Engagement With Young Adult Literature: Outcomes and Processes

Gay Ivey
University of Wisconsin–Madison, USA

Peter H. Johnston
University at Albany, State University of New York, USA

ABSTRACT

This study examines students' perceptions of the outcomes and processes of engaged reading in classrooms prioritizing engagement through self-selected, self-paced reading of compelling young adult literature. The primary data were 71 end-of-year student interviews, supported by end-of-year teacher interviews, biweekly observational data, on-the-fly conversations with students, and video/audio records of student-initiated book discussions. An inductive analysis yielded 15 main categories of outcomes, including changes in students' identities, in their sense of agency, and in their relational, moral, and intellectual lives. The web of relationships among the processes and outcomes is examined through 317 causal statements made by students in interviews. Finally, a case study illustrates the cascading and reciprocal effects of engaged reading on one student's development. These adolescents showed, to varying degrees, an awareness of these processes and self-transformations, and thus a sense of agency with respect to their own development—their personhood and future narratives. This study raises questions about the adequacy of existing models of engagement for explaining students' engaged reading experiences and about currently advocated approaches to teaching English language arts that (a) minimize the roles of engagement and fiction, (b) require students to read the same text, (c) focus on engaged reading as an individual cognitive act without regard for the social nature of literate and human development, and (d) expect uniform outcomes across students.

Educational reform efforts have for decades focused on improving reading achievement and reducing achievement disparities. Engaged reading is associated with both (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010), but in the United States there has been a steady decline in the amount of voluntary reading reported by 13- and 17-year-olds (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). Yet, calls to make engaged reading an essential component of adolescent literacy curricula (e.g., Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Torgesen et al., 2007) go unheeded. In this article, we report the experiences of eighth-grade students whose English teachers prioritized engaged reading as their central curricular goal, using self-selected young adult literature to establish student autonomy and relevance—both recognized conditions for engaged reading (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012; Wigfield et al., 2008).

Although there is a substantial body of research on student engagement in general and the contexts that enable engagement (e.g., Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012), our study responds to calls for students' perspectives on engagement, which Reschly and Christenson (2012) note are "critical to understanding the person–environment fit and to efforts to enhance student engagement" (p. 13). Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012) similarly argue that students' perspectives afford us the opportunity to discover the different processes by which students become engaged and the potential outcomes of engagement

that are unrealized in standard forms of measurement. In this article, we draw on student voices to construct an expanded understanding of the nature and outcomes of engaged reading and the processes through which those outcomes are realized.

We approach this work through an expanded sociocultural theory (e.g., Deakin Crick, 2012; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004) for two reasons: (1) because of the breadth of development touched by research on engagement, including the development of identities (e.g., Moje, 2000), agency (Reeve, 2012), moral development, and other dimensions of personhood (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004); and (2) because engagement is not solely an individual phenomenon but, rather, is relational (Yazzie-Mintz, 2007) and cultural (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012).

Background of the Study

Any study invoking extended self-selected reading brings to mind research on access to books (e.g., Allington et al., 2010; Kim & White, 2008), time spent reading (e.g., Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988), and various interpretations of the significance of independent silent reading programs (e.g., Cunningham, 2001; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Shanahan, 2003). Most of this work is ultimately concerned with the link between independent reading and higher reading achievement as a targeted outcome. Although these lines of research are related to the present study, our primary concern is with the processes of engaged reading and the breadth of potential outcomes, as experienced by students.

First, then, we briefly review the status of engaged reading. Second, we explore the potential of young adult literature for supporting engaged reading among adolescents. Third, we review current methodological concerns regarding student engagement and the void potentially filled by the inclusion of student perspectives.

Engaged Reading

Much of the research on engaged reading has been reviewed (and accomplished) by Guthrie and his colleagues (e.g., Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012). Through their work on Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction, they have identified instructional practices associated with engaged reading. For instance, engaged reading is enhanced in classrooms with interesting texts, real-world interactions, autonomy support (e.g., choice), strategy instruction, opportunities for collaboration, and teacher involvement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012), although teacher involvement in the form of frequent monitoring, supervision, and interference

undermines feelings of autonomy (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002). So, in recent work with adolescents, these researchers focus particularly on relevance and supporting student autonomy (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Klauda, 2012), conditions exploited by the teachers in the present study.

Although the conditions for engaged reading are well specified, at least in the abstract, the definition of engaged reading deserves further exploration. At the outset, we relied on the widely accepted definition offered by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) that engaged reading is strategic, motivated interaction with text and that engaged readers are "motivated to read, strategic in their approaches to comprehending what they read, knowledgeable in their construction of meaning from text, and socially interactive while reading" (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012, p. 602). Most work on engaged reading has focused on the first half of this definition of an engaged reader.

As our work progressed, students made us increasingly aware of the need to understand the latter part of this definition: the nature of their construction of meaning and the socially interactive (relational) aspect of engaged reading. These dimensions of engaged reading are underexplored as processes, although they are recognized in places. The Motivation to Read Questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), for example, has an item stem "I feel like I make friends with people in good books" (p. 432). This concept invites a transactional view of the reading process—a theoretical perspective that does not use the term *engagement* but shares qualities with engagement theory, particularly a social dimension.

From a transactional perspective (Rosenblatt, 1983), the construction of meaning from text and the socially interactive nature of reading are intimately connected. For example, working with young readers and narrative texts, Lysaker and her colleagues (Lysaker & Miller, 2012; Lysaker, Tonge, Gauson, & Miller, 2011) developed a fundamentally social view of reading engagement and instruction: Relationally Oriented Reading Instruction (RORI). RORI is grounded in research on social imagination (Fernyhough, 2008), dialogism (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), and literary theory (Rosenblatt, 1983). RORI views engaged reading primarily as a site for the development of a dialogic, relational, narrative self—the development of a human being. It assumes that language events like reading and the conversations in which they are embedded become the raw materials for the construction of self, including, for example, the capacity for social imagination and the construction of other. As such, reading provides a foundation for the relational properties of communities and relational capacities of community members. It appears that this kind of flexibility, and the relational capacity of social

imagination that affords it, might similarly be necessary for deep engagement.

In other words, a transactional view of the reading process offers new meaning to engaged readers' "construction of meaning from text, and [being] socially interactive while reading" (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012, p. 602). Lysaker and Miller (2012) argue that such dialogic encounters "might be necessary for deep engagement" (p. 21). From this viewpoint, engaged reading offers the possibility of expanding the capacity for social imagination in the reader's own life, potentially changing readers' social behavior (Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Lysaker et al., 2011) and life narratives—their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In this sense, as Deakin Crick (2012) argues, the engagements necessarily would have ethical/moral implications. Indeed, from this perspective, engaged reading is fundamentally about highly consequential dimensions of readers' socioemotional lives.

Young Adult Literature and Engagement

Young adult literature is potentially a useful tool for engaged reading among adolescents. Contemporary selections in particular are inherently relevant in that, by design, they are responsive to the emotional and cultural challenges young people face in their everyday lives. Engagement with such texts invites dialogic relationships with the characters whose narratives have relevance for readers' lives (Rosenblatt, 1983). Indeed, Coats (2011) suggests that young adult literature

> is itself dialogic—that is, it participates in the vibrant and constantly shifting cultural dialogue regarding what we value and how our lives might be lived both responsibly and responsively in the face of increasing globalization, perspective-altering technologies, and ideological challenge and change. (p. 320)

Features of contemporary texts, such as multiple narrators, shifting perspectives, and multimodalities, invite readers to consider varied viewpoints on personal and social problems, including those normally underrepresented. In the process, they "call [the] moral universe into question" (Coats, 2011, p. 322), leaving issues of equity and identity and the tensions between stability and growth not as lessons to be learned but as points of uncertainty, thus inviting readers to construct meanings in the world of the text and to seek potential meanings with others outside of the text.

There is reason to suspect, then, that opportunities to select young adult literature, typically situated in the social networks with which adolescents identify, would foster engaged reading. Indeed, in a survey about adolescents' reading habits outside of school (Moje, Overby,

Tysvaer & Morris, 2008), nearly a third of respondents reported reading young adult novels but not necessarily the texts that are valued in school. In reflecting on this finding, Moje and colleagues suggest that we may be selling short the potential of literature to positively influence adolescent development because of what we have observed in traditional settings characterized by whole-class assigned readings and teacher-directed instruction.

Implicit in this observation is the possibility that if adolescents were provided with the reading materials they valued, we might gain new insights into the nature of their engaged reading experiences and associated outcomes. Perhaps the failure of research to provide these insights is due to the absence of personally relevant texts in secondary English classrooms (Lewis & Dockter, 2011) where required canonical texts from American and British literature, rather than engagement, anchor the curriculum (Applebee, 1993; Hale & Crowe, 2001; Sewell, 2008; Yagleski, 2005).

Student Perspectives and Methods for Research on Engagement

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) critically reviewed the methods commonly used to measure behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, the current cornerstones of student engagement research. First, they suggest that observational techniques, such as those used to evaluate behavioral engagement, often fail to account for the quality of students' thinking and participation. Furthermore, the researchers argue that interpretations of student behavior can be misleading, citing a study by Peterson, Swing, Stark, and Wass (1984) in which students observed to be on task were actually not thinking about the material at hand. Conversely, students who appeared unengaged were actually involved in deep thinking about the material.

Second, Fredricks and colleagues (2004) describe shortcomings in the types of self-report measures often used to measure emotional and cognitive engagement. They point out that surveys of emotional engagement, measured by items addressing general emotions such as happy, sad, interested, or bored, do not reveal the precise source of emotions. The researchers also describe cognitive engagement as inherently difficult to measure and impossible to capture through observation. Even in self-report scenarios, students are commonly asked to think about their cognition hypothetically rather than attached to specific activities. Survey items such as "I pay attention in class" (Reeve & Tseng, 2011, p. 259) offer some information about general tendencies but no insight into the qualities of engagement in a specific context. Indeed, Eccles and Wang (2012) observe that engagement itself might be "content specific," noting

"many of the existing engagement measures are quite general, rarely focusing on specific tasks, situations, or subjects" (p. 137).

Surveys and questionnaires that leave students little room to elaborate might also mask the dimensions of engagement that students find most important. For example, in a large-scale survey of high school engagement (Yazzie-Mintz, 2007), students were asked to respond to 100 items that included multiple-choice questions and focused short-answer questions. The last question, however, was open ended and invited students to comment on whatever they deemed important. Themes emerging from the analysis of this item centered on how relationships and learning mattered over conventional forms of achievement—a departure from the content and focus of the multiple-choice and short-answer items. In short, surveys and observations alone narrow the potential for gaining new insights into the processes leading to engagement, the nature of engagement, and the potential outcomes of engagement.

Additional gaps in the research on engagement include limited information on engagement as a multidimensional construct that combines not only behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement (Reeve, 2012) but also other possible dimensions such as agentic engagement (Reeve, 2012). According to Fredricks et al. (2004), the emphasis in current research on variable-centered models fails to capture the possible interactions among the different constructs, thus offering "little information about interactions or synergy" (p. 87). The researchers hypothesize that methods that consider simultaneously the various dimensions of engagement would "allow for fuller characterizations of individuals" (p. 83). Fredricks et al. call for qualitative approaches—seldom used in student engagement research—as a way to help fill this gap. The present study, centering on student interviews about engaged reading in young adult literature—a specific kind of activity with potentially its own unique dimensions—addresses this void.

The present study is based on the premise that middle school students given opportunities to select personally meaningful young adult literature, autonomy in their use of that material, and time to read will readily become engaged in reading. The second premise is that interviews with students who have experienced extensive engaged reading will likely provide insight into the nuances and significance of engaged reading. We posed the following research questions:

- What do students perceive to be the outcomes of engaged reading of young adult literature?
- What do students perceive to be the causal processes of engaged reading?

Methodology

This is a qualitative study of the processes and outcomes of an instructional focus on engaged reading. Our data collection and analyses are informed by sociocultural theories, particularly by theories related to the development of personhood (Deakin Crick, 2012; Stetsenko, 2012; Sugarman, 2005), that is, the notion that persons develop through entrenchment in sociocultural contexts and within relationships, but not without agency.

Instructional Context

Two years prior to the present study, all four eighth-grade English teachers in one middle school decided to focus on student engagement by supporting autonomy and personal relevance. They abandoned whole-class assigned classic texts in favor of student-selected, self-paced reading within a collection of materials dealing with issues and concepts of high interest to students, primarily edgy, contemporary young adult fiction. In interactions with students, the teachers focused on engagement, following and stimulating students' lines of inquiry rather than doing comprehension checks. The students read at their own pace and were no longer held responsible for any particular assignments associated with the books (e.g., projects, quizzes). The teachers encouraged the students to read at home, and no additional homework for English was assigned. This shift in learning environment had three central components, ceding to the students both choice of reading material and choice of how to respond and introducing them to many personally relevant books. There were no substantive changes to the writing curriculum, and these changes did not take place in the seventh-grade curriculum.

The teachers continued this practice upon entering the year of the present study having become increasingly knowledgeable of young adult fiction and narrative nonfiction, particularly the types of texts of interest to eighth-grade students in their community. A large proportion of these books contained stark realities (e.g., sexual abuse, suicide) and moral uncertainties. There were 150–200 different titles available in each classroom, with only one to three copies of each book. The classroom collections were rotated among classrooms every nine weeks to maintain student access to new texts. During the first week of school, the teachers reserved a day in which all students gathered in the auditorium during their English block to hear a series of book talks presented by the teachers. Each student was given a bookmark on which to write the titles of texts that piqued their interest. Thereafter, the teachers introduced new books on a regular basis during regular class times.

Although there were subtle differences between the teachers, all of the English classes began with a substantial amount of time devoted to student reading, followed by a teacher read-aloud of a young adult book and ending with time devoted to student writing. Although writing instruction and student experiences with writing were often connected to the students' self-selected texts, the present study emphasizes student engaged reading.

The Demographic Context

The setting for this study includes all eighth-grade English classrooms in a public middle school (grades 6–8) serving a mid-Atlantic town with a population of approximately 22,000. U.S. Census Bureau (2010) data indicate the median household income in this community is $41,000, with 13% living below the poverty line. The school had 670 students, 47% of whom were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch. The percentages of ethnicities were Caucasian 72%, African American 16%, Hispanic 11%, and other ethnicities less than 1%. Each of the four English teachers instructed three 90-minute classes of 17–20 students. Three of the 12 sections were designated as honors classes and two sections as inclusive classrooms. The 71 participating students were those who gave assent and had their parents' consent. The percentages of these students' ethnicities were Caucasian 68%, African American 27%, and Hispanic 5%.

Data

Because our research questions demanded student perspectives on their own development and insider knowledge of processes, our primary data were end-of-year student interviews ($n = 71$) in May. State test scores from the current and previous school year were available for all eighth-grade students but identified only for students in the study. One interviewed student was absent for the test. There was no difference between the mean test scores of the interviewed group ($n = 70$) and those who were not interviewed ($n = 162$; $t = 0.399$, df = 230, $p = .691$). The group variances were also comparable: $F = 2.535$, $p = .113$, Levene's test.

Our student interview questions reflected the intentions of our research goals, that is, to understand the range of outcomes of engagement and the processes supporting engagement as perceived by students. We sought information on depth of engagement and how students experienced compelling young adult texts as well as students' sense of agency in reading. Because we were drawing on theories of personhood (Stetsenko, 2012; Sugarman, 2005) and its possible relationship to engagement, we also asked about perceived change in self and in students' ways of thinking. To understand the social outcomes of engagement, we initially asked only about talk related to reading. In initial interviews,

we noticed students, unprompted, were mentioning changes in their relationships because of these conversations, so after 36 interviews, we followed up by directly asking whether reading and talking about text had affected relationships. We asked about how reading at home had changed, what students expected would happen with their reading in summer, what they learned as readers, and finally, whether there was anything else they would like to add. A list of all interview questions is included in the Appendix.

The following were the secondary data sources intended for comparison with the interviewswere:

- End-of-year interviews with all four English teachers to explore their instructional decisions and their observations of significant changes in practice and student behavior
- Observational data obtained approximately two full days each week spent in classroom visits
- On-the-fly conversations with students during English class time
- Videotapes and audiorecordings of student-initiated small-group discussions of books

Analysis

Our primary strategy was an inductive analysis of the 71 student interviews to identify the scope and nature of the outcomes of engaged reading. We began with open coding, each author independently coding, line by line, five arbitrarily selected interviews. We then collaboratively sought tentative emerging axial codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process was repeated with the next five arbitrarily selected interviews, and then the next five, in the context of the developing axial codes. This was followed by two cycles of 20 interviews each.

This process produced continual refinements. For example, early on we had axial codes for "community" (e.g., inclusiveness, symmetrical power structures, noticing others' interests and change, class history of talk topics, reference to *we* as community) and "relationships" (e.g., breaking the ice, generating new relationships, trust, deepening relationships). Ultimately, we eliminated the category of "community" as largely redundant with "relationships," with some codes moved to other categories. For example, "class history of talk topics" became part of an emerging category "talk through and about books," and "reference to *we* as community" became part of the emerging category "identities/selves."

We then turned to the other data sources for corroborating evidence. For example, observational instances such as a student finishing a book, immediately turning to the student seated behind her to insist, "You have *got* to read this book!," and then offering a summary provided supporting documentation for the

category "talk through and about books." When the student who was told about the book consequently decided to read it, to the delight of the instigator, we noted evidence for the category "agency," specifically the subcategory "social agency." We continued to compare secondary data sources for verification to the point where saturation signaled to us a satisfying conceptual framework that included 15 major categories of outcomes and several subcategories. These were sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate all codes but sufficiently unique to be reliably identifiable. Indeed, independent coding of the remaining 16 transcripts (22% of the data) by the two authors produced an inter-rater reliability of 90.6%. Much of the remaining disagreement was constrained to cross-coding of two categories, "intellectual stance" and "moral stance," so we collapsed these into a single category called "intellectual and moral stance."

The Results section of this article is structured around these codes, with clarifying descriptions and examples. In some instances, a single extended example suffices, whereas in others, multiple shorter examples are needed. To be clear about the prevalence of each construct, we identify the number of students whose transcripts showed at least one instance of evidence for the construct. As an additional potential outcome, we offer a pretest/posttest analysis of test scores.

During the course of our primary analysis of the interviews, we discovered explicit statements from students in which they offered what they viewed as causal links in their engaged reading. For example, one student observed, "Well, free verse made me get into reading. I used to not like [reading]." This is a clear statement that a particular kind of book produced more engaged reading. Similarly, a student observed, "It's like the books have me more focused on reading than just, like, messing around in class." In this example, the student argues that books occupy his mind, which reduces disruptive behavior. These statements potentially shed light on the network of processes through which the outcomes occurred. Thus, we conducted a second analysis of the data to identify the range of causal process statements made by students.

We independently reread the data, seeking instances of causal statements, and found 317 instances in which both researchers identified a statement as causal and identified the specific cause(s) and consequence(s). To address instances on which we disagreed, we attempted to further operationalize causal statements by listing the range of causal phrases, such as *made me*, *because*, *so, and now*, *gave me*, and *brought me out to be*. The list became very long and still failed to cover examples like "I have a bit more sympathy now. After reading *Not Simple* [by Natsume Ono], it's hard not to." Consequently, we operationally defined causal process statements as only those instances that both researchers independently identified as such.

We then organized the statements into groups by causal relationships, resulting in 37 categories of relationships. Some statements included simple relationships (e.g., reading a particular book caused self-regulation). However, many statements included multiple causal relationships, for example, Marcus noted, "We talk about what we want [to read] next...a book like *Stolen* [by Lucy Christopher] kind of helps you make new friends…people, like, I would never have talked to last year, we've become, like, friends through books." Here, we identified one process link between a specific book and talking about a book and a second link between talking about a book and the development of relationships. These causal process statements are unique to individual students, yet overlapping, and collectively suggest an extended web of linked processes.

Finally, as a third level of analysis, we constructed five case studies: three studies of individual students, one study of two students in relationship with each other, and one study of three students with shared experiences. The purpose of developing these narratives was to understand the interrelatedness of processes and outcomes within individuals and the processes that explained the proposed outcomes. We present one of these cases to illustrate this interrelatedness while maintaining a sense of the person-level wholeness of the data, not as representative of the full diversity of cases.

Results

Our first question, "What do students perceive to be the outcomes of engaged reading of young adult literature?," called for a descriptive analysis of the dimensions of achievement resulting from engagement with young adult literature. We present these dimensions, each with a brief description, the number of students reporting it, examples from interview data, and an example from an additional data source. For our second question, "What do students perceive to be the causal processes of engaged reading?," we report and illustrate the network of relationships students describe. We close this section with a case study that demonstrates the cascading effect of the learning environment on development within one student, and its relational implications.

Students' Perceptions of the Outcomes of Engaged Reading of Young Adult Literature

Engaged Reading (*n* = 71)

Evidence for engaged reading included student reports of reading for extended periods within and outside of school and beyond sanctioned times. Josiah observed, "I be getting in trouble for reading my book when I'm not

supposed to be, in math class or something. He'll say, 'Put your book away.' Paul always get in trouble for reading his books." Tory confessed, "I usually read, like, all the time at night…if I hear [my parents] come upstairs, I'll, like, just put it under my covers, then they go away, and I'll start reading again."

We often observed students continuing to read as teachers moved on to other activities. For instance, one day we noted, "Reading time in class ended at 2:20, Nikki [kept] reading until 2:47." Students reported prioritizing reading over other activities (e.g., "I'll go home, and I'll get engaged in a book instead of just get on the computer and watch TV and stuff like that."), and they noticed that same trend in others (e.g., "I see my friend Edward reading a lot. He's always talking about how he's reading at home and, like, reading more than playing video games."). Most students viewed the decision to read voluntarily as a substantial change As Max put it, "Last year I didn't read at all. The only book I read is *The Outsiders* [by S.E. Hinton]…but now I read whenever I can get the chance."

Engagement was evident not just in the time students spent reading but also in how they talked about their involvement with text, which they juxtaposed with passive, compliant reading of the past. For instance, Lacey noted,

> *Before I Fall* [by Lauren Oliver] is one of those, like, the first books I've ever truly gotten into, like one of those books where you could really picture yourself in that scene. Like you feel like you're with them…I used to hate to read. I didn't read at all. I'd sit there and turn the pages when the teacher looked at me, and that was pretty much it.

The last part of Lacey's statement—a confession of past noncompliance and the realization of engagement as an alternative—occurred frequently and explicitly in the data. For example, Kely stated,

> Before this year, we kind of had to read books they assigned to us, so I'd pretend to read it, and I just wouldn't care about books at all. But now they give us a choice if we want to read it, where we get to pick the book that we read. I actually read it instead of pretending to read it.

Related, students reported that their reading experiences lingered with them even after they finished a text (e.g., "It's a really good book, and I keep thinking about it.").

Students' involvement in books, though, did not stop at attention to story lines. Their comments indicate dialogical relationships within books. Addie described it this way: "I feel so connected to the characters that I don't want to leave them…I have a special bond with the characters, 'cause I just feel like I was in the book, and I was there beside them the whole time." About *The Book of Bright Ideas* by Sandra Kring, Addie confessed, "I fell in love with [the main] character…like, every day, I'm thinking what would Freeda do?"

At a time when she was going through personal struggles, Maya described a mutually beneficial relationship between herself and the main character of *Delirium* by Lauren Oliver: "'Cause right now she's having problems of her own….It's like I'm helping her with her problems, as well as she's helping me." Students indicated that they sometimes struggled with characters' emotional states. For instance, Wes was frustrated with the main character of *Gym Candy* by Carl Deuker, whose father had taught him to stifle his emotions: "It kind of made me think that he thinks that football is his life. There's no crying in football, so there's no crying in life," and as if speaking directly to the character, "It's kind of like some people need to cry. So when something like that happens, just let it out."

Talk Through and About Books (*n* = 65)

Closely tied to engaged reading in the data was evidence of widespread talk inspired by students' experiences with books, both within and outside of school and with peers, teachers, and family members. Students reported that spontaneous conversations occurred in English class, often when small groups of students ended up reading the same book. As Amber described it,

> We have a lot of group discussion about books. Like I got this book, *Go Ask Alice* [by Anonymous], and I told [my teacher] about it….So, I read it, and she read, and because of me reading it, we got the whole class to read it. They wanted to borrow my copy and hers. And we've had, like, discussions of that, and we compared that book to, like, *Crank* [by Ellen Hopkins]….I haven't read *Crank* yet, but we compared it to different books like that, and it just got us into this discussion. And *Go Ask Alice*, we always seem to go back to that one, trying to compare.

There was talk around problem solving (e.g., "Me and Layla were reading the books at the same time, so we would talk to each other about it, and then I would have to go back and reread or whatever and figure out what they were trying to say.") and book recommendations (e.g., "Students, they would come to me and be like, 'Oh, girl, you need to read this.'"). We observed and teachers reported that student-initiated talk was common and that its purpose was not necessarily for clarification or recommendation, per se. As one teacher explained,

> They are so excited about what they're reading, and they love what they're reading. They sit and tell you everything. They don't care whether you know the book or not. They don't love the affirmation. They just want the avenue to talk.

But talk was not limited to English class. For instance, Marty explained, "It happens a lot in math…. I'll be like, 'Oh, Dustin, you should read this book,' and I'll tell him what it's about. He'll want to read it. He'll do

the same thing." The cafeteria was mentioned frequently, as in this comment from Kelly:

> It's a common thing at our lunch table to talk about the books we're reading, 'cause we all take them to lunch, even though we don't read them at lunch. It's just, they come around everywhere with us…it doesn't even seem like nerdy. It's just what's been going on. We talk about the characters… and how it's different than other books we've read.

Talking about books extended beyond the school day (e.g., "I'll call and talk about the book I'm reading.") and with friends from other schools (e.g., "sometimes my friends on the swim team"). Thirty-one of the 71 students interviewed made references to conversations with family members about books. For instance, Jonathan recalled,

> I talk to my dad when he's home, but he usually be at work all the time. I only see my dad in the morning and on weekends. I talk to him about *Homeboyz* [by Alan Lawrence Sitomer] and how it relate to my cousin.

Similarly, Maria shared, "I told my mom and my sister about [*Perfect Chemistry* by Simone Elkeles] 'cause it had a lot do to with, like, gangs and them Latino Bloods and white people."

Relationships (*n* = 50)

Conversations inspired by reading were connected to student reports of changes in relationships in and outside of school. Students shared instances of interacting with peers whom they would not have otherwise (e.g., "This morning, this girl, she's got the book called *Scars* [by C.A. Rainfield] that I love, and we just sat there talking like forever. We had so much to say about it.") and of using shared knowledge about books to ease social tension (e.g., "It's like an icebreaker."). Others reported new friendships (e.g., "We both read that, and we talked about how much we liked it, and now we're really good friends.") and the deepening of existing relationships (e.g., "One of my friends who did recommend, like, one book, we really weren't that close before, but it turns out we both had an experience in that book, and we bonded over that.").

Students reported increased interpersonal trust. As Harris explained, "I don't know how to put it, but it's just that talk, you get to talk between each other, and that makes you feel you can trust that person more." The trust extended into the whole-class community, as Monica described:

> At the beginning of the year, you've known everybody, but you're not really friends with everybody. And, like, once we start doing this, and everybody starts speaking out, and, like, everybody's having conversations with each other about it, it seems like you're friends with everybody.

In addition, relationships between teachers and students evolved. As one teacher explained, "They're talking to me as if they're readers and I'm a reader, so we're on an equal playing field. It's no longer teacher and student. We're the same." Similarly, students reported that engagement opened up communication with family members. For example, Jackson explained, "Me and my mom have more things to talk about now. When she asks me about school, I can say, 'I read a book,' give her details about it."

Identities/Selves (*n* = 52)

We documented shifts in students' sense of themselves and the possibility for change. Most obviously, there were shifts in students' self-perceptions as readers, evident in clear declarations of identity, such as "I'm a bookworm," and in statements reflecting the dynamic nature of becoming a reader, such as "I used to be slow at reading, but I'm kind of, like, in the middle." We captured instances of these changes when students were cognizant of the difference. For example, we observed this announcement from Cash one day in class: "I got up early today to read. I woke up, got right in the shower, ate, so then I'd have time to read *Unwind* [by Neal Shusterman] before I came to school. It's good. I've never done anything like that before." The shifts from a fixed view of "who I am" to an understanding of the possibility of change ("I'm becoming someone different") and thus toward the conscious shaping of students' own futures extended beyond identity as reader. For example, in thinking about how reading had changed him, Barry stated, "I think I got smarter." Hattie reflected, "I feel like I used to be a very social person, and I'm not a very academic person, but I can actually, like, have conversations about books now, which is kind of weird for me."

Social Imagination (*n* = 32)

Expanded social imagination (i.e., the ability to imagine what is going on in others' minds and to imagine the logic of social interaction) was evident in the expanded competence, and propensity, to recognize the self in other and the other in self, and in conversational contributions about socioemotional logic. For example, Marion reflected.

> I thought [*Destroying Avalon* by Kate McCaffrey] was really good, really sad at the end. But it just makes you think about, to pay attention to how people react, to pay attention to how they're feeling about stuff. Like when you see people you don't really think, you know, you think. well. they don't have problems or whatever. But then some of the ones I've read, you can just understand people better.

Attention to the mental activity of others was also documented in students' conversations with one another. For instance, Ted shared with his classmates in a peer-led discussion, "In *Why I Fight* [by J. Adams Oaks],

this boy burns his house down, and I was thinking how bad that would feel to burn your house down by accident and then to get blamed for it."

Agency (*n* = 65)

We documented shifts in students' agency. Students had a substantially stronger sense that they could have an effect on things: their own reading, social relationships, emotions, and life narratives. These claims were also evident (but not documentable) in a newfound confidence in students' speech, reflecting a new sense of competence. We documented five different domains of agency: (1) agency in reading, (2) social agency, (3) moral agency, (4) agency with respect to one's life narrative, and (5) agency in self-regulation.

Agency in Reading (n = 56)

This refers to a sense of initiative and control in aspects of reading. For example, "I'll bug my mom to take me to Books-a-Million to get a book or go to the library more often. She would usually have to drag me there, but now I drag her there" or "Then I started *trying* to find deeper reading." Keisha recalled when she began to take control of her reading:

> I was flipping through the pages [of *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott], and I wasn't reading, but then I saw a part where I started to read it, and I was like 'I'm going back to the beginning,' and I started reading from the beginning. Usually I wouldn't have done that. But that was when I completely got hooked on all the books that I've read…. When I read *Living Dead Girl*, my whole perspective changed 'cause before I read that book, the books I read were like completely the opposite of the way I read books now. 'Cause usually it will get boring to me, and I will just read it because I don't have anything else to read. But I'm changing now. It's like I get something out it of every time I read it.

It was common to see students demonstrating agency in their reading. For instance, we observed Katrina writing sticky notes about the multiple first-person narrators of her book as a way of keeping characters straight when perspectives shifted across chapters.

Social Agency (n = 33)

This is the sense that the student can or has intentionally affected others through his or her actions or that he or she can arrange for others to affect their own behavior. Most notably, students mentioned that they were responsible for someone else reading a particular book (e.g., "I told him he should read it, and he's reading it now."). Social agency was readily observable in the classrooms. For instance, we witnessed Dean persuading Gavin: "You really should read *Wish You Were Dead*. It's by Todd Strasser, who wrote *Give a Boy a Gun*, and you got me to read that." We might have coded these as

part of agency in reading, but the category also included examples of students deliberately making changes in their peer relationships as a consequence of reading particular books.

Moral Agency (n = 20)

This refers to morally significant behavioral acts or intentions and the sense of making a moral difference in the world. For example, Lindsay described this shift:

> I read a couple of books where people get bullied, and it changes my mind, 'cause in a couple of books I read, people commit suicide for it. And in *Hate List* [by Jennifer Brown], that book is really good, and it changes my mind about how people feel about things. And even, like, a little comment can change someone's life. And, like, the other day, I saw people on Facebook picking on this one girl, like, saying nobody liked her because she was ugly and had no friends. And I kind of put a stop to it. I told them it was wrong and that people commit suicide for it all the time. So, it changed my way of seeing things. Normally I wouldn't have said anything to stop. But now, if I see anything, I stop it.

Notice that this example includes a clear argument for a causal relationship between engaged reading, particularly the book *Hate List*, and a commitment to moral action. Such causal statements are discussed later in the article. Similar commitments were observed in student–student conversations.

Agency in Life Narratives (n = 27)

This refers to a student's intention to live differently and make positive life decisions. For example, Maggie told others in a small-group discussion, "Like when I read *November Blues* [by Sharon M. Draper], I was like, yeah, I'm not going to do that kind of stuff." Brent told peers in a small-group discussion that *Gym Candy*

> showed me just what steroids could do to you and how it can affect the relationship between you and your friends and affect the relationship between you and your sport. But I mean, like, the biggest problem for me is, like, if I did that, I would be getting kicked off the team. I mean, 'cause then I couldn't play another high school sport for the rest of my life, or I couldn't play any college sport or anything like that. But then again, I wouldn't want to lose my friends or stuff like that 'cause I know that that's what it does for you now. And they say it has real bad health effects on you, too, like your body.

In some cases, these were dually coded. For example, if agency with respect to life narrative had a clear moral thrust (as opposed to, e.g., an occupational direction), with a commitment to make morally significant decisions in one's life, it would be coded as representing both forms of agency, as in this comment from Maisha:

> When I read [*The Rose That Grew From Concrete* by Tupac Shakur], it makes me think about how his environment was

growing up. I mean, I lived it. My mom, she had me when she was 17. Didn't know exactly where she was going. So, it was kind of hard, but…his words reminded me of my own self in a way, but it made me feel like I should be more thankful 'cause I used to be a brat. It makes me feel I should be more thankful and take more responsibility and doing things that I think are right and trying to help other people out. When I grow up, I'm going to college to become a criminal justice detective or a social worker or something like that. I feel like I have a way in life of helping a lot of people.

Agency in Self-Regulation (n = 40)

This is students' ability to regulate their own emotional, academic, and social behavior and to take responsibility for making good decisions. Some students recognized their self-regulation as a conscious, deliberate achievement, but other students simply recognized a new fact about their behavior.

Examples of the former are Carrie's comment in class discussion, "I like to read slowly so I can think about things," and Addie's observation:

Like the cool thing about reading is that when I'm really upset or something, and I need to get something off my mind, I'll just go read a book, and I'll snap out of it during the reading time, and I'll just feel much better. And it calms you down.

An example of the latter is Maya's observation:

Reading has really brought me out to be another person, to be someone that I used to not be. Because I used to be all mean, and just, hateful. I used to be rude and disrespectful, but I'm polite now, and I learned how to not be so rude and have manners.

Intellectual and Moral Stance (n = 22)

Students reported being more curious, being more interested in and open to other ways of thinking about things, and being more intentional as listeners. They also reported a stronger sense of intellectual competence and pursued further information about aspects of books they were reading, such as metallurgy or aspects of armed forces.

As Roger shared, "I think I've gotten more open-minded because of the stuff I read…more open-minded and more willing to listen." Other students pointed to shifts related to a specific experience, such as when Addie confessed to peers in a small-group discussion,

Evolution, Me and Other Freaks of Nature [by Robin Brande], that was a hard book for me to process because it was about religion. I didn't like it at first because it made me question my religion. But then the more I got into it, the more I thought it was good for me to question it.

Students reported taking a different moral stance, particularly being slower to judge and being prepared to act to prevent inequities. For example, in response to the question "Has anything you've read changed the way you think about things?," Felicity reflected on a character from Because I Am Furniture by Thalia Chaltas:

She is actually just like furniture there. She watches her other two siblings getting abused, one sexually, the other physically. And in a way, I think she'd rather have that than not be treated in any way. At first I thought that's kind of sick, but when you read the book, you kind of understand how she feels in a way. You really can't judge a person and how they feel unless you're in that same situation.

Happiness (n = 19)

Students showed evidence of an increase in aspects of happiness. Although there was happiness as in the pleasurable life (e.g., "fun," "enjoy"), there was a stronger sense that students had more meaningful and engaged lives (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Given that their chosen books are mostly edgy and disturbing, their engagement was not with pleasure reading.

The engagement itself was satisfying to them, and the meaningfulness it brought to their own lives through their reflections, analyses, and relationships was satisfying. The students became engaged in personally meaningful ways with books and with others. Some students also admitted to having begun the year with a simmering anger because of their personal, economic, or family situation, but reading books in which plausible characters, with whom they could relate, have lives much harder than theirs, gave them a different perspective on their own lives. For example, Hattie reflected on changes in her state of mind after reading Chasing Brooklyn by Lisa Schroeder, in which characters are dealing with grief and loss: "When I was younger, I lost my best friend. It was really hard for me, but books like that really take me back and help me remember her but without getting really upset."

Students also reported more personal satisfaction. As Amber noted,

I've learned a lot from books, I guess, because you do get an appreciation for what you do have and, like, for being thankful for the happiness and joy in your life. Some of those books, it's crazy what's in there.

Knowledge (n = 55)

Students reported expanding their world knowledge. Paul observed, "I think I got smarter [this year]. Just reading, I think it helps you to get more knowledge." In this category, we included their comments about increased knowledge of the world, self, and relationships. For example, Derek mentioned the acquisition of relevant factual knowledge:

Like my friend went in the army, and I didn't know how it was like over there until I read another book. It's called [The] Army [by John Hamilton], and I read that, and it really tells

you about how they get ready and all that, and how they get trained and how long does it take.

Lindsay pointed to her growing knowledge of social and personal matters:

Like with bullying, I kind of know how to put a stop to it, or like when someone is going through a death, I know how to give them space or also help them out….It kind of helps me have an idea of what to do.

Another kind of knowledge that students were accumulating was knowledge about books. However, because every student offered such knowledge, the category was sufficiently large to be addressed separately.

Book Knowledge (*n* = 71)

Students identified the kinds of books made available as particularly significant, and they mentioned specific book titles, genres, and book characteristics. Characteristics such as intense, disturbing, and personally relevant were critical. Across the 71 interviews, there were 327 instances of students naming specific text titles, including 159 distinct titles.

Students also developed knowledge about how texts work. For example, having read *Crank*, Howie realized,

I just kept going, and I realized the way it was written. You gotta read something else first, like, 'cause on the pages, there's a, like, title almost on top of each and every page. It helps to read that.

Brady described the value of first-person point of view: "If you think of, like, [the character] writing it, you actually…like all the thoughts, like, going through his mind….You get what's going on in their head, and you don't have to make it up."

Wide Reading (*n* = 20)

Some students focused on a particular genre of texts, but many found themselves expanding their reading tastes, such as Richie, who explained,

I never liked books that were true—true stories. But when they let us start reading the Ellen Hopkins books this year, and I started reading *Crank*, and I started reading biographies and…[autobiographies]. Now I read those, and normally I like fantasy.

For some students, the broadening of reading interests appeared to be inspired by peers. For instance, Kenneth, who stuck mainly with fantasy early in the year, was reading the realistic fiction novel *Twisted* by Laurie Halse Anderson in class after learning about it in Joey's book talk. Kenneth also talked in class about reading *Homeboyz*, which is urban fiction.

Critical Reading (*n* = 13)

Students became more thoughtful about who writes texts, what authors are trying to do (using particular rhetorical strategies), and how texts might have been written or presented. Some students wondered why authors made particular decisions. For instance, in a class discussion, students questioned why Elizabeth Scott, the author of the dark and disturbing *Living Dead Girl*, wrote a number of lighter, romantic, and to them, less compelling books. Other students, such as Alicia, offered specific criticism:

Like some authors are, like, choppy. I guess they don't really follow their own logic. And like everyone loves Nicholas Sparks, and yeah, his plots are really good, but I feel like he should be a movie director, not a writer, because it's almost like he's got too much going in his brain at once, so he's getting it all confused on paper.

Writing (*n* = 8)

Some students, like Harris, reported improvement in their writing:

My vocabulary has changed a lot and conversation. Then, reading and stuff helps you when you gotta type or write something, you know, the punctuation and all that stuff, 'cause you see a lot of books. And some books have dialogue…you see all that.

Other students used books as writing models or inspiration. For instance, Gracie shared with her classmates her unassigned two-page poem about the main character of *Living Dead Girl*.

Reading Mechanics (*n* = 25)

Students mentioned improvements in, for example, their reading speed, vocabulary development, grammar, comprehension, ability to figure out difficult words, and strategies for resolving confusions. For example: "Manga…I'm down to where I can read one in half an hour," and "I've learned how to get through words if I find them challenging, just to find the root words, put them together."

Test Scores and Grades

Students did refer to grades and levels, but there were changes in students' test scores from seventh grade, which retained the traditional curriculum, to eighth grade, with the engaged reading curriculum. The percentage of students passing the test went from 78% in seventh grade to 85% in eighth grade, while the percentage at the state level stayed fairly constant (89% in seventh grade to 90% in eighth grade). Table 1 shows that the shift did not simply reduce the tail of the distribution but moved students out of the lowest passing category as well. A dependent *t*-test showed that the change

Percentage of Students in the Study Who Were Within State Test Score Bands

Passed or failed	Score band	% in seventh-grade band	% in eighth-grade band
Passed	Range: 500–600	36.9	36.2
Passed	Range: 425–499	32.4	41.4
Passed	Range: 400–424	10.7	7.8
Failed	Range: <400	20.1	14.6

in test scores from seventh to eighth grade (x = 467.49 to 479.59) was significant (t = −3.89, df = 219, p = .00). Although the effect size was modest (d = .27), no difference would still indicate a full year's growth.

Other changes were also evident. The pass rate for the economically disadvantaged group went from 69% to 81%, Hispanic students from 82% to 91%, African American students from 63% to 65%, and boys from 72% to 81%. Not all students improved, however. Two students who passed the test in seventh grade failed in eighth grade. One simply refused to bother with the test and, according to his teacher, finished the test in five minutes. The second was emotionally distraught because her twin sister was expelled from school within the previous 48 hours. The only others to fail the test were students with individualized education plans who faced the test for the first time, having previously been judged on portfolios, and some of these students came close to passing the test.

We are struck by the sheer scope of the outcomes evident in the data and the fact that students commonly traced these changes to dimensions of engaged reading. Although we are referring to these constructs as outcomes of the learning environment, each (except perhaps the last) can also be viewed as a link in quite complex causal webs, which we explore next.

Students' Perceptions of the Causal Processes of Engaged Reading

The constructs described so far can be linked to a deceptively modest change in the learning environment. However, as can be seen in some of the examples already provided, the students reported quite complex synergistic networks of causal relationships among the constructs. These were also supported by classroom observations, ongoing interviews, and recorded book discussions. The following further illustrate the range of student causal statements:

> "A little bit ago, I had this realization, that, oh my gosh, I'm a happy person. It might have been some of the books I've read, like [The] Rules of Survival [by Nancy Werlin] and November Blues….I'm, like, I have such an awesome life compared with other people."

> "I think I've gotten more open-minded because of the stuff I read. Because it's something most people wouldn't really consider reading. So, I think more open-minded and more willing to listen."

Table 2 presents the reported web of linkages. These are a conservative estimate because they are only those links that students were consciously aware of and

TABLE 2
Causal Linkages Perceived by Students in the Study

Perceived cause	Perceived consequence
Books	Moral agency, social imagination, intellectual and moral stance, agency in reading, engaged reading, life narratives, talk through and about books, identity/self, knowledge, reading mechanics, happiness
Choice	Wide reading, engaged reading, knowledge
Engaged reading	Social imagination, intellectual and moral stance, self-regulation, agency in reading, tests and grades, life narratives, talk through and about books, happiness, identity/self, reading mechanics, wide reading
Reading mechanics	Agency in reading
Relationships	Talk through and about books
Social imagination	Intellectual and moral stance
Talk through and about books	Social agency, relationships, engaged reading
Teacher behavior[a]	Engaged reading, reading mechanics, knowledge, talk through and about books
Time to read	Engaged reading
Wide reading	Identity/self

[a] Students were specifically prompted to explain how teachers helped them become interested in reading.

reported unprompted in the interviews and that both researchers independently identified.

As causal factors, not outcomes, the students also identified time to read (2), choice (23), teacher behavior (46), and books (55). Time to read and choice were singular and specific. "Teacher behavior" included behaviors such as read-alouds, connecting students, and finding the right books. The "books" construct included the codes relevance, edginess, first person, scarcity, adult characters, and specific book genres. Only teacher behavior was directly solicited in the interviews.

Table 2 does not adequately capture the dynamic and webbed nature of these connections. For example, one reported pathway was fully reciprocal. Engaged reading was seen to cause talk about and through books, which was seen to cause changes in social relationships, and the reverse causal order was also reported. Our observations and interviews offered independent evidence of students' claims. For example, students specifically pointed to the qualities of the books, particularly that they were edgy and personally meaningful. These characteristics commonly produced engagement and intense responses that demanded to be shared.

For example, a student who had been relatively aloof finally became fully engaged in a book, reading right through the class lesson. On completing it, she immediately turned to another student to insist on sharing her experience. This intensity of response, in turn, produced an expectation of a similarly intense response in others, and students monitored for this to share those experiences. Two weeks after reading *Living Dead Girl*, Addie described how powerful it was and how she could not stop thinking about it:

> [It was] the first book I've read that changed my perspective on the world. That's a really powerful book. I read it, [my English teacher] read it, Lydia took it, Phoebe took it. Shea read it, and she finished it the next day in Civics. I watched her finish the book.

Addie's commentary supported what we observed in classrooms and was described by students in various ways. Having intense reactions to books meant that students then wanted to engage others' responses to those same experiences. This meant keeping track of who was reading the book and where they were in it to know when to have conversations about it. The intensity of *Living Dead Girl* reaches a peak at the very end of the book. Once Addie knew, on entering Civics, that Shea had only 10 pages to go, she knew that Shea would have to finish it in Civics. She also needed to see her face at the end to share the intense experience with her and to subsequently begin the conversations.

The experience, both the face reading and the sharing of emotional experience, in turn, fed the expansion of social imagination. Both social imagination and the conversations fed positive relationships among the students, reduced the likelihood of disruptive or unfriendly behavior, and ultimately led to the development of trust.

The intensity of experiences and the links between those experiences and students' own lives and histories made them feel as though they had something to say. Because the things students had to say to each other offered new information about the other and about the morally and emotionally complex text, peers listened to each other closely. For instance, a group of girls from across several classes requested time to talk about *In Ecstasy* by Kate McCaffrey, a book Kylie described as "dead on" in its portrayal of tensions within teen relationships. In the conversation that ensued about trust issues surrounding the two main characters, Stacey asked the others, "Like, who would you be in this book?" Layla affirmed and extended Stacey's question, adding, "I think it's important because it makes you, like, question yourself and your relationships with other people. Like when I was reading that, I was wondering, I was thinking, "Am I who I want to be?""

Later in the conversation, she reopened this line of thinking:

Layla: When I was reading this book, I found myself wondering if I'm, like, where I want to be, like am I with the people I want to be with or even like?

Stacey: I have to rethink my friends half the time, and be like, like I think of this book and like…am I making the right decision?

Kylie: Am I truly happy here, or am I just telling myself I'm happy so I don't like feel bad?

Terry: And then you start to think, is there another person I keep passing every day in the hall that could be closer than the ones…

Stacey: Like one of my best friends that I haven't even talked to…

Terry: That you haven't even talked to because the way they dress, or you heard something, or you came in at the wrong time in a conversation.

Being heard in this way reinforced that they had something important to say, and because the discussions had to do with characters' experiences, feelings, and decisions and implicated their own, the conversations offered a vehicle for expanding social imagination and relationships.

The conversations that followed these intense and personally meaningful experiences raised morally and emotionally complex issues, the exploration of which led students to reveal a great deal about themselves. For

instance, Brady and Wes became friends over a common interest in *Gym Candy*. Talk about how the main character's decision to use steroids connected to his relationship with his father turned to their own father–son relationships:

Brady: When I was reading the book, it kind of related to me. I don't play football, but my dad and even my teachers think I should play football because I'm fast and I'm good at catching it. So, I was just thinking that I should. I don't know. I was talking to my dad, and I was like, "You were really good," 'cause he was talking to me, and he lived in, like, North Carolina, and we were at this restaurant, and there's actually this newspaper with, like, his name and this other quarterback….I talked to him about [*Gym Candy*] when I was there at spring break. I was, like, reading instead of going to sleep, and he's like, "What are you reading?" I'm like, "I'm reading this book about football." He's like, "Oh." So, we just talked about it every time I'd read a chapter. I'd tell him about it.

Wes: I played football a little bit when I was younger, but I didn't play around here 'cause I've never met my dad, but I know he played football [in a neighboring city] when he was little, so that's where I went and played football at 'cause that's where my mom wanted me to so I could kind of get the feel of how he played when he was younger. But it's kind of like I don't know how far my dad went with it, so I gotta kind of push myself as far as I can go with it if I want to make a career out of it….He left me before I was even born. He didn't think I could even accomplish anything in my life, so if I could do something like that, it would show him I could accomplish things, you know?

Throughout this process, students found themselves in conversations with people they would otherwise not have considered talking with, and they found themselves engaged. In the process, they came to understand people they previously stereotyped in ways that break down the stereotype, opening new relationships and building trust. For instance, Alicia disclosed to her classmates that one book had shed light on family tension surrounding questions of her own sexual identity:

> When I read *Keeping You a Secret* [by Julie Ann Peters], I thought, Yeah, like this could happen to me. Like, I'm really glad my mom understands, but my dad was like a complete homophobic. I know if he was still living in my house with my mom, I'd be in a situation where I'd have to go live in a let's-be-gay shelter.

A classmate, Julia, described in her interview how this confession influenced students:

> I know some books, like *Keeping You a Secret* is a book that a lot of people—that some people didn't really want to read because they don't agree with the whole background of it, the whole gay thing. But some people were really taken to it and then talked to some of the people in our school that are like that. I guess got closer to them, too. I thought it was really good. It was so sad, though, how the girl's mother didn't want her anymore just because of the choice. We were talking about it in class a little bit. I remember Alicia was the first one to read it in our class, I think. She was saying how she loved it and how she, like, cried during some parts and how she laughed. So that helped more of us to read it. It's really good.

Students mentioned the significance of choice in combination with relevant and engaging books to choose from as an important factor in their engagement. However, the availability of these books only made choice possible through interactions with the teacher and peers; that is, someone had to introduce a book sufficiently to make it a viable choice. In other words, the students knew through conversations with peers and the teacher that engaging books existed. It did not guarantee that each student immediately found such a book, but it did centralize the conversations about books as a means to find a productive experience and as a means to recruit peers into conversations about intense experiences.

Thus, relationships were a central part of the process, both because friends wanted friends to share the experience and conversation and because students built new relationships because of books. By discovering a peer who had made a similar choice, conversations began that often led to friendship and, more generally, a reduction in "othering."

Choice and edgy, compelling books, along with time and introductions, commonly led to engagement. Once engaged, students learned that they were able to resist distraction and persist for extended periods, giving them a sense of self-regulation, which they then recognized as a personal competence. However, engaging books led to intense experiences that needed to be discussed immediately. Students negotiated in class a shift from silent reading to somewhat silent reading to allow them to take up these conversations as they arose.

Because other students were engaged in their own books, they were largely insulated from the conversations unless they heard a hint of a conversation in which they had an interest. In this way, conversations could draw interested participants, leaving others to pursue their own reading. Once engaged in books and conversations, students were less inclined to get into trouble or "drama" and were explicit about this in interviews, several reporting that they had explained this to their

parents when their parents had wondered about the source of the observed change.

A Section of the Whole Cloth

We hope it is clear that these separate threads of causal connections are thoroughly interconnected and form a closely woven fabric. However, the fabric is not uniform and not experienced in the same way by different students. To give a sense of how these fit together, we offer a brief case study of one boy, illustrating both how individuals' development is intimately tied to their relationships with others in their lives and extends beyond the immediate context.

Jeremy began eighth grade with a history of problems in school and limited positive experiences with literacy. He had spent a portion of seventh grade in an alternative school, and eighth grade for him had a shaky beginning fraught with discipline problems. According to his teacher, there were even discussions of another alternative situation because his behavior in English class was becoming a serious disruption to other students' learning. Early on, Jeremy hinted at a stressful life outside of school, confessing to Peter, unsolicited, that he now had no mother and that "all my life I've been involved in gangs….I'm used to, like, having people die."

One day he confessed to his English class that he could not recall ever being hugged. According to his teacher, some of his classmates snickered at first, slow to realize that he had just disclosed a sobering and heartbreaking reality. The Jeremy they knew was more prone to clowning around and getting in trouble than getting personal and serious. Their amusement appeared to turn into concern, however, as they heard Jeremy, this time addressing only his teacher, ask, "Do you think maybe when I was really little, my parents hugged me?" This scenario provided a glimpse into Jeremy's life, as we were able to understand it, and it illuminated the intensity and importance of the changes he experienced across eighth grade, which were outcomes that began with engagement.

In a beginning-of-the-year interview about his reading, Jeremy could name only one memorable book, *Henry and Mudge* by Cynthia Rylant, and he could not recall a teacher who had inspired him to read any book on his own. He barely passed the state reading test in seventh grade, and when asked what he hoped to learn as a reader in eighth grade, he replied, "Don't know."

The books that first engaged Jeremy in eighth grade were fictional stories addressing the roots and implications of violence. He remembered being absent quite a bit during the time his teacher was reading daily from *Quad* by C.G. Watson, about a school shooting, but it piqued his interest enough to make him try it on his own. However, it was his experience with another book that marked a significant turning point:

At the beginning of the year, I didn't like books at all until I read one, and that was *Homeboyz*, and I was like, all right, they're interesting. Let's go onto a second one. I liked that one, too, so I decided to go on to a third one and kept going.

According to Jeremy, "I was just on a roll after that," as he found a steady supply of books he wanted to read, adding, "This is the first year I read more than one book." The extent of his absorption in the texts he chose is evident in how he detailed his habits within and outside of school:

Like in the morning, I have first block, and then after first block, I'll go down to [my English teacher's] room and pick up my book. And in [reading intervention class] and science and all that and in lunch, I'll read, and I'll read like 40 pages. And it's like I fell in love with almost every book, almost….I read a lot at home now. I decided to spend my money on books rather than going to 7-Eleven and buying a Slurpee or something. I go to Books-a-Million near Target. That's a good place to find some books.

Gay (first author) noted seeing Jeremy walk across the hall one day from one room to another, head bent over into the pages of his book, *Street Pharm* by Allison Van Diepen, without ever glancing up from his reading, even as he took a seat in his next class.

Becoming engaged in texts made it more likely for Jeremy to persist with difficult reading and to try texts he might not have otherwise. At the start of the year, he reported that his strategy for dealing with a confusing text was to put it back on the shelf. For instance, when he was reading *Boot Camp* by Todd Strasser, he reported to Gay that he was finding some parts boring and confusing, but that as he "pushed through," things began to make sense. He reported that friends recommended *Snitch* by Allison Van Diepen to him at the beginning of the year, and at the time, his response was "Naw, not right now." But after some good experiences, he returned to it later in the year. He described a similar experience with *Gym Candy*:

I couldn't get into that book, so I put it down, and then like three weeks later, I picked it back up and started to read it again...and I found out it was a good book, too. At first I didn't think it was so cool 'cause I thought it would be about steroids in the beginning, but he waits until the end, or middle ways, to start using them.

Asked if he thought he had changed as a person during eighth grade, Jeremy described the shift in his ability to regulate his own behavior, which he explicitly connected to engagement:

I used to be like super, super, super hyper when I'd come to school. That was, like, in the beginning of the school year, too, this year. Now I'm, like, chill. I'm chillaxin', you know. Relaxin', chill in class, doing my work now. And I think that part of that is because of books. They give me something,

like, to do when I'm fidgetive. I'll just turn to the next page and read instead of getting in trouble.

One interpretation of this explanation of change is that reading interesting, challenging texts began to occupy his mind, thus lessening the potential for misconduct. Yet, additional evidence indicates that Jeremy's reading was more than just a diversion. Simply put, his reading caused him to think differently. For instance, he described his involvement with the main character in *Homeboyz* this way:

> It just gives me a sense of mind, of what it would be like to live the life of those people. It has a very good detail about what he does and how he does it…this feeling that he's right there next to you, sitting there talking to you….It, like, takes you through stages of him growing up, while you're, at the same time you're reading the book, you're thinking about him growing up. So, that makes you want to grow up with him and, like, be mature and not do, like, stupid stuff. Yeah, so that book helped me become a better teenager or something.

This transformational experience is almost definitional of dialogic engagement (Lysaker et al., 2011). Jeremy's attention to the mental and emotional states of the character, rather than just the action in the text, signified an expansion of his social imagination. In doing this, he began to imagine the character's motives, decisions, and consequences in relation to himself and to those around him outside of the text. In particular, he began to reflect on how he wanted to live his life.

These are experiences that Jeremy did not keep to himself. He reported that conversations about books occurred sometimes outside of school, such as while playing video games with friends. He explained how his relationships changed "in a good way" because of reading:

> In the beginning of the year, some of my friends would, like, Danny, he was thinking gangs were all cool, right? And then I read *Homeboyz*, and then I told him to read *Homeboyz*, and now he don't like gangs. He ain't into them. He's, like, friendly now, into sports, just like me. So, all right! Cool. I'm trying to, persuading other people, to, like, read books, too, now. The books that I've read, I'll tell them about it, and they'll be like, "I already read that. That's a really good book." I'm like, "Yeah it is. You should read the next one."

According to Jeremy, then, connections with friends deepened as talking about books became a new dimension of the relationships. In the process, though, there are additional developments: Jeremy's belief that he is responsible for getting his friend to read a particular book and, consequently, to think in a different way suggests a sense of social agency.

Jeremy's score on his eighth-grade state reading test was 47 points higher than he had achieved in seventh grade, giving him not only a solidly proficient status but

also placing him on a trajectory toward advanced achievement. What this score fails to illuminate is the range of development he reported and that we interpret as the interplay of engaged reading, social imagination, self-regulation, agency, and relational development. Again, we present Jeremy's case as a unique illustration of the interrelationships among the constructs, not as modally representative. However, the data contain many uniquely compelling cases like Jeremy's.

Discussion

In this article, we drew on student voices to explore the different processes by which students become engaged in reading, and the processes and outcomes of "construct[ing]…meaning from text, and [being] socially interactive while reading" (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012, p. 602)—processes and outcomes that are unrealized in standard quantitative approaches to engagement (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Our analysis suggests that while constructing meaning from text, students were also using text to construct meaning in their lives.

Expanding the Consequences (and Goals) of Engaged Reading

Our research supports and adds detail to conventional outcomes of engagement and engaged reading. For example, students reported increasingly purposeful and prolonged absorption in books, a strong sense of agency with respect to their reading, stretching themselves to their limits, and the deliberate use of the available scaffolds (particularly peers) when encountering difficulty. This perhaps represents the content-specific version of "agentic engagement" (Reeve, 2012) defined as "students' intentional, proactive, and constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive" (p. 161) and measured by items such as "'During class, I express my preferences and opinions'" (p. 161).

More importantly, the data are consistent with research on engagement that suggests the necessary involvement of students' socioemotional lives (e.g., Deakin Crick, 2012) and with research taking a relational view of reading, which makes similar predictions (Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Lysaker et al., 2011). Students took increasing responsibility for not only their "learning trajectory" and its meaningfulness but also "the trajectory of his or her particular life story" (Deakin Crick, 2012, p. 679).

The expanded sense of agency with respect to their own and others' behavior, attention, relationships, and moral and intellectual stance makes it possible for students to imagine narrative futures for themselves and to form a moral basis for those futures. This expands our

understanding of the construction of meaning in, and the social nature of, engaged reading (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012). The meaning being constructed is not merely about the text but also about the relational self. Students' growing social imaginations in the context of the narrative texts they engage allow them to imagine the historical consequences of decisions and to construct alternative future-oriented narratives and possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

In other words, through their engagement with these books and one another, these young adults were recognizing the possibility of, and the cultural tools for, shaping their individual and collective lives. As part of their engaged reading, these adolescents experienced transformed interactions with their social environment, yet they, in turn, transformed that environment and, thus, themselves. By showing, to varying degrees, an awareness of these processes, they appeared to be gaining a sense of agency with respect to their own development—their personhood (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004).

Student Perspectives on the Causal Processes of Engaged Reading

Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) opened the door to understanding the relationship between social interaction and reading engagement by asserting that students are "socially interactive while reading" (p. 602) and by examining student collaboration around reading as a motivational process. In the present study, social activity was central to engaged reading, occurring inside books in the form of dialogical relationships with characters and outside of books in dialogical relationships with others and with selves. These relationships might more accurately be characterized as transactions rather than interactions—a distinction Rosenblatt (1985) insisted on—because of student reports of dynamic readings of the texts, and of transformations in themselves and in the classroom and school communities.

The data also indicate that socially meaningful talk and active listening lead to a sense of relatedness and of feeling appreciated and understood by others (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000), including teachers. As students became more engaged with one another and with characters in the books in self-generated discussions, they encountered others and themselves differently and had an altered sense of the significance of difference.

We argue that these shifts are neither trivial nor merely ancillary to the engaged reading process. Engagement clearly cannot be reduced to a solitary cognitive relationship of focused attention. Rather, in the context of these texts, engaged reading was fully personal and fully and inseparably relational. For example, initially, some students reported focusing on the action in books, skipping sections devoted to character and context development but subsequently shifting to deep engagement with the characters.

In Buber's (1923/1937) terms, the engagements shift from an I–it relationship to an I–thou relationship, within which it is necessary to wrestle with the emotional significance of the relationship. Without full social engagement with the characters, reading the book can remain a third-person, spectator experience. Once a reader enters the lives of interacting characters, it becomes a first-person experience—an I–thou engagement—the sort of engagement that is necessary for development (Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Lysaker et al., 2011).

Our data also allow reflection on the sequence of engagement processes in existing engagement models. Students reported the significance for reading engagement of autonomy and relevance, consistent with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Similarly, the well-documented role of engagement as a mediator between instructional context and achievement (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012) was indeed a process relationship reported by students (e.g., a student becomes engaged in reading because of available interesting books, which, in turn, improves reading achievement).

However, our data suggest multidirectional and reciprocal relationships. For example, standard models and even some sociocultural models (e.g., Deakin Crick, 2012) suggest that motivation precedes engagement. Our data suggest that motivations also arise out of the process of engagement. For example, Brady and Wes initially opted to read *Gym Candy* because of their (surface) interest in football, but engaged reading (including their conversations) established the shared personal relevance of the difficult father–son relationship in the book. The motivation to pursue conversation and further reading arose in the deeply social meaning-construction process of engaged reading.

The instructional context was often transformed through processes that began with engaged reading, as when Amber read *Go Ask Alice*, introduced it into the classroom community where it was read and discussed by others, eventually becoming a touchstone for comparisons to other texts, effectively changing the discourse of the class. Similarly, the book conversations, including self-revelations, led to a greater sense of trust in the classroom and a stronger sense of relational ties, which, in turn, opened more diverse perspectives and self-revelations and a greater interest in hearing classmates' views, along with greater incentive and leverage to encourage a peer to read a shared book. The processes mediating engagement, particularly the social networks that developed, also included the potential for students to make visible to one another aspirations that they had not previously imagined or valued.

Autonomy is experienced when efforts arise from personal goals, but personal goals are in part made possible by the learning community and its relationships (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). Although a sense of agency and competence comes about when students realize that they can achieve a goal they value through strategic action, this recognition, at least initially, arises after the fact as they realize what they have accomplished and, having accomplished it, value it. Such goals/accomplishments initially include such things as reading an entire book and understanding it for the first time, experiencing a satisfying conversation about a book with another person, or recognizing oneself as successfully engaging in academic practices.

Initially not imagined as possible goals, once achieved, they become recognized as goals and as attainable. The sense of agency produced by these accomplishments leads students to work harder, to become more invested in their learning, to persevere in the face of difficulty (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell, 1998), and to stretch to more ambitious goals (Bandura, 1991). We saw no examples of students choosing particular books because they were easy, presumably because engagement and this sense of agency and competence only arise with optimally challenging tasks (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Implications

Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012) note that the current linear assembly line model of schools, in which "materials and parts are assembled to produce identical products over and over again—puts the focus on only those factors that are directly associated with a countable output measure of achievement (standardized test scores, graduation rates, etc.)" (p. 758). They ask,

> What about the processes, interactions, and relationships...? What about the consideration of other measures of achievement, success, and output? What about the differential ways in which students experience schooling?... engagement is a complex process that does not happen the same way every time and with every person. Contrary to much popular criticism of schooling today, this is a good thing. (p. 758)

Our data provide support for asking these questions in the context of engaged reading and suggest that it might make more sense to view engagement, particularly engaged reading, as an integral part of complex social practices, that are at once processes and outcomes and that promote a healthy development of personhood (Stetsenko, 2008; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004).

Our data also raise questions about the assumptions underlying currently advocated approaches to reading instruction in which (a) the role of engagement is minimized, (b) students are all required to read the same text at the same time, (c) the role of narrative is minimized, (d) the focus is centrally on an individual cognitive act without regard for the social nature of development, and (e) uniform outcomes across students are expected. For example, a primary argument for all students reading the same text, particularly classics, includes the need for people to be able to engage in important common cultural conversations (Hirsch, 1988).

In this study, students certainly engaged in common conversations, even though there were only three or fewer copies of each text, and many read the same text, just not at the same time. Consequently, students experienced regular, expanding reviews of a text they had read, as they took up conversations with current readers, often ones whom they had persuaded to read the text. Common conversations are perhaps better viewed as the outcome of motivated social dispersal than of enforced transmission.

Our results offer a strong rationale for revisiting the role of extended, intensive reading in English language arts classrooms. Presently, extended reading is most likely to take the form of either 20-minutes-a-day voluntary silent reading programs isolated from the primary curriculum or teacher-regulated assigned reading that limits students' access to meaningful relevant choices (Assor et al., 2002; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999) by requiring the literary canon (Applebee, 1993; Sewell, 2008; Yagleski, 2005) and anthologies packed with controlling comprehension questions (Scherff & Piazza, 2008). The first option offers choice but not necessarily the deliberate attempts by teachers to identify what is relevant for students and to support their autonomy.

It is clear from our students' accounts of their reading, also, that deeply engaged reading extended well beyond 20 minutes a day. In fact, we might argue that if students can constrain their reading to a 20-minute period set aside in school, they likely are not engaged. Similarly, silent reading may not be optimal. Students in this study, when fully engaged, were not disrupted by conversations among other students and preferred to be able to solicit conversation at the point of need, developing strategies for soliciting conversations only from willing peers. If we want dialogical classrooms, currently rare but associated with higher achievement (Nystrand, 1997), we should allow students to read books that engage them dialogically and invite such engagement.

In this study, students' choices were based on personal relevance, regardless of difficulty. Their reported sense of agency in reading and persistence through challenging texts ironically resembles the performance and dispositions that seem to be the goal of common

approaches to skill and strategy instruction. Strategic behavior for these students, though, appeared to be less the result of strategy instruction than a response to their own need to make sense. Their reading processes suggest that although it is possible to teach particular strategies, instructional time might be better spent supporting engaged reading, a context in which students are more likely to actually become strategic. Enciso (1996) documented this phenomenon for one low-achieving reader, and our data extend this to a wide range of students and to the navigation of more complex texts. Students' accounts suggest, though, that engaged reading promotes much more than strategic reading and greater involvement in the world of the text. More precisely, they become more strategic and involved in the navigation of their lives.

Our study has little to say about students' responses to nonnarrative texts because the students chose narrative texts, particularly fiction—texts that have previously been associated with light reading, pleasure reading, and escapism (Nell, 1988). However, their descriptions indicate that their experiences were not mere mental diversions. They reported dialogic conversations with book characters, with one another, and with themselves, suggesting that engaged reading involved the active construction of selves and of the narratives of their lives rather than temporary escape from those lives.

Yet, to be fully realized, perhaps, is the potential impact of instruction on these outcomes and processes. The teachers in the present study primarily set out to get students engaged in reading throughout the year. They reduced the amount of time spent on instruction and provided instruction in the context of reading aloud with students, texts largely drawn from the same pool as those being read by their students, making for easy transfer. The teachers also distributed instruction by sending students encountering difficulty to talk with students who had had a deep engagement experience with the same text, thus increasing the available instructional support and strengthening the social network.

The breadth of development represented in our data also raises questions about current approaches to educational curriculum and evaluation—about the nature of the work of the discipline in the English language arts and what we expect of the collective curricula of schools. For example, if a student were to perform worse on a state reading test than previously, but several other areas of development showed the more positive changes we have described, we would have to ask whether the test score is the most accurate, appropriate, or valued reflection of learning. Similarly, in the context of the epistemological and anthropological outcomes of engaged reading, when we examine the effects of changes in reading instruction, is it enough to demonstrate change in test scores?

NOTES

REFERENCES

Allington, R.L., McGill-Franzen, A., Camilli, G., Williams, L., Graff, J., Zeig, J., et al. (2010). Addressing summer reading setback among economically disadvantaged elementary students. *Reading Psychology*, *31*(5), 411–427. doi:10.1080/02702711.2010.505165

Anderson, R.C., Wilson, P.T., & Fielding, L.G. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *23*(3), 285–303. doi:10.1598/RRQ.23.3.2

Applebee, A. (1993). *Literature in the secondary school: Studies of curriculum and instruction in the Unites States*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Assor, A., Kaplan, H., & Roth, G. (2002). Choice is good, but relevance is excellent: Autonomy-enhancing and suppressing teacher behaviours predicting students' engagement in schoolwork. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *72*(2), 261–278. doi:10.1348/000709902158883

Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of self-regulation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 248–287. doi:10.1016/0749-5978(91)90022-L

Biancarosa, C., & Snow, C.E. (2006). *Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Buber, M. (1937). *I and thou* (R.G. Smith, Trans.). Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark. (Original work published 1923)

Christenson, S., Reschly, A.L., & Wylie, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of research on student engagement*. New York: Springer.

Coats, K. (2011). Young adult literature: Growing up, in theory. In S.A. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enciso, & C.A. Jenkins (Eds.), *Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature* (pp. 315–329). New York: Routledge.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: HarperCollins.

Cunningham, J.W. (2001). The National Reading Panel report [Essay book review]. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *36*(3), 326–335. doi:10.1598/RRQ.36.3.5

Deakin Crick, R. (2012). Deep engagement as a complex system: Identity, learning power and authentic enquiry. In S.L. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 675–694). New York: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_32

Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.

Eccles, J., & Wang, M.-T. (2012). Part I commentary: So what is student engagement anyway? In S.L. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 133–145). New York: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_6

Enciso, P. (1996). Why engagement in reading matters to Molly. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *12*(2), 171–194. doi:10.1080/1057356960120205

Fernyhough, C. (2008). Getting Vygotskian about theory of mind: Mediation, dialogue, and the development of social understanding. *Developmental Review*, *28*(2), 225–262. doi:10.1016/j.dr.2007.03.001

Fredricks, J.A., Blumenfeld, P.C., & Paris, A.H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, *74*(1), 59–109. doi:10.3102/00346543074001059

Guthrie, J.T., & Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In P.B. Mosenthal, M.L. Kamil, P.D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 403–422). Mahway, NJ: Erlbaum.

Guthrie, J.T., Wigfield, A., & Klauda, S.L. (2012). *Adolescents' engagement in academic literacy*. Retrieved February 8, 2013, from www.cori.umd.edu/research-publications/2012_adolescents_engagement_ebook.pdf

Guthrie, J.T., Wigfield, A., & You, W. (2012). Instructional contexts for engagement and achievement in reading. In S.L. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 601–634). New York: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_29

Hale, L., & Crowe, C. (2001). "I hate reading if I don't have to": Results from a longitudinal study of high school students' reading interest. *The ALAN Review*, *28*(3), 49–57.

Hermans, H.J.M., & Kempen, H.J.G. (1993). *The dialogical self: Meaning as movement*. San Diego, CA: Academic.

Hirsch, E.D. (1988). *Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know*. New York: Vintage.

Ivey, G., & Broaddus, K. (2001). "Just plain reading": A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *36*(4), 350–377. doi:10.1598/RRQ.36.4.2

Kaufman, G.F., & Libby, L.K. (2012). Changing beliefs and behavior through experience-taking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103*(1), 1–19. doi:10.1037/a0027525

Kim, J.S., & White, T.G. (2008). Scaffolding voluntary summer reading for children in grades 3 to 5: An experimental study. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, *12*(1), 1–23. doi:10.1080/10888430701746849

Lewis, C., & Dockter, J. (2011). Reading literature in secondary school: Disciplinary discourses in global times. In S.A. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enciso, & C.A. Jenkins (Eds.), *Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature* (pp. 76–91). New York: Routledge.

Lysaker, J., & Miller, A. (2012). Engaging social imagination: The developmental work of wordless book reading. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1468798411430425

Lysaker, J., Tonge, C., Gauson, D., & Miller, A. (2011). Reading and social imagination: What relationally oriented reading instruction can do for children. *Reading Psychology*, *32*(6), 520–566.

Markus, H.R., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, *41*(9), 954–969. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954

Moje, E.B. (2000). To be part of the story: The literacy practices of gangsta adolescents. *Teachers College Record*, *102*(3), 651–690.

Moje, E.B., Overby, M., Tysvaer, N., & Morris, K. (2008). The complex world of adolescent literacy: Myths, motivations, and mysteries. *Harvard Educational Review*, *78*(1), 107–154.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Nell, V. (1988). The psychology of reading for pleasure: Needs and gratifications. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *23*(1), 6–50.

Nystrand, M. (1997). *Opening dialogue: Understanding the dynamics of language and learning in the English classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2010). *PISA 2009 results: Learning to learn: Student engagement, strategies and practices* (Vol. 3). Paris: OECD.

Peterson, P., Swing, S., Stark, K., & Wass, G. (1984). Students' cognitions and time on task during mathematics instruction. *American Educational Research Journal*, *21*(3), 487–515.

Rampey, B.D., Dion, G.S., & Donahue, P.L. (2009). *NAEP 2008 trends in academic progress* (NCES 2009-479). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination perspective theory on student engagement. In S.L. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 149–172). New York: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_7

Reeve, J., & Tseng, C. (2011). Agency as a fourth aspect of students' engagement during learning activities. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *36*(4), 257–267. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.05.002

Reis, H.T., Sheldon, K.M., Gable, S.L., Roscoe, J., & Ryan, R.M. (2000). Daily well-being: The role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *26*(4), 419–435. doi:10.1177/0146167200266002

Reschly, A.L., & Christenson, S.L. (2012). Jingle, jangle, and conceptual haziness: Evolution and future directions of the engagement construct. In S.L. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 3–19). New York: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_1

Rosenblatt, L. (1983). *Literature as exploration*. New York: Modern Language Association of America.

Rosenblatt, L.M. (1985). Viewpoints: Transaction versus interaction—A terminological rescue operation. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *19*(1), 96–107.

Scherff, L., & Piazza, C.L. (2008). Why now, more than ever, we need to talk about opportunity to learn. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *52*(4), 343–352. doi:10.1598/JAAL.52.4.7

Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, *60*(5), 410–421.

Sewell, W.C. (2008). Entrenched pedagogy: A history of stasis in the English language arts curriculum in the United States secondary schools. *Changing English*, *15*(1), 87–100. doi:10.1080/13586840701825345

Shanahan, T. (2003). Research-based reading instruction: Myths about the National Reading Panel report. *The Reading Teacher*, *56*(7), 646–655.

Skinner, E.A., Zimmer-Gembeck, M.J., & Connell, J.P. (1998). Individual differences and the development of perceived control. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *63*(2/3). doi:10.2307/1166220

Stetsenko, A. (2008). From relational ontology to transformative activist stance on development and learning: Expanding Vygotsky's (CHAT) project. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *3*(2), 471–491. doi:10.1007/s11422-008-9111-3

Stetsenko, A. (2012). Personhood: An activist project of historical becoming through collaborative pursuits of social transformation. *New Ideas in Psychology*, *30*(1), 144–153. doi:10.1016/j.newideapsych.2009.11.008

Stetsenko, A., & Arievitch, I.M. (2004). The self in cultural-historical activity theory: Reclaiming the unity of social and individual dimensions of human development. *Theory & Psychology*, *14*(4), 475–503. doi:10.1177/0959354304044921

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sugarman, J. (2005). Persons and moral agency. *Theory & Psychology*, *15*(6), 793–811.

Torgesen, J. K., Houston, D. D., Rissman, L. M., Decker, S. M., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J. Francis, D. J, Rivera, M. O., Lesaux, N et al. (2007). *Academic literacy instruction for adolescents: A guidance document from the Center on Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction, RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

U. S. Census Bureau. (2010). *State & county QuickFacts*. Retrieved February 21, 2013, from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/.

Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J.T. (1997). Relations of children's motivation for reading to the amount and breadth of their reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(3), 420–432. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.89.3.420

Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J.T., Perencevich, K.C., Taboada, A., Klauda, S.L., McRae, A., et al. (2008). Role of reading engagement in mediating effects of reading comprehension instruction on reading outcomes. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 432–445. doi:10.1002/pits.20307

Worthy, J., Moorman, M., & Turner, M. (1999). What Johnny likes to read is hard to find in school. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34(1), 12–27. doi:10.1598/RRQ.34.1.2

Yagleski, R.P. (2005). Stasis and change: English education and the crisis of sustainability. *English Education*, 37(4), 262–271.

Yazzie-Mintz, E. (2007). *Voices of students on engagement: A report on the 2006 High School Survey of Student Engagement*. Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation & Education Policy.

Yazzie-Mintz, E., & McCormick, K. (2012). Find the humanity in the data: Understanding, measuring, and strengthening student engagement. In S.L. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 743–761). New York: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_36

GAY IVEY is the Tashia F. Morgridge Chair in Reading at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA; e-mail mgivey@wisc.edu (corresponding author).

PETER H. JOHNSTON is a professor in the Department of Reading at the University at Albany, State University of New York; e-mail pjohnston@albany.edu.

Student Interview Questions

1. Have teachers this year done anything that made you interested in reading a certain book? What was it?

2. Have you read something this year that was so memorable that you keep thinking about it or you told someone else about it?

3. Have other people this year helped you decide to read certain books? Who? What did they do or say that made you want to read?

4. Do you talk with anyone about the books you read? Who do you talk to, and what kinds of things do you talk about?

5. How have your relationships changed this year?

6. Have you started to read a book in school that you found confusing? What happened with that?

7. Tell me something about your reading in classes other than English (social studies, science, math, etc.). What has been interesting or challenging about those experiences? Has anything changed for you this year?

8. How has reading at home changed this year?

9. What will happen with your reading this summer?

10. What did you learn as a reader this year?

11. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your reading?

12. Have you changed as a person this year, do you think? How so?