implemented for interviews and focus group responses. The only difference was that the transcriptions were provided by the participants. The participants typed their letter responses. Hence, it was unnecessary for me to provide a transcription as no verbal responses were elicited. Once the written responses were completed, I reviewed the responses multiple times to highlight those ideas and statements that were repeated amongst the respondents thereby employing the same process of memoing, coding, developing themes, interpreting data, and visually representing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018) that was used for the interviews and focus group.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness component of the research process ensured with great probability that the data and the interpretation thereof was credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable. Credibility dealt with the notion that the results of the research represented accurate interpretations. The dependability of a study was similar to reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018) whereby the data was likely to produce similar results after repeated investigations. Confirmability was established when auditors were used in the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly, transferability spoke to the idea that the findings were accurately transmitted between the participants and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I ensured that all

participants had the opportunity to approve of the transcripts and confirm that the information thereof adequately and appropriately represented the participants' sentiments.

Credibility

The credibility was established by triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation served to present multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995) which could leverage more valid findings that cyclically check one another (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pourtoussi et al., 2018). In this case study, there were three modes of data collection. There were interviews, a focus group, and document analysis. As the three forms of data presented consistency in interpretation, the results of the investigation suggest that evidence was what supported the culminating proposition. In addition, another aspect of producing a credible investigation is that I clarified my own bias and engaged in reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly, the I established credibility by member checking or soliciting the feedback of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In other words, the participants were asked to confirm the accuracy of the accounts of the data.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability suggest that the studies can be repeated in different settings and circumstances and produce similar data analysis and interpretation. Auditing was implemented to establish trustworthiness. An external audit entails the use of an outside expert to examine the entire research process and the data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The auditor confirmed that the process is dependable. In addition, dependability and confirmability can be established by generating a robust and rich description of data. Moreover, inter-coder agreement (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was another method that was used. It entailed ensuring that each auditor agreed upon which codes should be used and how they should be categorized. Lastly, once again,

the notion that I identified and bracketed biases is another aspect of dependability and confirmability.

Transferability

Transferability is ensured when there is the generation of “rich, thick description” (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When I thoroughly described the participants and the setting, there can be transference of common characteristics to other contexts. If I had failed to provide in-depth description, the lack of information would have rendered transferability invalid.

Ethical Considerations

In reference to research studies, ethical considerations are paramount. These considerations encouraged me to guide my investigation based upon three guiding principles. The principles are: respect for persons, concern for the welfare of participants, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are several protocols that were in place in order for me to demonstrate ethical behavior.

First, all participants were referenced with the use of pseudonyms. The names of participants were protected. In addition, the school site that is involved was referenced with the use of pseudonyms as well. In the case of additional possible identifiers of participants, these identifiers were masked to protect the anonymity. In addition, the participants were assured that their involvement in the research was completely voluntary; hence, the participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any given time. Furthermore, I offered reciprocity in terms of offering a small monetary incentive to all participants as a form of appreciation. Moreover, all transcripts are to be stored in a secure site for 5 years. Lastly, all digital documentation has been password protected.

Summary

Empirical studies require much more than merely selecting participants and conducting an investigative study of a phenomenon of personal interest. First, I determined the gap in literature and selected an appropriate research design. I was obtained approvals, permissions, assent, and consent from all relevant parties. In addition, I recognized that as the human instrument, it is my responsibility to ensure that the data presents the most accurate reflection of the participants' sentiments. There are many components that come into play with this empirical process. I was intentional in ensuring that I bracketed my own assumptions, values, and beliefs. I also assumed the ethical responsibility to make sure that justice was rendered and that participants were protected throughout the process. In essence, I am obligated to demonstrate trustworthiness which can be ensured as data was handled in a manner that produced analyses and interpretations that are credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present the results of the data analysis. This chapter is specifically reserved for findings for the research study. The purpose of this study is to explore bibliotherapy as a beneficial intervention for socially aggressive African American adolescent girls in an urban school setting. First, there will be a thick, rich description of all participants. All names will be pseudonyms that reasonably represent each participant. Once all participants are presented, then there will be the exposition of the data analysis. The results of the data analysis will be organized thematically and in accordance with the designated research questions. The theme development that stems from coding will be supported with appropriate narrative and collected data from each of the triangulation modalities. The data will be highlighted with graphic representation and all research questions will be directly addressed with the use of evidence from participant responses. Lastly, a summary of all information from the data analysis will be offered.

Participants

The participants were selected through purposeful sampling. There were 11 adolescent girls that agreed to engage in the study. They were all enrolled in an urban middle school in Oakwood County, a region located in the Midwest area of the United States. The school is called Cadillac Middle School. These participants were also African American females between the ages of 11-14 who were deemed as having engaged in socially aggressive behavior for some period in their academic career. Each participant was assigned to one of three bibliotherapy groups. Hence, even though all participants attend the same academic institution, they were separated into three distinct groups. Each participant who was represented by a pseudonym

provided narratives that reflected their lived experiences and diverse perspectives regarding the phenomenon of bibliotherapy.

Table 1

Participant Names, Age, School, and Grade

Name	Age	School	Grade
Kayla	13	Cadillac	8
Nayla	13	Cadillac	8
Keisha	13	Cadillac	8
Darnella	12	Cadillac	6
Tania	11	Cadillac	6
Darnisha	13	Cadillac	7
Tamara	13	Cadillac	8
Zoe	14	Cadillac	8
Janae	11	Cadillac	6
Kenyah	13	Cadillac	8
Lenaya	14	Cadillac	8

Kayla

Kayla was thirteen years of age at the time of the research study. She was an eighth grader. She is a talented singer. She had showcased her talent at various school events. Kayla lived with her mother, and her twin sister. She and her twin have a healthy and positive relationship. The two got along quite well even though they are complete opposites. Kayla is much more reserved than her twin. She loves choir because she said that in that class, there is very minimal written work; the students just sing. Kayla also loves to eat, stay on her cellphone, and play sports. She described herself as awesome, cute, protective, and smart.

Naya

Naya is thirteen years of age at the time of the research study and in the eighth grade. Naya is very gregarious and outspoken. She is not afraid to challenge ideas even if those ideas originate from teachers and other adults. She resided with her “Ti-Tis” or aunties and one of the

aunt's babies. Both of her aunts' boyfriends live with them at times. She has a close-knit family with a host of aunts and only one biological uncle. Naya enjoys staying at home unless she is hanging out with her friends. She loves to stay on her cellphone and talk to her friends. Naya likes to cook meals with seafood. She loves children and aspires to become a pediatrician in the future.

Keisha

Keisha was thirteen years old at the age of the research study. She was in the eighth grade. She previously lived with her father, but she currently lives with her mother, two brothers and three sisters. She has nine siblings total, some of whom live with her father. She was an athlete who played basketball for her current middle school. She was also a math whiz who boasted that she achieves high grades in math even though she barely studies. However, she aspires to become a lawyer and play in the WNBA. She is extremely outgoing and comedic. Keisha described herself as goofy and fun-loving.

Darnella

Darnella was in the sixth grade and 12 years of age at the time of the research. She lived with her dad; but she enjoys seeing her mother on some weekends for outings such as getting manicures. She and her dad also had recently acquired a dog. She loves her dad very much, but oftentimes desired to spend more time with her mother. Darnella's godmother is a doctor who helps the elderly and has been a source of inspiration for her. Darnella described herself as very kind and compassionate; however, she needs some alone time and does not like to be disturbed during those solitary seasons. Her favorite hobby and greatest talent is dance.

Tania

Tania was 11 years of age and in the sixth grade at the time of the research study. She is reserved and soft-spoken, yet very highly intelligent. She carried herself with a great deal of grace and femininity. She lived with her mother and father. Tania has four siblings, but only resides with one of them along with their parents. Tania described herself as a nice and easygoing person. Her favorite hobby is dancing. She aspired to be a nail technician when she grows up. Tania also would like to have a nail salon of her own.

Darnisha

Darnisha was 13 years of age and in the seventh grade at the time of the research study. She is mature, communicative, confident, self-assured, and bright. Darnisha resided with her little sister, little cousin, and her two grandparents. She is involved in Student Council, the volleyball team, and Project Youth. Her favorite subject is history. She desires to become a lawyer in the future. She described herself as a caring and patient person who loves to help people.

Tamara

Tamara was in the eighth grade and 13 years of age at the time of the research study. She is articulate, analytical, and intelligent. She lived with her mother and four brothers, two of whom are a set of twins. The youngest brother was born on Christmas Eve; hence, Tamara recalled spending Christmas Day with her mother and new sibling in the hospital. She enjoys her brothers because she can understand the perspective of males and how to adjust to various personality types. Her favorite subject is algebra, but she also enjoys the study of history and literature. She had been considering becoming involved in school sports, namely, track. Tamara and her mother like to bake and provide decorations for a host of events. She is quite serious about the pursuit of a career in the field of culinary arts. She described herself as loving and

compassionate. She stated: “You have to bring or be the rays of sunshine in somebody’s life at some point.”

Zoe

At the time of the research study, Zoe was in the eighth grade and 14 years of age. She is strong-willed and self-confident with an incredible ability to effectively communicate her thoughts and ideas. She lives with her mother, father, and three brothers. She enjoys her three brothers because they mutually enjoy a healthy competitive relationship. She is the middle child. Even though Zoe enjoys writing, she finds herself with an affinity for math. Zoe also loves to watch Anime. She is not sure of what she will do when she grows up; however, she desires to learn how to speak Japanese.

Janae

Janae was 11 years old and in the sixth grade at the time when the research was conducted. She is reserved and bright. She lived with her mother and her 13-year-old sister. She has other siblings who live with her father. She has a desire to become more involved with school activities in the upcoming school year. Some of her hobbies are dancing, reading, cooking, and baking. She describes her greatest talents as dancing and baking. She has been inspired to become a real estate agent like one of her aunts.

Kenyah

Kenyah was 13 years of age and in the eighth grade at the time of the research study. Kenyah is sassy, vibrant, and energetic. She resided with her mother; but stays at her grandmother’s home most of the week during the time that her mother is at work. She likes to visit her father’s house. She has siblings who live elsewhere. She enjoyed playing volleyball and dancing. Kenyah expressed that she loves to dance so much that any time she can find a camera

or mirror, she will dance in front of it. Kenyah was a majorette and enjoys hip-hop dancing. She was also a cheerleader and involved with the school volleyball team prior to the pandemic. In the future, Kenyah plans to be a pediatrician. She loves to take care of young children.

Lenaya

Lenaya was 14 years old and in the eighth grade at the time that the research took place. Lenaya is intelligent, articulate, and wise beyond her years. She resided with her mother, brothers, and sisters. She has three brothers and two sisters. She was a committed athlete who trained regularly. Lenaya played both volleyball and basketball for her middle school. Her favorite subject is writing. She believes that her personality is unique because she is a perpetual encourager. She described herself as humorous and light-hearted. She had been inspired by her aunt who conducts a therapy group for Black women to discuss current political and personal issues. Lenaya also desired to become a counselor because she seeks out opportunities to help people learn how to gain inner peace and become more productive citizens.

Results

After the three bibliotherapy groups completed their six-module sessions, I scheduled interviews with each of the 11 participants. All the interviews were initially planned to be conducted on site in a secure and private setting. Nevertheless, some of the interviews were held face-to-face in a private office space for those in-person students and the others were held via google meet to accommodate those students who remained virtual. Due to the unusual situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 65% of students and their families opted to remain in a virtual academic setting. Hence, the research interviews accommodated the appropriate setting for students whether terrestrial or virtual. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly created unique circumstances for the research study.

A group of three young ladies also participated in the focus group. Lastly, all letter responses were collected. As stated earlier, I transcribed the interviews and focus group sessions verbatim. Both were recorded on two digital devices. The focus group was held virtually, and I was able to record the audio only of that google meeting on my laptop as well as the use of additional digital devices. The same held true for the virtual interviews. The letter responses were either hand-written or typed. Hence, there was no need for any additional transcription on my part.

Once all data had been collected, I read and reviewed all information multiple times as I began to memo and make notes of recurring ideas, perspectives, phrases, expressions, and thought patterns. These concepts were triangulated across all modes of data collection. Then, I highlighted those ideas and began coding them into categories and documented them in a visual representation, or graphic. Then, these categories were interpreted as themes. Once the themes were identified, they were presented as substantive, evidentiary responses to the proposed research questions.

Table 2

The Imagination Station: Theme, Subthemes, Codes

	Theme: <i>The Imagination Station</i>	Sub-theme: <i>Translation</i>	Sub-theme: <i>Identification</i>
	I just imagine that I'm there	I'm there	In their shoes
	Reading is a journey	In their shoes	Myself as the character
	Imagine in I'm in their shoes	As the character	Pretend to be in their shoes
	I was imagining her in the new school	Like I'm in the book	Act like I'm in the book
	I just read in my mind and picture it	In a different world	Try to relate
	I could picture Maleeka in the bathroom with the girls	Reading is a journey	I feel what the character feels
	I kinda drew pictures in my head		
	I imagine myself as the character		
	I pretend to be in their shoes		

You can think or imagine what people look like		
I act like I'm in the book		
You get to be in a different world		

Theme 1: The Imagination Station

The first theme that will be addressed here is the “Imagination Station.” Table 2 represents the themes, sub-themes, and coding for this section. For practically all the participants, the imagination played a major role in the reading experience. The participants *clearly revealed that as they used their minds to visualize characters and their experiences, the book was relatable, engaging, and interesting.* The group highlighted their abilities to envision certain settings, characters, and scenes from the text.

Kayla stated, “I just imagine that I’m there ‘cause like how the author says the words. It makes me feel like I’m there.” Darnisha noted:

When Maleeka was at school, I could picture her in the bathroom with the girls and being scared because she didn’t really have no one in there that really liked her and they were just using her to do their work.”

Another participant by the name of Lenaya shared, “That’s how I visualize and I actually get to like the book more and get more interested about it.” Tania added, “I was picturing how Maleeka had felt nice about her dad’s poem that she read and what she looked like when she got her hair done.”

Translation

I chose to use the term *translation* for this sub-theme because it is also synonymous with terms such as *journey, voyage, or pathway*. Many participants viewed the act of reading as a journey whereby they were able to be translated to a different location. The pathway was the

result of the convergence of words and the imagination. Tamara shared, “My imagination with reading kinda helps. I read in between the lines a little bit.” She continued:

I kinda drew pictures in my head of how everybody looked. It changes the perspective of how you look at people. It’s just a journey you’re going through- a literature journey you’re going through reading the book all the time.

Janae expressed, “I pretend that I’m in their shoes. It’s like you get to be in a different world.”

The participants clearly viewed the reading experience as one that possesses the power to transport them from one place to another. The experience also allowed them to take a journey as they assume the role of another individual. In essence, they were not merely reading a text, but navigating through newfound territory, terrain that requires Kayla stated, “I just imagine that I’m there cause like how the author says the words. It makes me feel like I’m there skillful use of the imagination.”

Identification

This sub-theme speaks to the idea of an association or connection with another entity. As the participants of the research study began to engage in the bibliotherapy experience, they indeed found themselves leveraging their imagination to traverse the literary cosmos. However, they also intrinsically and organically linked themselves to the narrative, whether the connection was with a particular character, emotion, or situation.

Zoe stated, “I try to imagine myself as the character so I get to understand them more. You know, think about where they are coming from and what they might do.” Lenaya commented, “I just act like I’m in the book, like I’m one of the characters. I pretend that I’m that

character. I feel what the character feels. You put yourself in a book, you can have fun with it.”

Another respondent expressed the following:

It impacted me in a strong way because at first you think that you're alone.

Then you realize that there is a lot of other people who go through the same thing so it assures you that you are not alone.

The highlighted theme and sub-themes in this section addressed Research Question 1 which seeks to identify the metaphors, examples, or personal scenarios that are employed by participants as they engage in reading. The “Imagination Station” theme captures how the participants engaged their imagination which speaks to an example of how reading is approached. The notion of “translation” represents the metaphor of a vehicle of sorts as the reading experience can be likened unto being transported into another world and into someone else’s shoes. Furthermore, the readers have not only been afforded the opportunity to be transported to a new and exciting place, but they were also able to identify themselves with the text on many levels. The metaphor is now extended beyond the voyage but also to bringing back souvenirs. Those souvenirs or mementos are the transformative and cathartic manifestations that have occurred throughout the journey which also reflect the sub-theme of “identification” whereby as readers identify with characters and places, they experience perhaps a shift in emotions, perspectives, meta-cognition, and self-reflection.

Table 3

The Aggressor Syndrome: Theme, Subthemes, Codes

Theme: The Aggressor Syndrome	Sub-theme: <i>Internal Conflict</i>	Sub-theme: <i>Internal Affect/ Sympathy</i>
I was disrespectful	Because they're hurting inside	I feel sympathy for them
I was being disrespectful	Hurt, going through stuff	Hurts my feelings

I did you wrong	Jealousy; hurt inside	Try to relate to what they're going through
Hanging with the wrong crowd	Something's not right at home	Everybody goes through something
Being disobedient	Come from a bad neighborhood	Knowing what others go through
I regret my choices	Try to relate to what they're going through	I kinda feel sad for Maleeka
Bad behavior	They're jealous	I feel what the character feels
Disruptive	They bully because of jealousy	I felt sympathy for her
They can be rude	They tend to get jealous	I had sympathy for her
They say rude and disrespectful stuff	They don't like themselves	How a bully would feel
Wrong crowd	Try to make them feel better about themselves	How Maleeka would feel
Treat each other bad	Think about where they are coming from	Perspective of how Charlese feels
It was wrong of me	That's why she acts like that	See how she felt
How I treated you was not right	They act out	What they go through is worse than what you go through
	When I realized she had to go through that	

Theme 2: The Aggressor Syndrome

This next theme as well as its subsequent sub-themes and codes are represented in the Table 3. "The Aggressor Syndrome" was primarily the byproduct of elicited responses from the document analyses which was also substantiated by the data collected from the interviews and focus group. Most of the participants opted to write a letter of apology to one of the characters who had been mistreated in some form. However, the participant was writing the letter in the stead of another main character.

The coding for this theme was quite consistent in the manner whereby the respondents described their own (or the character proxy's) behavior. The behavior of the socially aggressive

characters was described in terms that represented anti-social behavior. Kenyah stated: “I’m sorry for treating you this way.” “I’m sorry for being bad and disruptive in your class.” Darnella expressed, “I want to apologize for all the bad behavior.” Naya said, “I am sorry for being disrespectful. How I treated you was not right.” Kayla noted, “I’m sorry for how I been to you. It was wrong of me. I was disrespectful. I’m going to change.”

The behaviors of the socially aggressive characters were described with terms such as *disruptive*, *bad*, *wrong*, and *disrespectful*. Clearly, the participants have not assigned any positive attributes these characters. There are some undeniable, albeit tacit, values that most human beings espouse. As I analyzed the participants’ responses, they certainly have a clear understanding of what is considered unacceptable, offensive, and reprehensible behavior.

Internal Conflict

This sub-theme addresses the notion that socially aggressive behavior is a byproduct of the inner turmoil that one suffers. The participants gleaned from the text that there indeed was a root cause behind the actions of those characters who demonstrated socially aggressive behavior. Moreover, the participants also transferred this knowledge to their own lives because they were able to analyze or at the very least provide suppositions regarding anti-social behaviors that they have either encountered or demonstrated. In essence, as the focus of this study explored the phenomenon of bibliotherapy and socially aggressive girls, as participants engaged in the reading experience and provided their responses as data, they were able to not only identify unacceptable behavior, but also conceptualize that there must be causation or impetus that engenders the behavior as well. Naya stated:

But people only bully people because they’re hurting inside for real.
Most girls treat each other bad. Hurt, going through stuff. Probably

need someone to talk to. They say rude and disrespectful stuff. Jealousy and hurt inside and something's not right at home.

Janae asserted, "Sometimes they bring each other down. They don't like themselves." Zoe responded, "I think it's a lot of sometimes about jealousy or just not having what they have because I know some girls, they tend to get jealous when they don't have certain things that other girls do." Darnisha maintained, "It could be because they're jealous and one could be prettier and they just don't like them because of that."

Internal Affect

This sub-theme deals with how the participants responded emotionally to the characters who engage in socially aggressive or bullying behaviors. Moreover, the respondents also applied these emotions to non-fictional bullies, sharing their sentiments regarding their experiences with and perceptions of bullies. As the respondents explored textually and practically the behavior of these oppressors, they arrived at the conclusion that perhaps the bullies are simply troubled individuals upon whom we all should bestow mercy.

Perhaps the participants had also become quite introspective as many expressed that they could identify with the actions and consequences of the bullies and/or the predicament of the victims. Perhaps the participants became reflective about why they had behaved in negative ways in the past whether they were engaged in cliquish behavior, supporting the behavior of a bully, or being the embodiment of the perpetrator. Whatever the case may be, the respondents practically unanimously purported that bullies should be pitied because those who torment others are tormented themselves. Darnisha asserted:

At first I thought that she was mean until I found out how she was treated at home with her sister and I thought, wow that's why she acts like that

because this is what she has to go through, so she thinks that's ok to treat other people that way. I felt angry at first and then I felt sympathy for her.

Zoe added, "I felt angry at her but when I realized what she had to go through, I felt sympathy. But she could have done something differently instead of bullying. She could have talked to an adult." Tamara stated, "You don't know what they go through. You don't know what perspective they went through, so you have to be there for them, just so they have somebody to talk to."

The themes and sub-themes for this section address two of the research questions. They address Research Question 2 which deals with the types of emotions, memories, and/or perceptions the aggressors describe when they read about or reflect on the concept of mean girls. Even though the respondents described these culprits with terms of disapproval, they, however, felt sympathetic toward mean girls which affirms the representation of the "internal affect" sub-theme. They believed that the aggressors would not behave in such an offensive manner had they not experienced severe trauma and hardships. This belief system reflects the sub-theme of "internal conflict." The second question that is addressed is Research Question 3 which posed, "What words or phrases do the participants use to depict real-life or fictional mean girls?" The participants described mean girls as those who, due to injurious and disquieting life circumstances (current or past), exhibit disrespectful, rude, and belligerent behaviors. According to the participants, these aggressors were deemed as jealous, mean, wounded, damaged, and insecure. All the terms reflect the major theme, *The Aggressor Syndrome*.

Table 4

The Power of the Narrative: Theme, Subthemes, Codes

Theme: The Power of the Narrative	Sub-theme: <i>Bibliotherapy Affect</i>	Sub-theme: <i>Connectedness Ideology</i>
Reading makes us smarter and powerful	I feel happy	I feel included

When I read, it feels relaxing	Before the girls' group, I really didn't care for reading	Look at everybody's perspectives
You need words to get somewhere in life	It makes me happy	Everybody pulled something different from the book
Reading changed my mood and emotions	I was excited	Being able to talk with other people
I tend to get happy when I read	I feel happy	You can relate to what others discuss
Reading can help you mentally and physically	I feel good	I ask "Who am I"
The process of reading makes me feel good	I feel happy	Girls can relate to the story
It helps you concentrate	I feel included	It's special because it's mostly girls
I feel like I have courage	I feel good	I could connect to
Reading changes your perspective	I feel happy	Try to relate to
Reading is calming	My experience was good	Before the girls' group, I really didn't care for reading
	It was nice	Makes me think about myself
	It was fun	How somebody feels
	It was comforting and exciting	We find what we have in common
		Put yourself in the position they are in

Theme 3: The Power of the Narrative

Table 4 highlights the theme and sub-themes for this section. The primary theme was "the power of the narrative." The participants expressed how the reading experience and the bibliotherapy sessions were so beneficial in a myriad of ways. They seemed to have felt empowered and encouraged by it all. They came to the realization that reading entails far more than simply the recognition of familiar vocabulary and concepts and the encoding and decoding of phonemic characters. According to the participants of the study, reading serves as a gateway or portal that provides access to new horizons.

Tania stated, “I feel like I got the courage to say the answer whether it’s wrong or right.” Tamara expressed, “Reading is actually fundamental. Reading helps you mentally and physically.” Lenaya said, “I actually have been sad and a book changed my emotions. A book about three sisters changed my mood because I seen what they can do, I just see if they can do it, I can do it too.” Zoe commented:

I feel happy because I’m learning something new. So, it’s good for me to branch out. You learn different things to use outside when you’re trying to find a job or something. Sometimes you may not know what to do in certain situations and reading can help you with that.

Bibliotherapy Affect

This sub-theme explores how bibliotherapy and the reading experience impacted the mood of the participants. Even though some of the respondents shared that their minds sometimes wandered and that they were distracted at times during reading, for the most part, they all described the encounter as a pleasant one. All the terms that were used to describe the act of reading were of a positive and favorable nature.

Janae declared, “The process of reading makes me feel good. It’s like you don’t really wanna stop reading because you’re so into the book. It makes me happy.” Kenyah shared, “Reading is calming. I like to come outside when it rains and read it because it’s very calming and because the rain chills me out.” Darnella noted, “It makes me happy because I know how to read. I can help my younger brother when he doesn’t know a word.” Darnisha stated: “Plus, it helps you concentrate. When I read, it feels relaxing.”

Connectedness Ideology

This sub-theme highlights the notion that an intrinsic facet of the bibliotherapy experience entailed the development of relationships and making connections. The participants were able to connect to the text, the characters, themselves (introspection), and others. Some expressed that they were excited about being involved in a group and being able to connect to other young ladies. This connection was based upon having similar experiences. Others expressed how much they connected to characters or a situation that they read about in the text. Moreover, there were participants who were also able to connect to themselves and become reflective as they related to the events of the narrative and characters.

Tania shared, “It’s special because it’s mostly girls. It’s nice to hear her story because girls really go through that.” Darnisha noted, “Talking with a group—that was nice. I would read it again and any other books they make because it was something I could connect to.” Zoe added, “It impacted me in a strong way because at first you think that you’re alone, then you realize that there is a lot of other people who go through the same thing so it assure you that you are not alone. Lenaya expressed, “I feel included. It’s a great thing for us.” Tamara commented, “This is actually the first time reading a book about our color and how somebody feels about being for the color they’re in.” Zoe noted, “I try to imagine myself as the character so I get to understand them more. You know, think about where they are coming from and what they might do.” Keisha stated, “I think of who am I?” Kayla said, “It makes me know more about that person and make me think about myself sometimes.”

The themes and sub-themes address Research Question 4 which is centered around the value that had been assigned to bibliotherapy in the lives of the participants. In accordance with the “power of the narrative” theme, the participants collectively clearly set forth the idea that

overall, the bibliotherapy experience was a beneficial one that brought forth enjoyment and stimulated the intellect. They concluded that participating in reading along with the bibliotherapy sessions were metaphorically speaking, mirrors and windows whereby readers were able to look at themselves and peer into the lives of others which served to establish the sub-theme of “connectedness ideology.” Lastly, according to the participants, this encounter ultimately engendered empowerment and served as a significant mood booster which confirmed the sub-theme of “bibliotherapy affect.”

Research Question Responses

Question 1

The first research question sought to explore the metaphors, examples, or personal scenarios that the participants employed to describe the experience of reading. The individual interviews as well as the focus group really seemed to extricate some poignant and robust sentiments from the participants regarding the act and experience of reading. Many alluded to the notion that reading is a vehicle of sorts that allows one to travel to a new and exciting literary land. Tamara expressed, “It’s just a journey you’re going through- a literature journey you’re going through reading the book all the time. Kayla asserted, “I just imagine that I’m there ‘cause like how the author says the words. It makes me feel like I’m there.” Keisha shared, “I think about what I read and imagine me in their shoes.”

Hence, the participants seem to have conceptualized reading as a gateway to another world. However, to maximize the experience, one must leverage the power of the imagination which ensures that the journey takes place. In other words, the text alone cannot provide for the rich experience of translation. The interaction between the text and all that the mind has to offer is crucial to a successful expedition. Moreover, the experience of the journey affords the

sojourner the opportunity to procure valuable souvenirs in the form of meaningful discoveries and enlightenment regarding themselves and other individuals (either real or fiction). Zoe shared, “It impacted me in a strong way because at first you think that you’re alone, then you realize that there is a lot of other people who go through the same thing, so it assures you that you are not alone.” Darnisha expressed, It gave me a point of view to at everybody’s perspective.”

This group of African American, adolescent, socially aggressive females wholeheartedly surmised that reading is a powerful tool.

Question 2

The second research question identified the types of emotions, memories and/or perceptions that the participants associated with reading about the mean girls. The participants expressed a range of emotions from anger and sadness to hurt and sympathy. They even began to recall personal experiences whereby they relived painful incidents as the victim, perpetrator, or bystander. Kayla stated:

The book made me mad because they were bullying her. I don’t support bullying. I had a friend; she got bullied and we used to talk and it hurt her deep inside. It made me feel sad for the teacher. I feel sympathy for them.

Lenaya expressed, “Yes. I’ve been around bullies. I was in the wrong too. I feel bad about it. I feel like I have to step in because I didn’t before.”

As the respondents examined the lives of the socially aggressive characters in the texts, they began to formulate how they viewed these individuals based solely upon actions. Keisha commented, “[Bullies] need to chill out because they doing too much. Someone is being an instigator.” Tania stated, “Most girls really go through bullying. Most girls start drama first.”

Nayah commented, “They say rude and disrespectful stuff.” Darnella mentioned, “The bad people pick on the good people who are not going to get into anything because they’re good.”

All the comments that were attributed to the assessment of bullying behavior suggested that how the aggressors interacted with others was less than desirable, and perhaps even reprehensible and despicable.

Nevertheless, as the participants continued to read and the unfolding narrative, and as we began to analyze socially aggressive behavior through the interviews, the focus group and the letter responses, emotions and mindsets regarding these troubled individuals began to shift from disdain or contempt to sympathy. Nayah relayed, “They are really hurting inside. They are trying to get things off their chest and trying to make other people feel their pain. They just don’t want to be the only one hurting and stuff like that.” Tamara noted, “It’s just the fact that you have to see that somebody is hurting inside or outside. You gotta ask and see if somebody’s hurting.” Keisha pointed out, “Some of them come from bad neighborhoods and they tend to act out. But most of them, they are good.” Darnisha noted, “I just like knowing what other people are going through and like try to relate to what they’re going through.”

In essence, the participants associated the offenders or bullies with offensive behavior. The participants did not approve of the behavior and initially expressed negative emotions such as disdain, disapproval and indignation. However, the participants also expressed the need to delineate and identify with challenges of the of the bullies. As they had undergone this process of identification whether connecting to the characters or connecting the characters to their own experiences, they found themselves espousing the notion that socially aggressive individuals are victims as well and need to be handled gingerly with some compassion. In essence, the

participants expressed anger, yet that anger transformed into sympathy and in many cases empathy.

Question 3

The next research question focused on the words or phrases that the participants used to depict the actions of other real-life or fictional mean girls. The participants were required to write a letter of apology to a character that was the recipient of maltreatment or a letter of encouragement to one of the bullies. The respondents were required to assume the identity of one of the bullies and write the letter of apology from that perspective. Likewise, the letter of encouragement was also written from the vantage point of a designated character.

It was interesting that out of 11 respondents, 10 of them opted to write the letter of apology. It appeared that the notion of issuing an apology was probably what the participants viewed as both paramount and a priority. Perhaps in their minds, a remorseful heart is a necessary component in the healing or mending process of any relationship. This activity allowed the participants to both analyze the behavior of the aggressor and expound upon their own inner thoughts regarding penance and remorse. This exercise enabled the writer to expose her own true sentiments and perspective regarding the actions of a bully. These sentiments were also consistent with the responses from the interviews as well as the focus group. The consensus was that the actions were described as quite disagreeable. Bullies were deemed as those who had no regard for the welfare or feelings of others. They were willing to denigrate and subjugate those around them (if possible) to attain some skewed and perverse form of power and satisfaction.

Kayla stated, "It was wrong of me. I was disrespectful." Naya claimed, "I am sorry for being disrespectful. How I treated you was not right." However, it was interesting to note that many of the participants began to express a heart of gratitude toward the victim. There was a verbal

display of a change of heart. Keisha stated, “I’m sorry for what I did to you. Thanks for jumping in that fight for me. I did you wrong and wish I never did.” Tamara noted:

I’m so sorry for not listening to you. I am sorry for hanging with the wrong crowd. I am sorry for being disobedient. I am thankful that you helped me out. I am thankful that you gave me that special assignment to do. I am grateful for you and happy you helped me.

Darnisha also apologized for her maltreatment and continued, “Thank you for helping me and still being kind to me and caring even when I did the worst to you.” Zoe commented, I do regret my choices. I would like to thank you mama for helping me.”

In essence, the participants consistently conveyed the idea that bullies should be ashamed of their behaviors and should be willing to apologize. According to the participants in this study, bullies should have remorseful hearts as well as hearts of gratitude. The phrases that were most widely used to depict the aggressors were terms that reflected negativity. These phrases such as disrespectful, wrong, bad, disobedient, and disruptive were a collective perpetual theme that resonated as participants assigned descriptors to socially aggressive individuals.

Question 4

The last research question examined the value that was assigned to bibliotherapy as an intervention in the lives of the African American adolescent socially aggressive females. Unequivocally, the participants described the bibliotherapy experience as an exceptionally propitious one. As discussed earlier, the underlying themes that supported this research question indicated that there are layers of benefits as the participants explored the power of the narrative and its subsequent byproducts. The group seemed to understand the most fundamental advantages of reading in isolation to the extensive benefits of the bibliotherapy group setting.

The bibliotherapy sessions were crafted with the intent to allow all group members to not only read a high-interest, grade level text, but to also explore its various themes such as bullying, colorism, loss, trust, the power of words, relationships, and self-image. The selected text entitled, *The Skin I'm In* by Sharon G. Flake, was centered around a seventh grader by the name of Maleeka. The protagonist was an only child and lived with her mother. The father had died in a freak car accident. Even though Maleeka was very bright, she was bullied because of her dark skin. She encounters a new teacher who has also a skin condition whereby there is a huge birthmark on her face. Maleeka was not too keen about the new teacher herself.

The bibliotherapy groups expressed that they were able to relate to the book because of the challenges of being in school as adolescents and dealing with classmates and their peers. Many of the issues in the text were all too familiar to the group members. During each of the six bibliotherapy modules, the participants were afforded the opportunity to openly discuss the various themes as well as analyze the events of the narrative, connect and link ideas with group members, and self-reflect. It must also be noted that even though a few of the group members admitted to the lack of interest in reading, all 11 participants expressed that they were excited or happy to be involved in the research and described the experience as one that yielded positive outcomes. Kayla asserted, "I feel happy...Reading makes us smarter and more powerful." Naya commented, "Before the girls' group, I really didn't care for reading. Right now, I will go pick up that book right now and read it." Tania shared, "It's special because it's mostly girls. It's nice to hear her story because girls really like go through that." Lenaya noted, "I feel included. It's a great thing for us." Janae said, "I feel happy; I don't know why."

The value that was assigned to the bibliotherapy sessions was that it empowered the young ladies. Reading gave them a positive outlook even if they could explain the rationale

behind it. The sessions allowed the girls to connect to each other, the characters, and the events. Overall, the participants collectively expressed that they were a part of something special and that they will be better and stronger because of this experience.

Summary

Chapter Four has provided an in-depth look at how and why bibliotherapy served as an intervention for socially aggressive adolescent African American females. First, the participants were presented with rich and robust description for the purpose of building background. All the participants were African American girls between the ages of 11-14. They also were deemed as socially aggressive according to recommendations based upon school behavior data. They also attended a middle school in an urban setting.

Second, the various themes and sub-themes and codes were delineated along with visual representations in the form of tables. Codes were established as repeated phrases, concepts, and ideas were present in the responses of the participants. Those codes were categorized and presented as themes. The sub-themes were those additional layers of concepts that were germane to the overarching theme. The codes were also expanded when necessary and employed as quotes from the participants for the purpose of providing evidence to support assertions.

Once the themes and sub-themes were discussed, they were embedded as integral parts of the responses to the research questions. Lastly, each of the four research questions were revisited. The participants' responses were offered as support for the development of the responses to the research questions. It was interesting to note that many of the participants' responses intersected across more than one theme or sub-theme. This also confirmed and supported the interconnectedness of the sub-questions and the research central question.

The participants revealed that they viewed reading as a portal to a new world of discovery. They explained how the imagination was a key resource that will enhance the reading experience. In addition, as the imagination was engaged, the group members were able to identify closely with characters, settings, and incidents. The respondents also indicated that they possessed mixed emotions when it came to bullies. Most of them felt anger and indignation initially toward socially aggressive individuals; however, they also felt sympathy for them because of the belief that bullies are who they are because of all the adverse circumstances that they have endured. Moreover, the participants believed that bullies are disrespectful and should be remorseful and seek to restore relationships that they have jeopardized. Lastly, according to the respondents, bibliotherapy was an overall favorable experience that engendered positive moods and meaningful connections.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe how bibliotherapy among adolescent African American females in urban middle schools serves as an intervention for female social aggression, or the mean girl syndrome. The guiding theory for the research study was Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. The central research was: What characteristics of bibliotherapy contribute to its mitigating impact on female social aggression?

The collective experience of the bibliotherapy participants was examined through the implementation of individual interviews, a focus group, and letter responses (document analysis). In Chapter Four, three themes were highlighted along with their corresponding sub-themes. These themes emerged from the analysis of the triangulated data. This chapter will explore the summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings inclusive of implications stemming from relevant literature and theory, a section on implications, an acknowledgement of delimitations and limitations, and an outline of recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Question 1

The first research question posed the following: "What metaphors, examples, or personal scenarios do the participants employ to describe the experience of reading?" The responses of the participants provided clear and substantive sentiments around the perception of the reading experience. The primary metaphor that was identified was that, along with the employment of the imagination, reading can be equated to a "journey."

This journey not only enables one to experience and explore new territory; it also allows the reader to gain insight into the lives of characters as they are introduced into the world of that

character and in many cases assuming the role of a proxy. The participants had expressed the feeling of being transported from one place to another. The reading experience takes one on a voyage that begins with exploration and culminates in discovery.

The discovery phase of the journey may allow the reader to identify with a character, a setting, or event. In essence, according to the respondents in this research study, the phrase “reading passage” is in its purest form, the embodiment of authenticity. Reading is truly a passageway or portal into new dimensions and realms that can provide insight about individuals and the reader herself.

Question 2

The second research question inquired: “What type(s) of emotions, memories and/or perceptions do the aggressors describe when they read about mean girls?” The participants in this case study provided evidence through the interviews, data analysis, and letter responses regarding the emotions and perceptions associated with their description of mean girls. As the themes and sub-themes were examined in the previous chapter, it was clear that respondents were felt a spectrum of negative emotions such as anger, disdain, resentment, and indignation.

The participants had even recalled incidents whereby they had been bullied, witnessed the act of bullying, or even supported the behavior of a bully. Whatever the case had been, the memories, emotions, and perceptions of these events were troubling. Even though there was negative sentiment surrounding the notion of bullying, the research group also found themselves embracing emotions other than anger and indignation.

As the group analyzed the behavior of socially aggressive fictional or real-life individuals, they highlighted what they deemed as the rationale, premise, motivation, or even excuse for the offensive behavior of bullies. The respondents surmised that the bullies only

conducted themselves in objectionable manners due to toxic environments and/or traumatic experiences. In other words, the bullies were acting out because of their own inner struggles such as low self-esteem, rejection, and the scarcity of love and support. Hence, the participants concluded that even though they were infuriated by the behavior of bullies, they maintained that the anger had been transformed into sympathy. The research group noted that the bullies should be extended mercy because of the trauma that these offenders had endured.

Question 3

The third research question asked: “What words or phrases do the participants use to depict the actions of other real-life or fictional mean girls?” The research group was afforded the opportunity to write an apology letter to a character who had been bullied or a letter of encouragement to a bully. Both options were to be written from the perspective of another character in the narrative. Ninety percent of the respondents selected the apology option. This spoke volumes because it is apparent that the notion of issuing an apology seemed to be a priority in the minds of most of the participants.

The research group collectively depicted the actions of mean girls as wrong, disruptive, rude, and disrespectful. These types of terms were used repeatedly across the multiple modes of data collection. The participants were unapproving of the acts performed by both fictional and real-life mean girls. They even suggested that these offenders engage in some form of therapy such as talking to a friend, teacher, or parent which confirms the idea that was mentioned in the previous section that the bully has unresolved internal issues.

Question 4

The final research question posed the following: “What value do the participants assign to bibliotherapy as an intervention in their lives?” The participants made it glaringly clear that

the bibliotherapy experience was an incredibly beneficial one. First, bibliotherapy entails the reading of a high-interest and relatable text. Then this text is discussed in a group setting after the similitude of a literary circle or book club. Nevertheless, the questions are framed around topics and themes that are relevant to whatever issue(s) are plaguing the participants. Hence, there is a therapeutic or cathartic element to the experience.

The participants collectively asserted that reading, in general, had served to empower and fortify them. The consensus was that reading is essential to an individual's livelihood and welfare. It was also espoused by the group that reading only served to embolden the partaker and recipient of this phenomenon. The participants also expressed that reading had a positive impact on their mood and made them feel happy, calm, and relaxed. Even though a couple of the group members admitted that they had not had an affinity for reading, the act of reading became more palatable as they engaged in the bibliotherapy sessions.

Lastly, not only did not the research group members hail the praises of reading, they also highly acclaimed the bibliotherapy experience. Many noted that the involvement of an all-girl group brought them excitement and a sense of belonging and inclusivity. They also shared that that discourse amongst group members served to provide unity, empathy, and a reverence for varying perspectives.

Discussion

This discussion entails the findings from this case study particularly as it relates to the empirical and theoretical literature that was previously highlighted in Chapter Two. It will also explore how this study confirms or corroborates previous research. Moreover, this exposition will expound upon how the study provides a divergence or expansion of previous research. It

will also delineate novel contributions to the field as well as shed new light on the study's theoretical foundation.

Empirical Literature

There is a great deal of empirical literature surrounding the topic of bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy can be categorized as either clinical or developmental. Clinical bibliotherapy is practiced by licensed medical professionals such as doctors and psychologists (Canty, 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016); however, developmental bibliotherapy may be employed by laymen such as teachers, school counselors, and behavior interventionists (Heath et al., 2017; Shem, 2016). For this study, the latter was implemented.

In a school setting, the facilitator of bibliotherapy sessions identifies appropriate self-help or high-interest literary texts that will engage students (Ford, Walters, Byrd, & Harris, 2019; Heath, 2017). Guided reading activities such as journaling, reflecting, questioning, and responding (Elley, 2014) are likely to be implemented to bring participants to climactic experiences such as illumination, analysis, application, catharsis, and resolution (Elsenman & Harper, 2016). The bibliotherapy sessions are framed after the similitude of therapy sessions whereby the reader is assisted in discovering solutions to problems, reducing aggression, and developing empathy (Heath et al., 2017; Shectman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016). It must also be noted that the human instrument is a very salient factor in the administration of bibliotherapy. The facilitator must be one who has established a trusting and positive relationship with the participants (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; Shectman & Tutian, 2016). There are also two major genres of texts that are integral aspects of the bibliotherapy phenomenon. The sessions are generally centered around a literary text which is usually fictional in nature (Canty, 2017; Heath

et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016), or an informational text which is exclusively expository in nature (Canty, 2017; Heath et al., 2017; Popa & Porumbu, 2017; Shem, 2016).

This literature confirmed what had transpired during the bibliotherapy sessions. In this research study, I, as the researcher (school administrator and former English teacher), served as the facilitator or bibliotherapist for the developmental model. As the human instrument, I was fortunate that I was able to build rapport with the young ladies during the first meeting together. They were receptive to my effervescent personality and were quite comfortable even though I had never had any major contact with them prior to our bibliotherapy sessions. Perhaps, I had an advantage because I am a certified secondary teacher and had also served as a middle school principal. I am quite aware of how to relate to adolescents. For this study, I selected a high-interest, relevant text that addressed the issues of adolescence, bullying, and self-image particularly specific to African American females. Each week I met with the participants to discuss the various themes in the narrative. The participants engaged in rich discourse as they identified with the lives of the characters and each other. Many anecdotes and analyses were offered within the context of these sessions. The participants were able to assess and assign value to the behavior of the characters and make suggestions for restoration, recompense, and reform. Furthermore, the participants expressed empathy for fictional and real-life bullies.

The research study was undoubtedly aligned to the current empirical literature regarding bibliotherapy. The trustworthiness of the facilitator was a major factor in the success of the bibliotherapy modules. In addition, the high-interest, grade-level appropriate text seemed to capture the attention of the participants. Lastly, the group members were able to engage in discussion and engage in a writing response that demonstrated connection to the textual themes and characters. However, the research study that was conducted was distinctive in that it

specifically involved African American adolescents who were considered socially aggressive in an urban school setting; whereas, the current literature primarily entailed Caucasian and Latino students in non-urban schools. Only one study entailed a group of African young ladies who were residing in a correctional facility located in Lagos, Nigeria.

Bibliotherapy has been distinguished as a highly effective intervention strategy for young children who demonstrate behavior issues in school. Studies have shown that it has served to mitigate socio-emotional issues in elementary students (Betzael & Shechtman, 2017; Elsenman, & Harper, 2016; Heath et al., 2017; Lewis, Amatya, Coffman, & Ollendick, 2015; Wang et al., 2015) especially as it relates to socially aggressive behavior (Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015).

This literature highlights the mitigating effects of bibliotherapy as it relates to ill-behaved elementary children in a school setting. It specifically delineates how bibliotherapy serves as an intervention for socially aggressive behavior. This literature supports the research study in terms of linking bibliotherapy and social aggression. Nevertheless, it only addresses this phenomenon within the context of young male and female children, not solely female adolescents. In addition, the demographic for these studies are Caucasian and Latino children in either a rural or suburban school district. The demographic for this study was African American females in an urban school setting.

Bibliotherapy has also been linked to bolstering prosocial behavior in adolescents (Adeyeye & Oyewusi, 2017; Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Shem, 2016) and the reduction in aggressive behavior among adolescents (Shechtman & Tutian, 2016; Tijms et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2015). Adolescents seem to be particularly susceptible to engaging in socially aggressive behavior primarily due to the unique stage of life for in which they find themselves as they are

grappling with issues of self-image, peer pressure, and the onset of adulthood (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Burckhardt, Manicavasagar, Batterham, Hadzi-Pavlovic , & Shand, 2017; Dray, Bowman, Wolfenden, Campbell, Freund, Hodder, & Wiggers, 2015; Hovland, 2016).

These studies corroborate this research study in a multitude of ways. Each of the participants were adolescent females between the ages of 11-14. These young ladies expressed that as adolescents, there is a great deal of internal and external conflict that is encountered especially in an academic environment. Many had expressed that intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships as well as seeking to thrive in a school environment are the most challenging issues that they face as an age group. Other prevalent issues such as depression, bullying, low self-esteem, and impending adulthood also plague this unique demographic. In essence, the research participants shared that a major focus for the adolescent is navigating through and forging healthy, positive relationships with peers and the opposite sex.

Studies have also shown that although it is nearly impossible for one piece of literature to capture the essence of the lived experiences of a culture, the integration of bibliotherapy has been beneficial in building self-esteem in African American gifted young ladies. (Ford, Walters, Byrd, & Harris, 2019). It must be noted that blacks and females, in general, (Broome, 2017) have been perpetually underrepresented in gifted programs and are viewed as inferior to the white males on both intellectual and social levels (Anderson & Martin, 2018; Evans-Winters, 2014; J.L. Young, J.R. Young, & Ford, 2017). Moreover, as the Blacks had been seemingly perceived as academically less capable than their White counterparts and the notion that high academic achievement has been frowned upon in some Black communities, the gifted Black girl experiences a great deal of emotional turmoil and pressure (Ford et al., 2019).

This section of the empirical literature deals with African American girls and bibliotherapy. Herein lies the similarity between the empirical literature and this research study. Nevertheless, it does not address the issue of social aggression. It also does not address students in an urban academic setting, nor does it focus on females between the ages of 11-14. The emotional needs of the group studied in this current literature are much different from those of the research group for this collective case study. Even though both groups are dealing with self-image and pressure, the root of the issues are quite different. The academically gifted Black girls were grappling with self-image due to the threat of White male dominance. On the other hand, the participants in the research study were seeking to navigate through interpersonal relationships with other females and the pressure to perform academically did not seem to be a major concern.

Theoretical Literature

The theoretical framework that is the foundation for this research study is Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading. This theory speaks to the idea that there is a transaction or exchange between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1969). As a reader engages with a text, societal expectations, ideology, and value systems will be present and embedded within the pages. According to Rosenblatt (1938,1969), the human experience and schemata cannot be untethered from the interaction with a text. The text speaks to the human soul and the human soul responds and interprets the words based upon experiential knowledge and acceptance.

The results of this research study are comprehensively aligned with the theoretical framework in numerous ways. The discourse during the bibliotherapy sessions as well as the responses from the letter document, interviews, and the focus group, confirm the suitability of Rosenblatt's (1969) transactional theory of reading for this study. It was made clear that the participants indeed viewed the reading experience as an exchange or transaction of sorts even

though they would probably not be able to categorize or conceptualize the experience as such. However, as participants described the act of reading as a journey and a vehicle that transports one into a new and exciting world of discovery, it is apparent that the act of reading extends far beyond the mere stages of encoding and decoding phonological and phonemic characters. According to the group, reading is and can be transformational.

Rosenblatt (1938, 1969) noted that all human beings are the manifestation and summation of their experiences on this earthly plane. They are also impacted and even evaluated by the ethical and moral implications that have been prescribed by the members of society at large. Moreover, Rosenblatt (1938) asserted that literature innately entails the exploration of human relationships while the reader is bringing his or her experiences in the world regarding his or her interpersonal and/or intrapersonal relationships.

As the participants continued this journey of reading along with the inclusion of bibliotherapy sessions, they expressed how this transaction transpired. They would explore how they inserted their own thoughts about characters and situations and related to these incidents and experiences in their own lives. Many of the girls relived situations with bullies, expressed their regret in their complicity in some of these cases, and even described how bullies and other characters should have handled certain situations in a more prosocial manner. Hence, the notion the transactional theory of reading (Rosenblatt, 1969) involved the insertion of one's own identity and ideologies into the act of reading is confirmed. The research group also unanimously declared that bullying is unacceptable which also reflected the societal norms especially as this topic has garnered a great deal of attention and has been at the forefront of school intervention strategic planning over the past decade.

Rosenblatt (1938) even purported that literature is so valuable, forceful, or powerful that it possesses the ability to impact the reader on a conscious or subconscious level, engendering him or her to experience an array of emotions and even identification with or empathy for a character. In essence, the researcher also viewed reading as an emotional outlet. Rosenblatt (1969) also highlighted that this theory that is grounded in psychoanalysis, whereby an individual analyzes thoughts, emotions, images, and perceptions. Rosenblatt held that “the transactional view is especially reinforced by the frequent observation of psychologists that interest, expectations, anxieties, and other patterns based on past experience affect what an individual perceives” (Rosenblatt, 1969, p. 44).

The participants also expressed that the act of reading allowed them to engage their emotions. Some reported that they felt calm or relaxed when reading. Others expressed that they felt like they were in a happy place while reading. Moreover, they collectively expressed that reading was empowering as they were able to learn and analyze information which would serve them in the near or distant future. In addition, the act of reading seemingly brought some level of comfort to as well as excitement to others. Some respondents also were able to emote not only due to the act of reading, but also in response to the content of the text. For instance, the participants collectively expressed that they felt anger as they read about certain characters were the victims of mean girls or socially aggressive girls. Yet, on a large scale, most expressed that they felt sympathy not only for the victim, but also for the perpetrator.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications for this study are manifold. The act of reading alone can be transformational for individuals. It allows readers to reflect and analyze their own identity, experiences, value systems, and ideologies. It allows the reader to engage the imagination, exploring sensory and psychological stimuli. Reading also has the power to impact emotions and change attitudes, moods, and behavior. Hence, it may be even viewed as a stand-alone therapeutic intervention. However, when reading is infused with bibliotherapy, the probability of greater length, breadth, and depth of experience massively increases. Bibliotherapy offers added layers to the reading experience as it may foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging as new relationships are forged, cultivate analytical thinking and appreciation for diverse perspectives, increase interest in reading, encourage processing of emotions, and assist in the development of or reinforcement of societal values.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications for this study are that the African American community has been somewhat ignored in the areas of bibliotherapy research. The current research addresses this phenomenon with more rural and suburban students, rather than urban. It also deals with mixed gender groups of elementary and secondary students who are either Caucasian or Latino. This study clearly implies that adolescent African American who are socially aggressive girls felt empowered by the bibliotherapy experience. They viewed it as an intervention that made them feel special and included. Throughout the study, the respondents did not issue a single negative sentiment or implication regarding the experience.

Practical Implications

The findings in this study suggests that bibliotherapy could benefit school districts in many regards. In addition, the developmental branch of the intervention is suitable for any educator, behavior interventionist, administrator, or counselor to leverage. First, the curriculum should be peppered with high interest, reading level texts that are suitable for the variegated age and grade levels. Moreover, minorities should probably always be exposed to literature that also reflects their own culture. Students must be able to connect with the literature whether through cultural experiences, age group, or interests. Bibliotherapy would likely serve as an intervention for students with socio-emotional and/or behavioral issues. All educators, regardless of their respective content areas, should also be encouraged to leverage the opportunity to engage students in meaningful and intentional discourse around human values within the scope of a great piece of literature.

Delimitations and Limitations

The participants for this research study included only African American females between the ages of 11-14. They were also characterized as socially aggressive. In addition, they attended an urban middle school. The rationale for this delimitation was that there was a gap in literature when it came to this demographic. Most of the current literature excluded African Americans and urban school settings.

There were several limitations or possible weaknesses in the study. First, the study was limited to a mid-western region in the United States. Some of the participants were stronger readers than others. Hence, the depth of comprehension and subsequent responses to the text greatly varied both in written and verbal forms. Moreover, the data relied upon self-reporting which has intrinsic limitations relative to the verification of response authenticity. Moreover, the

responses of adolescents were not necessarily as robust as they may have been in comparison to a more mature participant sample. In addition, as I relied upon the behavior interventionist and administrators at the site to recruit students based upon certain criteria, it cannot be guaranteed that they selected participants with fidelity. Lastly, the goal for the number of participants fell within the range 12-15. Twelve participants agreed to engage in the research study. However, one could not be located for an extended period amid the bibliotherapy modules. Consequently, that participant has been excluded from the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Upon reflection of the limitations, delimitations, and study findings, there are several recommendations for further study. Both qualitative and quantitative types of research should be considered. The qualitative approach provides a smaller sample, yet a more in-depth exploration of a particular phenomenon itself; whereas the quantitative approach examines a larger data set and establishes correlational and causal relationships between variables. Hence, both approaches are valuable as the researcher must determine the purpose of a study. This section will provide a blueprint for the exploration of future research that would benefit all stakeholders and contribute to broadening insight in this field.

Age

The research study entailed only adolescents between the age ranges of 11-14. Further studies could involve a younger or older population. Perhaps sample populations could include elementary children, high school youth, college-aged young adults, working adults, or the elderly.

Gender, Ethnic, Racial Limitations

The current study only included African American females. Recommendations for further studies could include African American, Latino, or Asian males. Research has been limited as it examined bibliotherapy intervention for males only.

Region

The bibliotherapy research was conducted exclusively in a mid-western region in the United States. Further studies could be conducted in perhaps the southern or northern regions of the country. In addition, studies in bibliotherapy could also be expanded to countries outside of the United States of America.

Research Criteria

The research criteria limited the participants to socially aggressive females. Perhaps further studies could target a diversity of criterion. Socially aggressive individuals are considered as those who leverage forms of verbal abuse to foster intimidation in others. On the other hand, there are also bullies that specialize in physical aggression. This group could also be explored in research. Moreover, research criterion such as academically gifted students, artistically gifted students, individuals with incarcerated parents, grief-stricken young people, foster children, and children raised in single households would add to this field of study.

Instrument

The instrument for this study was the DKC Bibliotherapy Program. It was created by the researcher who holds an Education Specialist degree and had served as an English language arts instructor for over two decades. This program entailed a six-week program that involved different modules. Perhaps a different program could be explored, and even additional time periods such as a full semester or school year for the bibliotherapy sessions to occur. In addition,

in the bibliotherapy sessions, only literary texts were implemented. Perhaps further studies could entail informational and/or self-help texts.

Summary

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore how bibliotherapy among adolescent African American females in an urban middle school served as an intervention for female social aggression, or the mean girl syndrome. Each participant engaged in a six-week bibliotherapy session. The participants provided insight regarding the program through the interview process, written responses, and focus group discourse. This triangulation of data produced a robust exploration of the nuances and facets of bibliotherapy.

Upon reflection of the implications section of this study, there are two major takeaways from this study. The act of reading is clearly a transaction between the text and the reader (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1969). In some ways, there was an exchange that impacted how the reader interpreted the text and what the reader experienced as a direct result of contact with the reading selection.

The participants noted how as they read the selected text, they were able to relate personal scenarios and experiences to the those of the highlighted characters. In addition, they collectively agreed that reading impacted their mood in a positive manner and allowed them to experience sympathy for characters. Hence, the transaction between reader and the text was established as the reader brought her experience as she interacted with the text and the text capacitated the reader to experience positive and empathic emotions.

For the African American adolescent socially aggressive females, the bibliotherapy sessions and the reading experience, in general, were engagements that promoted self-awareness, interest in reading, inclusivity, introspection, and catharsis. Once again, the notion of the

transactional theory of reading (Rosenblatt, 1969) is reiterated. The act reading with the addition of bibliotherapy, allowed participants to not only identify with fictional and real-life mean girls, it also fostered a sense of responsibility in terms of recognizing their individual roles in being instrumental in transforming their lives and in the lives of others.

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APPENDIX A: IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL

Date: 12-16-2020

IRB #: IRB-FY19-20-397

Title: Bibliotherapy as Intervention for African-American Socially Aggressive Girls in an Urban School Setting: A Case Study

Creation Date: 5-22-2020

End Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Deborah Charaman

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial	Review Type Expedited	Decision Approved
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Key Study Contacts

Member Shante Austin	Role Co-Principal Investigator	Contact [REDACTED]
Member Deborah Charaman	Role Principal Investigator	Contact [REDACTED]
Member Deborah Charaman	Role Primary Contact	Contact [REDACTED]

APPENDIX B: PARENT CONSENT/ASSENT LETTER

ASSENT OF CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?

Bibliotherapy as Intervention for African American Socially Aggressive Girls in an Urban School Setting: A Case Study by Deborah Charaman

Why are we doing this study?

We are interested in studying what African American adolescent students experience in a bibliotherapy program.

Why are we asking you to be in this study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because you will participate in a bibliotherapy program at your middle school, and you are an African=American female between the ages of 11 and 14.

If you agree, what will happen?

If you are a part of this research study, you will be experiencing a six-week bibliotherapy program. Each bibliotherapy session will last for one hour. You will be asked to respond to texts via discussion and written responses. You will also be interviewed which will last approximately one hour. You may be asked to participate in a focus group which will last approximately one hour.

Do you have to be in this study?

No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you do not want to, it's OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It's up to you.

Do you have any questions?

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

Signature of Child

Date

Deborah Charaman will be conducting the research. You may contact her at -----@liberty.edu or by phone at -----. You may also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Shante Moore-Austin at -----@liberty.edu. Correspondences of any type will be kept confidential.

Liberty University Institutional Review Board,
1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515
or email at irb@liberty.edu.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Bibliotherapy as Intervention for African American Socially Aggressive Girls in an Urban School Setting: A Case Study

Deborah Charaman
Liberty University
Department of Education

Your child is invited to be in a research study on how middle school females perceive bibliotherapy. The participants will be asked to describe their experiences with bibliotherapy. Your child was selected as a possible participant because she is a female between the ages of 11 and 14 and has agreed to participate in a bibliotherapy program. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow her to be in the study.

Deborah Charaman, a doctoral student in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to gain in-depth insight as to how bibliotherapy is perceived by female middle school students. Bibliotherapy is a form of intervention that allows individuals to address socio-emotional issues through the use of texts.

Procedures: If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, I will ask her to do the following things:

1. Participate in a six-week bibliotherapy program. Each session will last approximately one hour.
2. Answer open-ended questions during an interview that would take approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded.
2. A randomly selected group will be asked to engage in a focus group once all previous activities are completed. This activity will be video recorded. The time estimate for this activity is approximately one hour.
3. Respond to a writing prompt whereby the participant will write a letter to a fictional character.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits:

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Your child will be compensated for participating in this study. A gift card in the amount of \$25 will be issued to each participant upon completion of the research study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- I will conduct the interviews and other activities in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect her current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your child to participate, she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If your child chooses to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should your child choose to withdraw, any data collected, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Deborah Charaman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at -----@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Shante Moore-Austin, at -----@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO ALLOW YOUR child TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record/photograph my child/student as part of her participation in this study.

Signature of Minor Date

Signature of Parent Date

Signature of Investigator Date

APPENDIX C: LETTER RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Letter Responses

All 11 of the participants will engage in the letter responses. For the purpose of this study, the documents that will be analyzed consist of letters that are written in response to the text that is assigned to the participants. Each participant will be asked to write a letter to one of the characters. Each letter will address the following:

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WRITING PROMPTS:

Write a letter of apology to Ms. Saunders, Maleeka, Mr. Pajouli, or Mama from the perspective of any character who has disrespected one to these individuals. Also include how you would change your behavior to become more prosocial in your interactions.

OR

Write a letter of encouragement to Juju, Charlese, or John-John from the perspective of another pertinent character. Also include how Charlese or John-John could engage in prosocial behavior in the future.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Standardized Interview Questions for Bibliotherapy Recipients

1. Introduce yourself and provide any interesting facts that you would like to share about yourself, your favorite hobbies, your family, your school activities, and aspirations for the future.
2. What are some of the emotions you feel about being involved with research?
3. What are some of the challenges that you experience being an adolescent?
4. How do most adolescent girls relate to each other?
5. How do African American adolescent girls relate to each other?
6. How do you engage your imagination when you are reading?
7. What are some of the benefits of reading?
8. How would you describe what you feel during the process of reading?
9. What kinds of behavior are exhibited by bullies?
10. What makes females bully each other?
11. What is the difference between how females bully each other as opposed to males?
12. How do you think female bullies feel about what they do to others?
13. How do you feel about female bullies?
14. What advice would you give to a female bully?

APPENDIX E: FOCUS QUESTIONS

Standardized Focus Group Questions for Participants

1. What characteristics constitute the “mean girl?”
2. How would you describe what happened to you internally as you read about the mean girls?
3. What are some words or phrases you would use to describe the relationship between you and the text?
4. How would you describe your experience with the bibliotherapy sessions?
5. What impact has the bibliotherapy session had on you as an individual?
6. How do you think bibliotherapy could help “mean girls?”
7. How did bibliotherapy help you deal with some of your emotions toward bullies?