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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
WHEELLOCK COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Dissertation

**EXPLORING CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF READING ENGAGEMENT**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

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# **EXPLORING CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF READING ENGAGEMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation study, which comprises a series of three articles, addresses the following overarching research questions:

- 1. How have reading motivation and engagement been conceptualized in the research literature?*
- 2. How do educators, particularly teachers of the primary grades, conceptualize reading motivation and engagement? What sources of information do they draw upon to construct their understandings?*
- 3. How do educators, particularly teachers of the primary grades, enact literacy instruction in support of student motivation and engagement?*

In the first article, I explore different theoretical approaches to the study of reading motivation and engagement through the creation of a continuum model of the extant literature. I advance an approach to the study of reading engagement that is primarily sociocultural, while also drawing on insights from research that is more cognitive in orientation. To accompany that approach, I present a new definition of reading engagement that draws on insights from various theoretical traditions.

In the second article, I consider how 31 first-grade teachers at public schools in the Midwest and Northeast who were involved in focus groups to imagine what it might

be like to implement project-based learning in their settings conceptualized students' motivation for and engagement in literacy under the imagined curriculum. The analysis balances an approach in which the concepts from the extant literature are applied directly to participants' comments with an actor-oriented approach (Penuel, Phillips, & Harris, 2014) that privileges practitioners' perspectives and considers what participating practitioners were attending to in articulating their understandings. I explore in depth the complexities around the social and cultural dimensions of engagement experienced by participating teachers, and how they made sense of those complexities.

Finally, in the third article I offer a case study of how two third grade teachers at an urban, public charter school conceptualized reading motivation and engagement, including what sources of information they drew upon to construct those conceptualizations, as well as what those teachers actually did in their instruction to support and promote students' engagement in reading. Findings indicated that, while both teachers conceptualized engagement as social, the ways in which they enacted that understanding varied based on the principles around which they organized their literacy instruction.

At the conclusion of each article and at the end of the dissertation as a whole, I discuss implications for research and for practice, including teacher education and professional development.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DCI	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
PBL	Project-Based Learning
PD	Professional Development

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background

Engagement in reading is highly consequential for both individual learners and for the literacy communities to which they belong. For the individual learner, engagement in reading influences reading volume (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995), which in turn, influences reading achievement (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie, Schafer, & Huang, 2001; Stanovich, 1986). For the community, engagement in reading supports the development of social imagination, leading to the development of a literacy community in which students “understand, connect with, and care about others” (Lysaker, Tonge, Gauson, & Miller, 2011, p. 558) and in which students are empowered to explore their own identities and goals (Ivey & Johnston, 2015). Such consequences clearly support reading engagement as an important area for study.

However, reading engagement is also remarkably complex. It has been defined in a variety of ways in the research literature, with each definition emphasizing different facets of the construct and construing its relationship to motivation in distinctive and nuanced ways. Some of those conceptualizations draw primarily on work from educational psychology (Reschly & Christenson, 2012) and other traditions focusing on how motivation and engagement are operationalized in the individual mind (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), while others draw on work from more sociocultural traditions and focus on the practices of communities (Ivey & Johnston, 2015; Lysaker et al., 2011). Notably absent from those definitions, as well as from the vast majority of empirical studies on instructional practices that support reading motivation and engagement, are the

perspectives of practitioners such as classroom teachers, literacy coaches, reading specialists, and administrators. Practitioners hold their own views on engagement that shape their instructional philosophies and decisions (Borko, Shavelson, & Stern, 1981; C. N. Thomas, 2013). It is therefore vital to examine the different ways that engagement in and motivation for reading have been conceptualized, both in the research literature and by practitioners.

In taking up this task, it is especially important to consider the perspectives of teachers of the primary grades. Few extant studies on reading motivation, particularly studies taking a repertoires of practice approach (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) to consider how students' social and cultural repertoires may serve as a resource for their literacy engagement, have included students in grades one through three or their teachers as participants (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002). In addition to studying practitioners' conceptualizations of reading motivation and engagement, it is also worth examining the instructional practices that they enact to promote students' engagement to (a) understand how these practices follow from their conceptualizations and (b) document innovative practices that practitioners may design that are as of yet not reflected in the research literature.

This dissertation study, which comprises a series of three articles, addresses these gaps in the literature by exploring the following overarching research questions:

1. *How have reading motivation and engagement been conceptualized in the research literature?*

2. *How do educators, particularly teachers of the primary grades, conceptualize reading motivation and engagement? What sources of information do they draw upon to construct their understandings?*
3. *How do educators, particularly teachers of the primary grades, enact literacy instruction in support of student motivation and engagement?*

### **Origins of the Research Trajectory**

I came to these questions following a series of experiences both in the classroom and as a novice researcher. In my four years of experience as an elementary classroom teacher, I found I had both a passion and a talent for engaging students in literacy; particularly, helping students to find the texts and contexts that would support their transformation from often somewhat reluctant readers to voracious ones. I began to explore reading motivation and engagement as a research interest during the early years of my doctoral program, and eventually designed a dissertation study on this topic: a study of a nine-month long, iteratively designed professional development (PD) course focusing on reading motivation and engagement. That study, which was conducted in collaboration with site staff using a design-based experimental framework (Penuel, Fishman, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2011), ended after two months when it became apparent that the PD course was not meeting practitioners' needs. The experiences which led to the termination of the study helped me to refine my research questions into the series focusing on conceptualizations of reading engagement presented above. Before describing those experiences, I provide some detail on my own identities and positionality as a researcher.

### **Researcher Positionality**

I identify as a White woman of middle-class background; these identities both place me in a position of privilege and power and mark me as similar to the overwhelming majority of teachers, particularly teachers of the elementary grades. I am also a Lesbian and Jewish, identities which complicate my privilege but which are also not as immediately apparent to those around me. I have four years of experience as a classroom teacher in the New Orleans area, teaching students whose cultural practices were often very different from my own. Again, these experiences are similar to those of many White teachers. I am also a reading specialist and have worked in that capacity in both clinical and school-based settings, providing instructional support to students of all ages and literacy coaching to their teachers. These identities and experiences affect the ways in which I interpret the research that follows.

### **The Design of the Original Dissertation Study**

The original dissertation study took place at Red Cedar Charter School<sup>1</sup> and enrolled seven participating teachers of grades one through three; all teachers identified as women, five identified as White, one identified as African American, and one identified as both Indigenous and White. The study also involved the school Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI), who identified as a woman of mixed race, as co-designer of the PD course. She and I worked collaboratively to identify areas of strength and need in the school and to design a PD trajectory that would fit the context, both in

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<sup>1</sup> The school's name is a pseudonym.

terms of content and format. I served as both researcher and literacy coach, providing PD on general literacy methods (outside the context of the study) to the school as a whole, PD on literacy motivation and engagement to participating teachers, and engaging in a cycle of literacy coaching with participating teachers that involved observation, debriefing, problem-solving, and co-planning. In my work with teachers, I was conscious of the ways my background, my association with a prestigious university, and the fact that I was sponsored in my entry to the school context by administrators placed me in a position of power. I also was careful to negotiate expectations for confidentiality with the administrators so that my coaching would remain private between myself and the teachers, and so I would not be in a position to evaluate the teachers at any time. Finally, I also involved participating teachers in the design of the PD by soliciting their feedback in both informal and formal ways and incorporating it into the ongoing design process.

While the study ended early for reasons that are detailed below, the parts of the PD that *were* enacted included: a group workshop eliciting practitioners' understandings of literacy motivation and engagement, a group workshop exploring the potential of collaboration for supporting engagement, a series of two to three classroom observations per participating teacher (one of which was videotaped), and a series of two to three audio-recorded coaching sessions per participating teacher. These represent the data sources for the third article of this dissertation.

**Experiences leading to the termination of the original study and the reconceptualization of the dissertation.** One of the goals of the PD was to support teachers in thinking about how they might draw on their students' cultural repertoires of

practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) in designing instruction for literacy engagement. Given the racial and ethnic demographics of the school (50% Black/African American, 30% White, 15% Hispanic/Latinx), combined with the aftermath of the 2016 Presidential election and other conversations around race that were ongoing in the context, this topic—particularly the complexities of the intersections between cultural practice and race—proved both complex and highly sensitive.

In October, I held what was intended to be the first of several workshops examining different engagement-supportive practices from a cultural lens. With the cultural backgrounds of Red Cedar students in mind and in consultation with the DCI and others, I selected an article on how providing opportunities for social collaboration aligns with the cultural practices of African American students in particular and can support their reading engagement. However, I lacked expertise in facilitating productive conversations around racialized issues, and that inexperience combined with the title of the article, which combined a participant quote in which a student expressed frustration with reading with an explicit reference to African American males, meant that the discussion did not go well.

While the body of the article took a sociocultural perspective and the article was co-authored by an African American author and a White author, the title of the article was not reflective of those perspectives, and had the effect of essentializing African American cultural practices around literacy by suggesting that African American readers would be disengaged. The teacher who identified as African American pointed this out to me, telling me she felt the article was demeaning to her and her culture. She then

exercised her agency by leaving the workshop early and declining to work with me in future. The remaining five teachers in attendance, along with myself and the DCI, then engaged in a critical conversation about the title of the article and how research can perpetuate negative stereotypes about historically minoritized communities. We discussed the contrast in the tone of the title versus the tone of the body of the article, and whether the positive content of the body could outweigh the title, deciding it did not. We also wondered whether the title had been selected to grab readers' attention, without adequate consideration of how the title might be read regarding the cultural practices of African American students. While I felt this conversation was productive, if difficult, damage had been done to my relationships with participating teachers. My lack of criticality when selecting the article had caused great pain, particularly to the teacher who chose to leave the workshop. When it became apparent that repairing those relationships would take more time than the principal wished to invest in my work, the principal and I made the decision to end the study.

This experience led me to explore and reflect more on the various ways that researchers have approached issues of culture, particularly in research on reading engagement. I wanted to gain a more nuanced understanding of approaches to studying reading from a sociocultural perspective, to begin to better understand the subtle ways that essentializing perspectives can and do infiltrate even the most well-intentioned of research. I want to avoid causing pain in my work, particularly to participants of nondominant communities (I borrow the term "nondominant" from Kris Gutiérrez to recognize the political nature of this work) in the future. I therefore decided to take a

deep dive into these topics, the results of which comprise the theoretical paper presented in Chapter II.

### **Exploring Conceptualizations of Reading Motivation and Engagement: Three Articles**

In the three articles that follow, I explore the ways in which reading motivation and engagement have been conceptualized, both by researchers and practitioners. In the first article, I explore different theoretical approaches to the study of reading motivation and engagement, and ultimately advance my own approach that is primarily sociocultural, while also drawing on insights from research that is more cognitive in orientation. In that article, I also present my own continuum model of the extant research, as well as a new definition of reading engagement that reflects work across that continuum.

I apply this model in the second article, in which I consider how first-grade teachers involved in focus groups to imagine what it might be like to implement project-based learning in their settings conceptualized students' motivation for and engagement in literacy under the imagined curriculum. I present a multi-layered analysis that balances an approach in which the concepts from the extant literature are applied directly to participants' comments with an actor-oriented approach (Penuel et al., 2014) that privileges practitioners' perspectives and considers what participating practitioners were attending to in articulating their understandings. I explore in depth what complexities around the social and cultural dimensions of engagement participating teachers encountered, and how they made sense of those complexities.

Finally, in the third article I present a case study of how two participating teachers from the original dissertation study conceptualized reading motivation and engagement, including what sources of information they drew upon to construct those conceptualizations, as well as what those teachers actually did in their instruction to support and promote students' engagement in reading.

Following the presentation of the three articles, I offer a concluding analysis of the lessons I have learned throughout this process, particularly about being a White researcher working explicitly with issues of culture, as well as overall implications for research and practice. Finally, I describe my own future research trajectory and how it has been informed by this work, and offer suggestions for the field.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THINKING ABOUT READING ENGAGEMENT: A CONTINUUM OF LENSES**

### **Background**

Engagement in reading has powerful short- and long-term consequences for learners. In the short term, engaged readers read for their own purposes and goals, applying cognitive strategies to comprehend text within a literacy community (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In contrast, readers who are disengaged may avoid reading and may not feel efficacious in applying cognitive strategies or dealing with obstacles to comprehension. These differential patterns lead to a “rich get richer” effect over the long term (Stanovich, 1986): Engaged readers read more often and more widely (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995) and show more rapid improvement on assessments of reading proficiency (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie et al., 2001) while disengaged readers fall further and further behind (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Engagement also has consequences beyond the individual learner: As Ivey and Johnston (2015) highlight,

Engaged reading of narratives influences readers’ social imaginations and social behavior (Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Lysaker et al., 2011). From this perspective, engaged reading involves not only skills and strategies and knowledge construction, it implicates the socio-emotional (and thus moral) life of both community and individual. (p. 301)

In other words, the effects of engagement in literacy extend beyond the individual learner to the classroom and wider communities of which that learner is a part.

While reading engagement is clearly consequential for young learners, it is also incredibly complex; it is challenging to define, and it is related to the concept of motivation (which includes a constellation of sub-constructs, in its own right) in ways that are not yet agreed upon. The concept of engagement originated in educational psychology with studies of learner motivation for discrete tasks, often presented in laboratory settings (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Hidi & Boscolo, 2006; Schunk, 1991; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Once the domain-specificity of motivation was established (Wigfield, 1997) researchers in the field of literacy began to consider how students might experience motivation for reading tasks in particular (as opposed to motivation for participation in academic tasks, more generally) and how motivation for reading might affect reading achievement. Researchers in both the field of literacy and in education writ large began to think about motivation as it related to engagement; some viewed engagement as subsuming motivation and its related constructs, while others viewed motivation as a precursor to engagement (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Researchers now approach reading engagement through a variety of theoretical lenses; these lenses affect how the concept is defined, studied, and even whether the term “engagement” is used at all (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 614).

At first glance, these lenses might appear to fall into two primary camps: those that are primarily oriented towards the cognitive and focus on the mind of an individual learner, and those that are primarily sociocultural and focus on the practices of the wider community of learners. Indeed, many in the field of literacy have written about the supposed incompatibility, or “seeming incommensurability”, of the cognitive and the

sociocultural in an attempt to reconcile the two (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004). For example, a recent centennial review of the literature on literacy engagement concludes that the literature falls into two primary “currents:” the sociocognitive, and the sociocultural (Hruby et al., 2016). However, a closer examination of the research on reading engagement finds this distinction overly simplistic. Especially in the years following the “sociocultural turn” of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 615), researchers from historically cognitively-focused traditions have begun to acknowledge the vital influence of the sociocultural context on learning. Similarly, it is difficult to conceive of a culturally, socially, and historically-grounded literacy community without also considering the individual readers that are included in that community. This may be especially true for classroom practitioners, for whom the personalities, interests, and practices of the individual students under their care are incredibly salient.

### **Purpose of the Review**

In this theoretical paper, I argue that the differences among the ways educational researchers approach the study of engagement are better expressed as a continuum (see Figure 1). On one end are scholars who approach the topic from a primarily cognitive lens and who consider the individual mind as the unit of analysis, and on the other are those who use a primarily sociocultural lens, considering the social and cultural practices of the community as the unit of analysis. Few scholars (if any) are truly located at either end of the continuum. In the model figure, I further divide this continuum into six phases to trace how work located in each phase differs in respect to: (1) how the social, the

cultural, and the historical are considered (if at all); (2) the types of texts and tasks that are utilized, and what counts as evidence for motivation and/or engagement; and (3) what it means to read (See Appendix A).

Ultimately, this last dimension, i.e., what it means to read, is of the utmost importance to the research, teaching, and learning of reading. I argue for a perspective in which reading is done for the purpose of learning something about life, exploring the human experience in a critical way, and connecting the past, present, and future. To take such a perspective, a sociocultural approach to the study of reading engagement is imperative. However, much insight is still to be gained from work that is more cognitive in orientation; thus, this review ultimately advances a sociocultural approach to the study of reading motivation and engagement with elementary learners that draws on the insights of the sociocognitive tradition while also maintaining a commitment to the cultural practices and repertoires of the classrooms and local communities of which those learners are a part.

I argue that if we, as literacy researchers, can conceive of the body of literature on reading engagement as a continuum, then work from differing traditions becomes a resource to draw upon to generate research useful to practitioners, who may adopt a variety of theoretical lenses in their approaches to supporting the reading engagement of the diverse students they teach. However, when reconceptualizing the literature as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, it is also important to be aware and critical of instances when theories have been applied in superficial (or even deeply problematic) ways in an effort to bridge theoretical differences; I call attention to these as well in the

forthcoming review. These instances of misapplication of theory, which I demonstrate have largely occurred when more cognitively-oriented work attempts to add a sociocultural lens to an existing model, are another reason for my ultimate argument to begin with a sociocultural perspective and add important insights from other approaches.

This review focuses on empirical research conducted within school-based contexts, as well as relevant theories that transcend the in-school/out-of-school “divide.” While there are scholars who consider students’ engagement in literacy practices more expansively and locate their work in contexts outside the school space, such work is beyond the scope of this review, which aims to identify theory and research involving classroom practitioners and their students. The review draws on some general research on student engagement to provide context for the origin of the construct, but focuses primarily on classroom-based research conducted within the field of literacy. Before diving into an exploration of the continuum, I first present some of the key definitions of engagement in the extant literature. I then review literature representative of the continuum, and conclude the paper by presenting a definition of reading engagement that prioritizes the sociocultural while including crucial concepts from across the continuum, as well as discussing implications for future research.

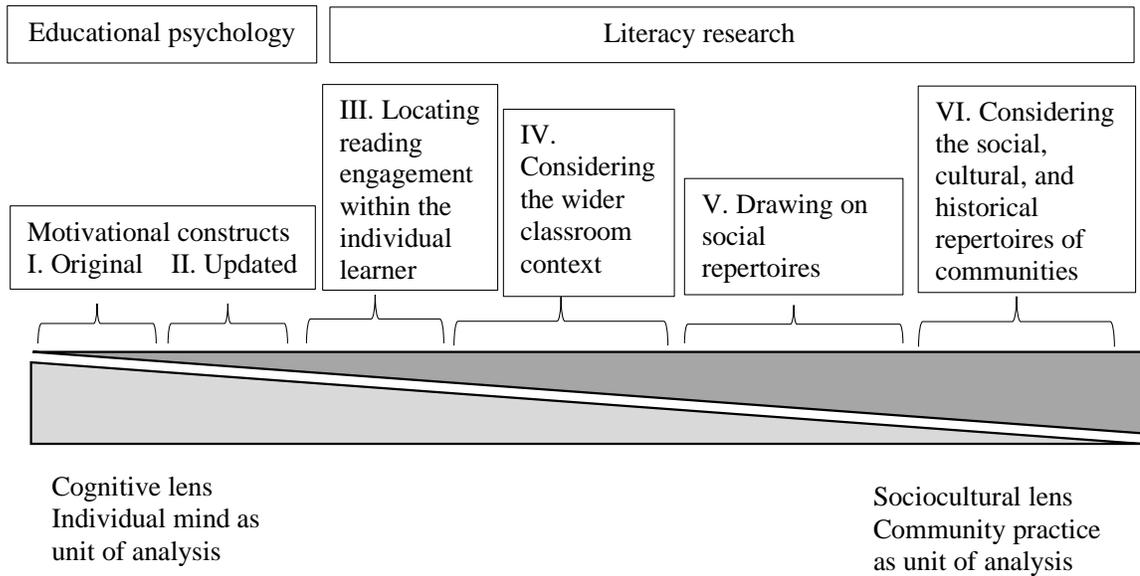


Figure 1. A continuum of perspectives on reading engagement.

### Foundational Definitions of Engagement

Engagement is a difficult concept to define; understandings of the concept are obscured by “jingle, jangle, and conceptual haziness” (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 3). Definitions for engagement have shifted over time and as the concept has become understood in domain-specific ways. Understandings of how engagement relates to the concept of motivation also vary across time and domain, and are debated among scholars to this day. To provide context for this review, I introduce some of the major ways engagement has been defined both in educational psychology in general and in literacy research as it applies to reading in particular. In later sections, I also elaborate on how scholars from each tradition understand the relationship between engagement and motivation.

**Conceptions of engagement from educational psychology.** In its earliest iterations, engagement was defined as little more than academic time on task (Reschly &

Christenson, 2012). However, contemporary educational psychologists find this definition to be insufficient—scholars now understand engagement to be “multidimensional and involving aspects of students’ emotion, behavior (participation, academic learning time), and cognition” (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 3). These various dimensions have given rise to typologies that classify engagement as: (1) academic (with indicators such as time on task, homework completion), (2) behavioral (i.e., attendance, preparedness, and class participation), (3) cognitive (i.e., valuation of the task, self-regulation, goal setting), (4) affective (i.e., belonging, identification with school), and (5) emotional (i.e., interest, enjoyment, enthusiasm, satisfaction, pride, ownership) (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Christenson et al., 2008; Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kinderman, 2008; Skinner, Kinderman, & Furrer, 2009). Some typologies of engagement add types of disaffection, including behavioral (i.e., passivity, withdrawal, giving up) and emotional (boredom, disinterest, frustration, shame, anxiety) (Skinner et al., 2008; Skinner et al., 2009). To these, Reeve (2012) also adds “agentic engagement” to capture learners’ active roles in influencing their learning contexts. Engagement as a whole is considered “the glue, or mediator, that links important contexts—home, school, peers, and community—to students and, in turn, to outcomes of interest” (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 3). Educational psychologists understand the relationship between engagement and motivation in a variety of ways. For some scholars, the two concepts are essentially synonymous and therefore the terms are used interchangeably; for others, engagement subsumes motivation; for still others, motivation is the intention behind an engaged action or an aspect of cognitive

engagement (Reschly & Christenson, 2012).

A second means of understanding engagement from an educational psychology perspective comes from Deakin Crick (2012), who conceptualizes engagement as “a complex system including a range of interrelated factors internal and external to the learner, in place and in time, which shape his or her engagement with learning opportunities” (p. 657); engagement is embodied social participation. Deakin Crick contrasts “passive engagement” with “deep engagement” (p. 679), arguing that there is difference between engagement for the purposes of conforming to a school and/or family culture and engagement that requires a deep and prolonged personal commitment to learning. This deep engagement in learning is grounded in Vygotskian theories of *perezhivanie*, or accumulated lived experience (Vygotsky, 1978) and includes elements of identity, personal and community stories, and dispositions towards learning. Deakin Crick rejects notions of behavioral and academic engagement as limited and passive, and considers cognitive, affective, and emotional dimensions to be “a more complete concern with learning process and outcomes at the whole person level” (Deakin Crick, 2012, p. 678). For Deakin Crick, motivation represents a “desire to engage” that necessarily precedes engagement (p. 678).

These two foundational definitions reflect a diversity of perspectives on engagement even within educational psychology; while both conceptualize engagement as multidimensional and involving both internal and external “factors,” they differ in which factors receive the most attention and in the degree to which individuals’ experiences and identities are emphasized. Definitions of reading engagement from

literacy research reflect an even greater diversity of understanding.

**Conceptions of domain-specific engagement from literacy research.** Within literacy research, reading engagement has been most explicitly defined by Guthrie and his colleagues. In their model of engaged reading development, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) define reading engagement by describing the behavior of engaged readers: “Engaged readers in the classroom or elsewhere coordinate their strategies and knowledge (cognition) within a community of literacy (social) in order to fulfill their personal goals, desires, and intentions (motivation)” (p. 404). In this definition, the authors identify three subtypes of reading engagement (cognitive, social, and motivational) and effectively subsume motivation, defined as “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (p. 405) under the umbrella of engagement. In an update to the original model, Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) add a fourth subtype of engagement processes: behavioral engagement, encompassing time spent reading, effort, and persistence. They also clarify the relationship between motivation for reading and reading engagement, stating that motivation is a narrower and more specific construct than engagement, and while the two are related they are distinguishable; motivation “energizes” engaged reading behavior (p. 602). These definitions of reading engagement draw heavily from educational psychology.

Other literacy researchers grounded in dialogic theories of reading (e.g., Lysaker et al., 2011) conceptualize reading engagement differently. As Ivey and Johnston (2015) highlight:

This line of research is not simply more focused on the social than on the individual, it theorizes the process of engaged reading quite differently... It assumes that reading, like other language events, is relational and dialogic and provides opportunities for self- and other-construction. (p. 301)

It is notable that in dialogic researchers' work, the term "motivation" is rarely found. This may reflect that researchers taking a dialogic stance on reading engagement give equal weight to the literacy community and the individual learner; since motivation is an individualistic construct, it is less relevant to a dialogic conception of reading engagement.

### **An Overview of the Continuum**

This continuum classifies research on engagement, specifically reading engagement, into six major phases; two of these phases represent research and theory in educational psychology, which provides the origin for the construct of engagement and the related set of motivational constructs, and four represent research conducted within the field of literacy on students' engagement in reading, in particular. The continuum is organized with research that considers the individual mind as the unit of analysis and takes a more cognitive perspective on the left, moving towards a more sociocultural perspective that considers the practices of the community as the unit of analysis on the right. From left to right, the six major phases are:

- I. Original motivational constructs (educational psychology)
- II. Updated motivational constructs (educational psychology)
- III. Locating reading engagement within the individual learner (literacy research)

- IV. Considering the wider classroom context (literacy research)
- V. Drawing on social repertoires (literacy research)
- VI. Considering the social, cultural, and historical repertoires of communities (literacy research)

I present theoretical work, as well as empirical research, in this order. Each section also elaborates on how the theoretical orientations of the perspective are expressed within the research through their consideration of the three dimensions identified earlier: (1) how the social, the cultural, and the historical are considered (if at all); (2) the types of texts and tasks that are utilized, and what counts as evidence for motivation and/or engagement; and (3) what it means to read.

### **Origins of the Construct: Educational Psychology**

Work on reading engagement has its origins in research on reading motivation, which is in turn rooted in psychological research on motivations for learning, more generally. In this section, I begin by presenting a brief overview of some key motivational constructs relevant to research on engagement, including both earlier or traditional conceptions of the constructs and recent updates that begin to consider sociocultural influences on the original theories. These represent phases I and II of the continuum.

#### **Phase I: Traditional Motivational Theories**

Research on motivation originated in the domain of psychology, where motivation has been defined as “the mechanisms that determine the focus, intensity, and persistence of an individual’s behavior” (Miller & Faircloth, 2008, p. 311). In

psychological research, two overarching questions in the mind of an individual were understood to determine whether the individual displays these characteristics: “Can I do this task?” and “Do I want to do this task and why?” (p. 311). Motivation was seen as a relatively simple construct that was present or absent in an individual (Miller & Faircloth, 2008). Tasks studied were often conducted in laboratory settings.

Work located in this phase considers the social and historical primarily as sources of information about the self; culture is rarely considered, and when considered it is framed as a variable or characteristic of the individual. Since this work is conducted outside the domain of reading, the questions of how this work uses text, considers evidence of reading engagement, and consider what it means to read are not relevant.

In the late 1980s, educational psychologists began applying cognitive theories of motivation and engagement to public school classrooms. Researchers then began to consider students’ expectations for success, values, and beliefs as determiners of engagement or disengagement in the learning process (Miller & Faircloth, 2008). The two fundamental questions of traditional research on motivation remained valid; Wigfield and Eccles (2000) applied the framework of expectancy-value theory, which integrated these two questions, to the field of education. Motivation was understood as the more complex interaction of a series of constructs, including self-efficacy, expectancies for success, attribution theory, goal theory, interest, task value, and intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. Macro-level theories such as self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) were also created to relate these constructs to one another and explain how motivation is affected by contextual factors.

Constructs related to the question, “Can I do this task?” included self-efficacy, expectancies for success, and attribution theory. Self-efficacy was defined as individuals’ judgments of their own abilities to succeed at a task (Bandura, 1986); in educational research, the construct included students’ judgments of whether they can learn to do a task, even if they cannot do it at present (Schunk & Pajares, 2004). Expectancies for success were more general and were considered less sensitive to contextual factors such as a student’s affect (Pajares, 1996). Attribution theory addressed how people perceive the causes of events such as educational success or failure (Schunk, 1991). These constructs, especially the construct of self-efficacy, demonstrate how work located in this phase considers the social: social interactions primarily are positioned as sources of information about the self. For example, a young reader who notices that other classmates read aloud less fluently than she does might use this information to inform her own beliefs that she can read aloud; her observations of others become a source for her own positive self-efficacy beliefs. Similarly, personal history (e.g., how well a learner has done on reading assessments in the past) becomes a source of information about the self that shapes that learner’s self-efficacy beliefs and expectancies for success.

Constructs related to the question, “Do I want to do this task and why?” included goal theory, interest, task value, and intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. Goal theory considered whether individuals are primarily motivated by mastery goals (e.g., learning for learning’s sake) or achievement goals (e.g., learning to get a good grade) (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Interest was conceptualized to have multiple levels: Situational interest in a particular topic at a particular time might develop into individual interest, which

could more easily be maintained (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006). Task value considered whether a student believes a task will be useful (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Lastly, motivation could be intrinsic or extrinsic. Students who are extrinsically motivated to read may seek recognition, grades, or social approval, while intrinsically motivated students may read for enjoyment or to gain new information (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). For students to be engaged in reading in the long-term, it was considered essential that they find personal significance in the act of reading and become intrinsically motivated (Miller & Faircloth, 2008).

Self-determination theory (SDT) was “an approach to human motivation and personality that... highlights the importance of humans’ evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). The theory proposed the existence of three basic psychological needs that are the basis for motivation: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. In other words, to perform to their highest potential, people need to feel: efficacious in their desired activities or interactions, that their relationships are caring and supportive, and that their behavior is self-endorsed (Reeve, Ryan, & Deci, 2018). As people satisfy these three basic needs, they can move from a state of amotivation, through extrinsic motivation, and finally to intrinsic motivation, which the theory considered as the “prototypic instance of self-determination” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 72). While the needs were considered to be universal to all people, SDT theorists acknowledged:

This does not imply that their relative salience and avenues for satisfaction are unchanging across the life span or that their modes of expression are the same in

all cultures. The very fact that need satisfaction is facilitated by the internalization and integration of culturally endorsed values and behaviors suggests that individuals are likely to express their competence, autonomy, and relatedness differently within cultures that hold different values (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 75).

Therefore, in work located in this phase, to the extent that culture is considered at all, it is considered as a variable that affects the individual; in the case of SDT, culture is a variable that affects how individuals might express the three needs.

**Summary.** Traditional theories of motivation focused on the individual mind as the unit of analysis; this orientation is reflected in the theorized existence of the two questions within the mind of an individual that determine whether or not that individual displays motivation for a task (Can I do this task? and, Do I want to do this task and why?). Most motivational constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, interest, intrinsic motivation, the need for competence and autonomy in SDT) originated within the individual mind, although there is some acknowledgment of external influences on the individual mind in the constructs of extrinsic motivation, attribution theory, and the need for relatedness in SDT. SDT is the only theory of these that even begins to consider culture, and it positions culture as a variable that would affect individuals' expressions of the three basic (internal, psychological) needs—keeping the emphasis squarely on the individual mind.

## **Phase II: Updated Motivational Theories: Considering Sociocultural Influences on Motivation**

In 2018, an anthology of theoretical perspectives on motivation was published in which prominent researchers in the field updated their seminal theories to better account

for sociocultural influences on motivation (Liem & McInerney, 2018). Of the theories discussed above, the following were revised: self-determination theory, expectancy-value theory, goal theory, and self-efficacy. While each of these theories attempted to reflect sociocultural turns in the field, it is important to note that the individual mind remained the unit of analysis, which raises questions about whether these revisions have truly accomplished their goal. I explore these concerns in more depth in the summary section following the presentation of the revised theories. Work in this phase considers the social, cultural, and historical and uses tasks in ways that are similar to the work in Phase I, although the use of SDT as a culturally critical theory becomes more prominent (as discussed below). Also similarly to the work in Phase I, the dimensions specific to reading are not relevant to this work.

**Self-determination theory.** Updates to SDT framed it as “a macro-theory of motivation that seeks to explain how sociocultural conditions facilitate or undermine human engagement and flourishing” (Reeve et al., 2018, p. 16). This definition was distinguished from previous framings of SDT by its forefronting of sociocultural conditions, rather than individuals’ “evolved inner resources” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). Notably, the 2018 definition also used the word “engagement” in addition to “motivation,” suggesting a shift in terminology to accompany the shift in focus towards the sociocultural. Reeve et al. (2018) also highlighted one of the core assumptions of SDT, that just as the environment can act on humans, humans can act on their environment—a concept that is integral to the ideas of Vygotsky (1978) and other sociocultural theorists. While the authors maintained SDT’s claim of the universality of

the three needs (a claim which the authors acknowledged has been questioned by researchers studying motivation in Eastern contexts, in particular), they lent additional nuance to the theory by considering the etic-emic distinction often made in sociocultural and ethnographic investigations. The authors defined etic constructs as those that are “robust and generalizable across cultures,” while emic constructs are “specific or unique to one particular culture” and are not intended to be generalized (p. 25). The authors asserted that SDT is an etic theory; no matter one’s culture, satisfaction of the three needs supports personal wellness, while lack of satisfaction leads to suffering. However, there remained emic aspects to SDT:

Culture influences what people believe to be true, and culture influences what behaviors represent ‘best practices’ regarding education... cultures vary in the value they place on an experience of need satisfaction (e.g., how important is it) and also on how much its members desire an experience (Reeve et al., 2018, p. 27).

Finally, the authors highlighted that SDT is a “culturally critical” theory; it can and should be used to evaluate cultures and organizations, and criticize those that “diminish, suppress, or outright crush” individuals’ autonomy, competence, and relatedness (p. 34). As I discuss in the below summary at the conclusion of this section, this is highly problematic from a sociocultural perspective.

**Expectancy-value theory.** In their expansions to expectancy-value theory, Tonks, Wigfield, and Eccles (2018) reminded readers that Eccles’ original model was designed to account for a sociocultural phenomenon: gender differences in students’

beliefs and values about math. The authors posited that differences in students' activity and behavior choices "reflect cultural differences in success expectations and subjective task-related values... [which] likely result from cultural differences in the wide range of social experiences that shape human development" (p. 95). Students' expectancies for success and their valuing of academic activities are influenced by a variety of social and cultural sources, such as socializers' (i.e., parents, teachers, and other influential adults) beliefs and behaviors, students' previous achievement-related experiences, and the cultural milieu of the student (e.g., gender and other social roles, culturally-rooted ideas about the nature of activities and abilities, family demographics). Individuals' valuing of an activity is also influenced by identity, which is socially constructed; students value tasks they perceive to be central to their sense of themselves. The authors described some cross-cultural research that has been done in non-Western cultures using expectancy-value theory, clarifying that they understood "cross-cultural" research to be research that compares individuals living in different cultures, rather than that comparing subgroups of a particular country. Similar to work in SDT, most of this work was undertaken from an etic perspective that assumed principles of expectancy-value theory to be universal. However, the authors hypothesized that "values, more so than ability beliefs, may be influenced by culture" and therefore may be more emic (p. 105).

**Goal theory.** In their update to goal theory, Liem and Elliot (2018) highlighted that while achievement goals have been found to be relevant to both Eastern and Western cultures, sociocultural backgrounds (e.g., gender, ethnicity) and contexts (e.g., parental expectations, classroom goal structures, and societal norms and ideologies) "may account

for cross-cultural variability in the degree to which different goals are adopted and the degree to which regulatory processes and outcomes are associated with the pursuit of these goals” (p. 41). The key to understanding these sociocultural influences on goal adoption, the authors asserted, lies in the connection between the goal a student might pursue in an academic setting and the reason for doing it; this was termed the “achievement goal complex” (p. 42). Students may choose to adopt academic achievement goals for reasons that are socially or identity-based. These reasons may also be proximal or distal in nature; proximal reasons may include desires and fears that immediately and directly prompt the adoption of a particular goal, while distal reasons may include constructs such as beliefs, expectations, and values. The consideration of distal reasons for goal adoption opened the door to the consideration of sociocultural contexts such as family and society as influences on individuals’ goal adoption through two mechanisms: sociocultural factors may influence distal reasons, which in turn influence proximal reasons, or they may influence distal reasons which directly instigate the adoption of achievement goals.

**Self-efficacy.** Two chapters of the anthology were dedicated to the construct of self-efficacy. In the first, DiBenedetto and Schunk (2018) claimed that the theory from which self-efficacy derives, Bandura’s (1986) social-cognitive theory, is universal, but that its theoretical variables (including self-efficacy) may be influenced by sociocultural factors such as culture, gender, and socioeconomic status. This may be especially relevant when considering self-efficacy’s relationship to self-regulated learning: “it may be that the idea of self-regulated learning is more compatible with beliefs of individuals

in individualistic cultures, which could lead to higher self-efficacy for self-regulated learning for students from these cultures compared with students in collectivist cultures” (p. 125). They distinguished self-efficacy from a variety of related motivational constructs; the most relevant to this review being the construct of engagement.

DiBenedetto and Schunk (2018) understood self-efficacy to be not just a precursor of engagement or a subcomponent of it, but a construct in its own right that has a longer temporal duration than engagement: “Unlike engagement, self-efficacy beliefs are present *before, during, and after* learning events [emphasis original]” (p. 122). Lastly, the authors introduced the emergent concept of collective efficacy, which refers to “the self-efficacy of a group, team, or larger society” and highlighted its potential for predicting the performance of individuals in collectivistic environments (p. 133).

The second chapter on self-efficacy by Usher and Weidner (2018) called attention to the finding that “the level of self-efficacy students report has been shown to differ across cultural contexts, which may signal that students form their self-efficacy differently according to their sociocultural background and local context” (p. 42). Of the four sources of self-efficacy information originally hypothesized by Bandura (1997), some were understood to be social or contextual in nature (i.e., vicarious experience, social persuasion) while others were considered internal to the individual (i.e., enactive experience, physiological and affective states); even those that are internally located may not be separated from the social contexts in which they occur. Culture may influence students’ self-efficacy development by cueing individuals to perceive information and themselves in ways that are specific to a particular society, time, and/or place. Similar to

other chapters, the authors cited research comparing the self-efficacy development of individuals in collectivistic vs. individualistic cultures, noting that self-efficacy is still relevant to individuals in collectivistic cultures because a sense of self is necessary to sustaining efforts to improve collective life. They also highlighted work on the relative influences of gender and cultural heritage, class, and power, calling for more research on the self-efficacy development of students who are disenfranchised.

**Summary.** While all of the updates to the motivational theories considered their constructs from a revised perspective that incorporated the sociocultural to a greater degree than their original expressions, moving them to the right on the continuum, it is important to note that the theories are still very much focused on the experiences of individuals. This focus can be seen in the ubiquitous use of terms such as sociocultural “factors” or “influences” that frame the sociocultural as a variable of the individual; this is in contrast with the research further to the right on the continuum, which is presented later in this review. Much of the research cited in all the chapters described tends to reduce culture to an individualistic/collectivistic or Western/Eastern divide; not much consideration is given to the diversity and nuance that exists within cultures that may fall into one of these two groups. Similarly, while the US or Western origins of these theories are acknowledged in the updates presented in these chapters, the diversity of cultures existing within the US is not. Usher and Weidner (2018) recognized and critiqued these tendencies in their chapter: “The social cognitive perspective does not position culture as a categorical ‘lens’ through which self-efficacy information is perceived...wide variation exists within and between cultures” (pp. 147-148); they also cautioned that “researchers

investigating the influence of culture should be cautious about using students' nationality or cultural group alone as a proxy for self-construal" (p. 156). Finally, the idea that theories such as SDT are a mechanism through which to critique cultures, particularly cultures that hold less power than the Western ones in which the theories originated, is extremely problematic from a sociocultural perspective. Taken together, these trends beg the question of how (or whether it is even possible) for these theories to incorporate sociocultural perspectives, given the persistent focus on the individual mind.

### **A Defining Shift: Motivation as Domain-Specific**

Wigfield, Guthrie, and colleagues changed the conversation on motivation by establishing that motivation could be specific to reading, essentially establishing motivation for reading as a domain within reading research. Wigfield (1997) adapted the questions and constructs identified by motivation theorists to reading research, positing that each construct related to one of two questions students can ask themselves: “Can I be a good reader?” and “Do I want to be a good reader and why?” (p. 60). Constructs relating to the first question included ability beliefs, expectancies for success, and self-efficacy. Constructs related to the second question included intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, achievement goals, and subjective task values. Wigfield (1997) cited earlier factor analytic research on children’s competence and self-efficacy beliefs, the findings of which suggested that these beliefs form distinct factors in different domains, as evidence for the domain specificity of motivation. Motivation for reading was therefore proposed to be a separate and valuable area of research.

Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, and Perencevich (2004) contended that children’s efficacy beliefs, sense of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and strength of motivation vary across activities. The question of whether the meaning of a particular motivational construct varies across content areas, however, is more challenging. The authors posited that since different academic content areas/domains require qualitatively different skills, motivational constructs such as self-efficacy may differ qualitatively as well, and they called for additional research in this area (p. 300).

## **Engagement in Literacy Research**

### **Phase III: Locating Engagement Within the Individual Learner**

The initial wave of research on reading engagement drew heavily from motivational research in the field of educational psychology. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) and Guthrie et al. (2012) presented two major theoretical models of reading engagement (the second model being an update of the first), and a series of empirical studies explored the dimensions of motivation for reading and linked reading motivation with reading achievement. I present the theoretical models first, as they provide the framework used in the empirical studies that follow.

In work located in this phase, social interaction is considered as one source or dimension of individuals' motivations for reading. Rather than considering culture directly, work in this phase considers race, ethnicity, and linguistic proficiency. Work in this phase does not consider the historical beyond the ways explicated in the original motivational constructs. This body of work relies heavily on survey research, in which the texts and tasks are often imagined within the contexts of survey questions. Reading is often thought about independent of context, or context is reduced to an in-school versus out-of-school dichotomy.

**Theoretical models of reading engagement.** Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) engagement model of reading development related reading engagement and motivation to comprehension, proposing that "engaged readers in the classroom or elsewhere coordinate their strategies and knowledge (cognition) within a community of literacy (social) to fulfill their personal goals, desires, and intentions (motivation)" (p. 404). Note

the dichotomy presented in contexts for reading: “in the classroom or elsewhere.” In their view, motivation is distinct from interest, attitude, and readers’ beliefs. Motivation for reading is multidimensional and activates engaged reading behavior, including the coordination of cognitive goals and strategies. Guthrie and Wigfield identified a series of instructional practices that contextualize and support the engagement processes: learning and knowledge goals, real-world interactions, autonomy support, interesting texts, strategy instruction, collaboration, praise and rewards, evaluation, teacher involvement, and the coherence of instructional processes. In the practice of “real-world interactions,” the social was brought in as one practice that might support or affect individuals’ motivations for reading and reading engagement. Reading engagement was viewed as a mediator between classroom contexts and reading outcomes; “engagement is the avenue through which instruction impacts outcomes” (p. 417).

Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) updated this model to better explain the relationships between instruction, motivation, behavioral engagement, and achievement. They expanded the list of instructional practices to include those relevant to early adolescents’ reading. They also emphasized classroom practices powerful enough to affect achievement on standardized reading tests (e.g., autonomy support, relevance, and quality of the teacher-student relationship) as educators in the post-NCLB era are being held accountable to these assessments. The authors represented and explained several pathways beginning with classroom practices, through engagement processes, to reading competence.

These two models effectively subsumed motivation for reading under the larger

umbrella of reading engagement. Especially important is the role of engagement in mediating the effects of instructional practice. It is important to note that neither model specifically addressed the reading engagement of bilingual learners.

**Empirical research based on the above theories.** Empirical studies drawing on the theories presented above may be separated into two groups: those aiming to identify and measure the dimensions of motivation for reading, and those exploring the relationship between motivation for reading and reading achievement. All of these studies, with their focus on the narrower construct of motivation rather than the broader one of engagement, focus on the individual reader as the unit of analysis. In the words of Hruby et al. (2016), these early framings of motivation for reading “posited student interests and self-perceptions as variables or characteristics of the student... subsequent work sought to determine the impact of these variables on student achievement” (p. 613).

***Identifying and measuring dimensions of children’s motivations for reading.***

Several instruments for measuring elementary students’ reading motivation have been created as part of the process of identifying the dimensions of children’s motivations for reading. These include self-report instruments using Likert-scale (Coddington & Guthrie, 2009; Schiefele & Schaffner, 2016; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), short-answer and checklist (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001) and interview formats (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), as well as teacher report instruments (Coddington & Guthrie, 2009; Guthrie, Hoa, et al., 2007). Questions utilized in these surveys and other instruments often ask learners to imagine texts, tasks, and contexts. For example, the Likert-scale survey used by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) asks learners to

respond to statements such as, “I like to read about new things,” or “I make pictures in my mind when I read,” in which the types of texts learners might be reading in these situations are left unspecified (p. 432). Questions may hint at a task, but leave much to the learner’s imagination, such as, “When a teacher asks me a question about what I read, I...” (Gambrell et al., 1996, p. 521). Some questions might specify a particular context for reading, such as, “Do you like reading at home?” (Coddington & Guthrie, 2009, p. 248) or imply a context, such as, “Is reading to the class hard for you?” (Coddington & Guthrie, 2009, p. 248); in these cases, the contexts are reduced to in- versus out-of-school. Many questions leave the context unspecified, such as, “I read because sometimes I can forget everything around me” (Schiefele & Schaffner, 2016, p. 226). In short, work done in this phase often leaves the purpose of reading relatively unexplained.

This series of studies suggests that the dimensions of children’s motivation for reading are nuanced and interrelated (Wigfield, Wilde, Baker, Fernandez-Fein, & Scher, 1996) and that measuring student motivation to read can be challenging (Guthrie, Hoa, et al., 2007; Watkins & Coffey, 2004). Children’s reasons for wanting or not wanting to read are complex, and may vary by text (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), context, and child characteristics such as gender (Marinak & Gambrell, 2010; Schiefele & Schaffner, 2016) and ability (Baker & Wigfield, 1999).

***Linking motivations for reading with reading achievement.*** With the dimensions of reading motivation identified, a series of studies established a strong link between students’ motivations for reading and reading achievement. These studies generally used standardized assessments of reading comprehension as evidence of achievement, and

explored whether differences exist based on student characteristics such as ethnicity and language proficiency, which here represent proxies for student culture. Elementary students' motivations for reading have been linked to their reading volume (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Wigfield et al., 1996). Links between motivation and reading comprehension achievement are also supported by several studies (Guthrie, Hoa, et al., 2007; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995; Solheim, 2011; Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2009), although those links are shown to vary in some cases according to gender (Baker & Wigfield, 1999), age (Taboada, Townsend, & Boynton, 2013), ethnicity (Guthrie, Coddington, & Wigfield, 2009; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006), and language proficiency (Taboada et al., 2013).

**Summary.** The studies reported above suggest that reading motivation (the term “engagement” is not yet used with frequency) is complex and multifaceted (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995). The findings establish a clear link between reading motivation and reading achievement for both monolingual (Baker & Wigfield, 1999) and bilingual (Taboada et al., 2009) learners. These theories and studies reflect the foundational motivational theories in their consideration of the *factors* that affect *individual students' motivations* for reading. These include but are not limited to social comparison (e.g., Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995; Watkins & Coffey, 2004), grades (e.g., Watkins & Coffey, 2004), self-efficacy (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2007), and work avoidance (e.g., Schiefele et al., 2012). Students' reading motivation profiles may differ based on age, gender, ability, race, or linguistic proficiency (e.g., Baker & Wigfield, 1999, Klaua & Wigfield, 2012; Proctor et al., 2014; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Again, elements of

culture are considered here as characteristics of the individual learner. Importantly, these studies seem to consider race and linguistic proficiency as proxies for culture; scholars further along the continuum would critique this stance (especially on race) due to its emphasis on inherited characteristics (e.g., skin color) over “routine and enduring social practices” (Lee, 2002, p. 284).

#### **Phase IV: Empirical Research: Considering the Wider Classroom Context**

Building from the work in Phase III, Guthrie, Wigfield, and their colleagues began to take a wider lens on reading motivation, considering its relationship to reading engagement and to the classroom context. Guthrie, Wigfield, and colleagues argued that the dimensions of motivation for reading identified in previous work were inherently social, and that the social context of the classroom could therefore be leveraged to improve learning (Hruby et al., 2016). The social is therefore considered in the classroom community, including interpersonal relationships. Similarly to the work in Phase III, studies in this phase that consider culture do so by considering race, ethnicity, or linguistic proficiency; for example, Taboada Barber et al. (2015) considered how the effects of their intervention might vary based on students’ language status (i.e., monolingual or bilingual). The historical is not considered in this body of work. This work was articulated in Guthrie, Wigfield, and colleagues’ seminal intervention model, Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction, as well as in interventions developed by other researchers. Key to Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction is a framing of reading as something one does to learn about the world. Many intervention studies produced following CORI’s development share this understanding of what it means to read. Texts

and tasks vary from intervention to intervention (see details below), but there are trends toward the use of high-interest (often informational) texts, and tasks that incorporate some strategy instruction and that are designed to be stimulating. These studies all generally accept the following as evidence of reading motivation and engagement: performance on the types of instruments developed in Phase III research, increased reading breadth and/or volume, and gaining new content knowledge from text.

**Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction.** The models offered by Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2000; 2012) provided the foundation for Guthrie, Wigfield, and colleagues' empirical work on Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction, or CORI, an instructional framework designed to enhance monolingual upper-elementary students' reading comprehension and reading motivation for both narrative and informational texts. The program incorporates five motivational teaching practices: thematic content goals, student choice, hands-on activities connected to reading, interesting texts, and opportunities for collaboration (Wigfield, Mason-Singh, Ho, & Guthrie, 2014) and takes place within science and English Language Arts instruction. The use of thematic content goals effectively frames the purpose of reading as learning about the world or gaining new content information. A series of studies have investigated CORI's effects on students' reading engagement and achievement. As CORI is the foundational program for much of the research into interventions for reading engagement in both this section of the continuum and the subsequent section, these are discussed in detail.

Guthrie and colleagues (1996) described the development and first implementation of CORI with 140 third- and fifth-grade students; note that this study is

the only CORI study that does not include a control group. The program was designed based on the motivation and engagement literature and included practitioner input. Professional development was provided for two third-grade and two fifth-grade teachers before the initial, yearlong implementation. CORI consisted of a four-phrase framework in which students: observed and participated in hands-on activities designed to spark situational interest, generated their own inquiry questions about the topic, learned how to effectively search for answers to their questions in a variety of informational texts, received explicit comprehension strategy and notetaking instruction, integrated their new understanding, and communicated what they learned to others in an output method of their choice. Interesting trade books were used exclusively in lieu of textbooks or basal readers.

Researchers compared the literacy engagement (as measured in semi-structured interviews) of two typical third-graders, post-CORI, with the engagement of two typical fifth-graders, pre-CORI. The third graders were engaged in literacy at levels equivalent to or higher than the fifth graders, demonstrating educational significance. Notably, 100% of students who showed increased intrinsic motivation also increased in literacy engagement. Eighty-five percent of students who increased in literacy motivation also increased in amount and breadth of reading. In short, the findings of this initial study were very encouraging about CORI's potential to increase student literacy engagement.

In other quasi-experimental studies, all conducted with children in grades 3, 4, and/or 5, CORI was found to benefit students' reading engagement in a host of ways. These studies generally compared children enrolled in CORI to children enrolled in

Traditional Instruction (TI) and/or children enrolled in Strategy Instruction (SI) that did not include the motivational components of CORI. Above and beyond these other types of instruction, CORI was found to improve students': (1) strategy use (Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, & Rinehart, 1999; Guthrie, McRae, & Klauda, 2007; Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006; Wigfield et al., 2008), (2) motivation (Guthrie, McRae, et al., 2007; Wigfield et al., 2008; Wigfield et al., 2004), (3) self-efficacy (Wigfield et al., 2004), (4) reading frequency (when compared to TI students only) (Wigfield et al., 2004), and (5) reading comprehension (sometimes when compared to TI students only) (Guthrie et al., 2004; Lutz et al., 2006; Wigfield et al., 2008).

Two studies examined teacher practices related to CORI. Wigfield and colleagues (2004) found that CORI teachers attained higher ratings than SI teachers on establishing knowledge goals, supporting autonomy, integrating hands-on activities, and supporting collaboration. Reading frequency increased under both conditions, demonstrating that strategy instruction alone holds potential to increase reading frequency. In Guthrie and colleagues' (2006) study, CORI teachers who provided more stimulating, hands on tasks saw increases in both student motivation and reading comprehension.

Guthrie, McRae, et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of CORI studies to determine the extent to which CORI increases motivation for third- through fifth-grade students. They located eleven quasi-experimental studies comparing CORI to a traditional instruction group and computed 75 effect sizes to evaluate the impact of the program on a variety of outcome variables. The total number of students enrolled across all 11 studies was 2,861. CORI was found to have a moderate effect on student curiosity

about reading, task orientation, and self-efficacy. Students' amount and breadth of reading also increased with CORI. The approach decreased students' avoidance of reading and perceived difficulty of reading, had substantial impact on engagement and strategy use, and resulted in gains on both standardized and researcher-developed reading comprehension assessments.

Taken together, the findings of CORI research demonstrated the effectiveness of a program combining thematic content goals, student choice, hands-on activities connected to reading, strategy instruction, interesting texts, and opportunities for collaboration with integrated instruction.

**Other interventions.** Studies of other motivational reading interventions provided additional support for the practices implemented in CORI, as well as several other practices. Results are presented by methodology, as Hruby et al. (2016) remind us that methodological choices often reflect underlying theoretical orientation, with quantitative methods being employed more often by researchers with a more sociocognitive orientation and qualitative methods being frequently employed by those with a more sociocultural one.

***Quasi-experimental studies.*** A pair of studies by Schunk and Rice (1991, 1993) found support for the role of goal setting and specific feedback in shaping fifth graders' (n = 50, 44) self-efficacy for reading. Marinak and Gambrell (2008) investigated whether proximity of extrinsic reward to the desired literacy behavior and student choice of reward would influence third graders' (n = 75) intrinsic motivation to read, and found that students who received the proximal reward and students who received no reward

were more likely to choose to read than the students who received the non-proximal reward; choice of reward was not significant.

Taboada Barber and Buehl (2012) found that monolingual and bilingual fourth-grade students' (n = 119) perceptions of teachers allowing criticism and independent thinking were significantly related to preference for challenge in reading and reading interest and that providing choices positively predicted reading self-efficacy. Marinak (2013) examined the effects of Courageous Reading Instruction, a program for fifth graders (n = 76) that was co-constructed by researchers and practitioners and that integrated student choice, interesting texts, and collaboration; students in Courageous Reading had significantly higher MRP scores than those in the control group, particularly on the value of reading subscale. Cantrell and colleagues (2014) investigated the impact of the Learning Strategies Curriculum (LSC) on sixth graders' (n = 851) reading motivation, strategy use, and performance. This program combined explicit strategy instruction with specific goal setting and did not involve any social collaboration. While there was no significant effect on achievement, the LSC group demonstrated significantly greater use of cognitive strategies, higher levels of cognitive engagement, and significantly higher efficacy, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation. Finally, Taboada Barber et al. (2015) investigated the effects of the first-year implementation of the United States History for Engaged Reading (USHER) program for monolingual and bilingual sixth- and seventh-graders' (n = 378) reading comprehension, reading self-efficacy beliefs, and engagement in social studies; little support was found for the benefits of this program for student engagement.

These studies provide evidence that the following practices facilitate the reading engagement of monolingual learners: the setting of knowledge goals (Cantrell et al., 2014; Schunk & Rice, 1991, 1993), the provision of specific feedback (e.g., on the success of strategy use) and rewards (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008; Schunk & Rice, 1991, 1993), autonomy support (Marinak, 2013; Taboada Barber & Buehl, 2012), collaboration (Marinak, 2013), interesting texts (Marinak, 2013), and strategy instruction (Cantrell et al., 2014). Findings relative to bilingual learners are considerably more complex. The findings of Taboada Barber and Buehl (2012) suggest that autonomy-supportive practices are also beneficial to bilingual learners.

*Correlational studies without control groups.* Several correlational studies without control groups further explored classroom practices to support reading motivation and engagement. Turner's (1995) study compared open and closed literacy tasks in whole language and basal-oriented first grade classrooms (n = 84), finding that type of task was the strongest predictor of persistence and the use of reading strategies, with open tasks being significantly more motivating than closed tasks across gender and instructional condition. Miller and Meece (1997) developed a motivational intervention in cooperation with practitioners, designed to increase third graders' (n = 187) opportunities to write multiple paragraphs, collaborate with peers, and work on writing assignments over several days. Student goal orientations varied by their teacher's degree of implementation: the literacy goals of students in high-implementation classrooms became less about outperforming others than prior to the intervention. The findings on the effects of teacher implementation serve as a reminder of the power of the teacher in

facilitating student literacy engagement; however, the lack of significant effects on strategy use suggests that this set of practices may be insufficient to influence literacy achievement. McCrudden, Perkins, and Putney (2005) found that explicit strategy instruction positively affected fourth graders' ( $n = 23$ ) self-efficacy and interest in reading; however, there was no significant increase in reading comprehension. Ivey and Broaddus (2007) conducted a mixed-methods, formative experiment with 18 Latinx seventh graders in which the intervention, which emphasized self-selected and teacher-directed reading of culturally responsive text as well as scaffolded writing on high-interest topics, was adjusted in response to students' needs as the experiment went on. Students benefited most and were most engaged when working primarily independently, with opportunities for peer collaboration and one-on-one teacher support; tasks that integrated reading, writing, and knowledge development proved most engaging. The authors highlighted that culturally relevant text meant more than simply having texts available in Spanish; they also needed to be interesting and accessible to students of emergent language capabilities.

This group of studies provides support for the following motivational classroom practices: open tasks (Turner, 1995), tasks that integrate reading, writing, and knowledge development (Ivey & Broaddus, 2007), collaboration (Ivey & Broaddus, 2007; Miller & Meece, 1997), texts that are high-interest as well as culturally relevant (Ivey & Broaddus, 2007), and strategy instruction (McCrudden et al., 2005). Two studies (Miller & Meece, 1997; Turner, 1995) also demonstrate the power of teacher effects in determining the effectiveness of a motivational intervention. In Turner's (1995) study, it was the type of

task a teacher chose to implement, not the overall instructional orientation or materials used in the classroom, that had the greatest impact on students' reading engagement. In Miller and Meece's (1997) study, the intervention was only effective to the degree that it was implemented by the teacher. These studies remind researchers of the importance of teacher autonomy and buy-in when designing practices to facilitate students' reading engagement.

*Qualitative studies.* Two qualitative studies investigated the effects of certain instructional practices on reading engagement. Notably, both of these qualitative studies focused on the reading engagement of bilingual learners.

A qualitative interview study by Cho, Xu, and Rhodes (2010) examined the impact of a literacy intervention program called Directed Reading-Thinking Activity on monolingual and bilingual fourth graders' ( $n = 26$ ) reading engagement. The small-group intervention emphasized making and confirming predictions in a relatively low-risk social environment. The opportunities for collaboration were beneficial for students' comprehension, but bilingual students' engagement suffered when asked to participate in oral discussion. Engagement was generally higher when teachers used the text to scaffold discussions about wider social and historical issues. Taboada, Kidd, and Tonks (2010) explored the effects of a twelve-week intervention for teacher autonomy support that involved student choice, fostering relevance, and a classroom structure that provided appropriate scaffolding of strategies without intrusion. Instruction included interesting trade books, cognitive strategy instruction, conceptual science development, and content-

specific vocabulary. The three fourth-grade bilingual readers interviewed expressed positive associations between autonomy support and learning.

These studies provide additional support for the following practices: collaboration (Cho et al., 2010) strategy instruction (Cho et al., 2010; Taboada et al., 2010), autonomy support (Taboada et al., 2010), interesting/culturally relevant text (Taboada et al., 2010), and knowledge goals (Taboada et al., 2010). The engagement research on bilingual learners is more recent than the research on monolingual learners, and there are far fewer studies specific to bilingual readers. These trends suggest that this field is relatively new or underdeveloped, a situation which is often ideal for qualitative research (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014).

**An additional study: Examining existing teacher practice.** One final study in this phase represents the only extant study (to my knowledge) to examine teachers' current motivational practices without asking teachers to implement a researcher-designed intervention. Bogner et al. (2002) used the constant-comparison method to study the instructional practices of seven first-grade teachers, with the goal of developing theories about how teachers of young learners motivate literate activity in their students. Importantly, the authors gathered data on the percentage of students in each participating classroom classified as "minority" and described the SES of the school community, but did not otherwise address issues of culture. The authors developed a list of motivating instructional practices that drew on concepts from the existing educational motivation literature, especially in educational psychology. The authors conducted classroom observations to document teachers' practices as well as assess student engagement at

regular time intervals, along with participant interviews to clarify observed practices. The authors found that participating teachers employed a wide range of motivational practices, far more than were listed on their a priori list, and that “engagement in reading and writing was greater in classrooms saturated with positive motivation and very low on instruction that could undermine student motivation” (p. 161). The authors called for additional research to test the potential correlation between “massive positive motivating instruction” and student engagement in literacy and to find out whether “infusing Grade 1 instruction with motivation can impact students from truly disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 162).

*Summary.* Finally, the studies presented in this section share an underlying assumption: students’ engagement in reading, while grounded in the mind of the individual student, may be encouraged or discouraged by the practices offered by the classroom context. The emerging work on bilingual learners, in its consideration of issues of linguistic and cultural identity, goes slightly farther in its reflection of the sociocultural contexts that shape individual minds. Even those studies, however, only begin to scratch the surface of the possible benefits for reading engagement of instruction that incorporates culturally sustaining practices, offers texts and experiences that reflect the diversity of the students involved, and considers elements of culture that are more localized than race or language, broadly conceived.

### **Phase V: Drawing on Students’ Social Repertoires**

The next phase considers how students may draw on their social repertoires to engage in reading, as well as how teachers might support students in doing so. Several of

the studies in the previous phase included social collaboration as one classroom practice that may support reading engagement. What makes this group of studies different is that, in addition to considering social collaboration and relationships as tools for supporting individual minds, these studies consider them as means of supporting a positive literacy community, and in some cases, ultimately a democratic society.

This body of work does not delve deeply into the cultural and historical repertoires of students and communities; cultural theories of learning do not feature heavily in the theoretical frameworks of these studies, and while some studies report on the ethnic and/or socioeconomic backgrounds of participating students and teachers, they do not explore these as potential resources for engagement. Texts used in this body of work tend to be contemporary and often multicultural or culturally relevant trade books. Gay Ivey has done much work in this arena, most recently alongside her colleague Peter Johnston; their work illustrates a shift toward more student-directed reading tasks. In this body of work, reading is done for the purpose of learning something about life and exploring human experience; correspondingly, these studies consider learners finding personal relevance in text and discussing text with others as evidence of reading engagement, although more traditional survey or interview measures are still sometimes used. Here, I present the studies conducted by others scholars first and conclude with Ivey and Johnston's work, as this reflects both the chronological order in which the studies were published and also illustrates a gradual theoretical shift even across the studies within this group.

In Lohfink and Loya's (2010) study, a university researcher and a classroom teacher collaborated to produce and implement an intervention using culturally relevant text with bilingual third graders ( $n = 20$ ). The intervention design was informed by a transactional theory of reader response (Rosenblatt, 1978) and sociocultural theories of learning. Students' written response artifacts demonstrated consistent, moderate to high levels of engagement with the text. While the authors of this study attribute the effects on engagement to the cultural relevance of the text, they may also be due to the opportunities for collaboration and choice afforded by the intervention routine.

McElvain (2010) investigated the effect of the Transactional Literature Circles (TLC) program (which emphasizes connections between the students' home culture and languages and the classroom, authentic reading tasks, social interaction, and engaging, relevant texts that provoke discussion) on upper-elementary bilingual students' reading motivation, engagement, and comprehension. The TLC program is grounded in the Transactional Learning Community model of literacy (McElvain, 2009), which emphasizes the dynamic and synergistic transactions that occur between student, teacher, peers, and text. In this model, it is understood that students bring language and culture to school-based literacy events, and that using home cultural Discourses in school helps to build "bridges of understanding" that "are useful in motivating [students'] learning" (McElvain, 2010, p. 183). Participants in the TLC program (grades four through six,  $n = 75$ ) experienced dramatic increases in reading comprehension, and teacher interviews and student surveys reported increased reading motivation and engagement as a result of the

program. However, large demographic disparities between the treatment and control groups in this study present some significant challenges to the validity of the findings.

Gambrell, Hughes, Calvert, Malloy, and Igo (2011) engaged third through fifth graders (n= 180) in a pen pal project that integrated reading and writing. Gambrell and colleagues grounded their work in a transactional model of reading (Rosenblatt, 1983) and in an understanding of reading as a social practice, or ideological model of literacy (Street, 1985); unlike the other authors in this group of studies, they also cited expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) as a component of their theoretical framework. Significantly, this study also focused on reading *motivation*, rather than reading *engagement*; together, these trends suggest that this study could be located between the work of Guthrie and colleagues and the work of Ivey and Johnston on the continuum. Students read researcher- and teacher-selected books and wrote to adult pen pals about their reading, and participated in small-group book discussions with peers. The intervention incorporated authentic literacy tasks and peer collaboration. Pre- and post-test scores on a measure of reading and writing motivation indicated positive effects on motivation for writing, but not on value of reading or reader self-concept. Girls' literacy motivations were significantly higher than boys' motivations. While the findings were mixed, student interviews revealed overwhelming support and enthusiasm for the program: 26 of the 28 students interviewed stated that they would participate again, and students reported that the letters and peer discussions aided their comprehension as well as piqued their interest. The authors speculated that correspondence with an adult unrelated to the school setting may increase elementary readers' situational interest in

reading.

Lysaker et al. (2011) described a reading intervention called Relationally Oriented Reading Instruction, or RORI. Lysaker and colleagues took a sociocultural perspective on engaged reading and considered literacy events and the conversations around them to be sites for self-construction: “A relational, dialogic view of reading accounts for the reader in broad terms. Here the *whole* [emphasis original] person who reads is considered, and it is the person’s relationship to text that leads to personal transformation” (p. 527). The intervention was grounded in the possibility that students’ abilities to understand both text and other people might be grounded in their social imaginations, and that engaging in children’s literature might positively influence the reading competence and social imagination of children that had been identified as experiencing difficulty with social relationships and reading comprehension. Twenty-two second- and third-graders who had been identified with such difficulties participated in RORI, with 12 students who did not experience such difficulties serving as a control group. The intervention consisted of small group repeated readings of researcher-selected picture books that emphasized inferring or imagining the experiences and feelings of the characters and that included time and space for community-building activities. After eight weeks of intervention, participating children improved significantly on measures of social imagination (e.g., ability to understand others’ feelings, and awareness of and sensitivity to social interactions) and comprehension.

Hall’s (2012) mixed-methods study examined the effects of a researcher-designed intervention that provided ample opportunity for group discussion on 52 sixth graders’

identities as readers and reading abilities. Similarly to Gambrell and colleagues, Hall located this study within an ideological model of literacy (Street, 1985), and within this model particularly privileged the component of students' identities as readers. Hall expressed the relationship between reading engagement, the social context, and student identity in this way: "students' interactions with texts and instruction are not necessarily mediated by their cognitive reading abilities but rather their interpretation of what it means to be a certain type of reader and how they understand themselves in relation to those norms" (Hall, 2012, p. 6). Students were assessed on reading motivation and comprehension and were assigned to discussion groups based on their self-identification of reading ability. After the intervention, vocabulary and comprehension abilities were improved. Students reported higher self-efficacy for reading, as evidenced by how they identified themselves as readers: 13% of students no longer identified as low-performing, and there was a 15% increase in those identifying as high-performing.

Ivey and Johnston took a sociocultural approach, framing engagement as a phenomenon that is relational and cultural, as well as individual (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, p. 256). Their work focused on engagement, rather than solely motivation. They related reading engagement to a transactional view of the reading process (Rosenblatt, 1983), which posits a deep connection between the construction of meaning from texts and the relationship between text, author, and reader(s). For Ivey and Johnston, a capacity for social relationship is both a foundation or prerequisite for deep engagement and a possible outcome: "Engaged reading offers the possibility of expanding the capacity for social imagination in the reader's own life, potentially changing the reader's social

behavior... and life narratives” (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, p. 257). The authors conducted a project in which four eighth-grade classrooms abandoned their traditional literacy instruction in favor of self-selected and self-paced reading of contemporary young adult literature that was also free of traditional evaluative measures such as projects and quizzes.

Two years into the project, Ivey and Johnston (2013) conducted interviews with 71 participating students to explore what students perceived to be the outcomes of this shift, as well as what they perceived to be the causal processes of engaged reading. Students reported reading both in and out of school, often beyond sanctioned times, and being much more involved with the text than in previous reading experiences, to the point of developing relationships with characters. Students also talked about books with peers, family, and teachers, again both in and out of school, and their relationships with their peers and classmates evolved toward greater interpersonal trust. Students reported shifts in their identities both as readers and as people that indicated a view of identity and personhood as dynamic. For many students, this shift extended to an increased ability to imagine the mental worlds of others. Students developed increased agency in reading, social relationships, moral situations, and life decisions, and many students also developed improved abilities for self-regulation. Students also reported changes in moral and intellectual stance, general happiness, knowledge, and both wide and critical reading; some students also reported changes in writing and reading mechanics. The most important causal linkages of reading engagement perceived by students were time to read, choice, teacher behavior, and books; social relationships were both a cause of

engagement and an outcome. The authors argued for changes to theoretical models of reading engagement in light of these results:

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... 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. (p. 271)

Ivey and Johnston (2015) continued to expand upon the same project, applying Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2001) to explore transformations of community and individual activity within the four eighth-grade classrooms (n= 258). CHAT is a theoretical framework that builds from Vygotskian theories of learning and development to study “how humans purposefully transform natural and social reality, including themselves, as an ongoing culturally and historically situated, materially and socially mediated process” (Roth, Radford, & LaCroix, 2012, p. 1). The authors selected CHAT as a theoretical framework due to its representation of “the social and cognitive as inseparable... emotions, behaviors, and cognitions cannot easily be separated from each other or from the cultural-historical activity systems in which they are constructed” (p. 300). The authors conducted interviews of both teachers and students, as well as classroom observations, and documented the nature and consequences (both intended and unintended) of the shifts in available artifacts (i.e., texts) and rules (i.e., self-selection and self-pacing of reading) teachers had made in their

classroom practice. They found that the changes in student engagement sparked transformations in the relational properties of the classroom community (e.g., more symmetrical power relationships and increased trust) and divisions of labor (i.e., both teachers and students engaged in teaching activities), as well as available goals (e.g., agentive self-narratives) and rules (e.g., allowing talk in the context of reading time). The authors summarized what makes their study and findings different from previous work on reading engagement:

Previous studies have documented the conditions or contexts that support individual engagement... The present study shows... the transformative evolution of a community of engaged reading (not merely a collection of engaged readers, nor merely a social context conducive to individual engagement). (p. 318)

Continuing the analysis of this project, Ivey and Johnston (2018) explored student and parent perspectives on an element of the project that caused some tension: the tendency of adolescent readers to select, and become engaged in, books of a mature or “disturbing” nature. Student perspectives were drawn from previous work (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, 2015) and were supported by interviews with the parents of five participating students. Students reported that reading books with controversial themes helped them put themselves into the minds of characters, taking their perspectives and considering their dilemmas, which ultimately helped the students develop empathy for others and view their own relationships from a renewed, more appreciative perspective. Students encouraged family members to read the books, insisting that these shared reading experiences improved family relationships. Parents described changes in their

teen's reading behavior and performance both in and out of school, and echoed some of the students' comments about how reading and discussing books together positively affected their relationships with their teens; for many, discussing the books provided a "safe way" (p. 5) to broach difficult topics such as drugs, sex, and eating disorders. Parents also located the books as sites for personal development for their teens and strongly supported the inclusion of disturbing texts in a classroom that prioritized engaged reading.

**Summary.** Together, these studies paint a picture of reading engagement that still speaks of individual readers' motivations for reading, but that also considers as central the social relationships that both support deep engagement in reading and that may strengthen as a result of deep engagement in reading. For these researchers, the act of reading cannot be separated from the social context in which it occurs. Many of these researchers draw on the transactional model of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1983) in their understandings of engagement in literacy events. While these scholars acknowledge that that social context is also inherently cultural, with the exception of McElvain (2010) they do not explore that cultural foundation as a potential resource for supporting engagement. In the words of Hruby et al. (2016), these researchers define the prefix *socio-* in the word "sociocultural" as referring primarily to sociality (i.e., interpersonal relationships) (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 616). This is in contrast to the next group of studies, which define the prefix *socio-* as referring to society and to which culture is therefore central.

## **Phase VI: Considering the Social, Cultural, and Historical Repertoires of Communities**

The sixth and final body of literature on reading engagement considers “repertoires of practice” (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) as resources for reading engagement. This term was coined by Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) to express a focus on repertoires over individual characteristics or attributes. The authors sought to find a way to address commonalities in the learning approaches of individuals belonging to traditionally underserved ethnic groups. The authors criticized the common assumption in educational research that individuals carry with them certain cultural characteristics based on ethnic group membership, arguing that this assumption does not adequately account for variations and changes in the individual, activity setting, and community, which can lead to an essentializing, reductive, or deficit-model approach to studying cultural variation in learning. In lieu of this approach, Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) advocated for a cultural-historical approach to studying teaching and learning that focuses on individuals’ “linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires,” or “ways of engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices” (p. 22). Importantly, the authors highlighted that people from the same ethnic group may differ in their experiences with particular cultural artifacts and practices; Gutiérrez (2011) referred to this as the “100% Piñata rule:”

100% of Mexicans do not hit piñatas 100% of the time... while cultural artifacts mediate human activity, they have varying functions in use and in practice, just as

there is regularity and variance in any cultural community and its practices (p. 31).

Gutiérrez, Morales, and Martinez (2009) extended these ideas by considering how they apply to the learning of literacy, in particular. The authors critiqued “autonomous models of literacy” (Street, 1993, p. 77), which are based on an assumption that literacy in itself—autonomously of social or economic conditions—will affect other social and cognitive practices. Autonomous models privilege school-based literacy practices rooted in dominant cultures, leading to deficit-based notions of the literacy practices of nondominant communities that result in students from nondominant cultures being placed in remedial literacy classes to “fix” their perceived deficiencies (Gutiérrez et al., 2009, p. 226). Gutiérrez et al. (2009) also challenged the related cultural mismatch theory, a highly prevalent approach within the field of literacy for explaining the variance in academic achievement between dominant and nondominant groups that locates the reason for nondominant students’ relative underachievement in a “mismatch” between the nondominant culture and the culture of the school. This theory, the authors argued, conflates race and ethnicity with culture and assumes that cultures are homogenous and unchanging—both of which are false assumptions. Similar to Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003), the authors argued for a cultural-historical approach to literacy learning that considers instead how to “re-mediate” the literacy practices of a particular local context, reorganizing the environment instead of pathologizing the student (Gutiérrez et al., 2009, p. 227). This cultural-historical approach, Pacheco and Gutiérrez (2009) asserted, “is the only theory of learning and development in which culture is not treated as a variable;

rather, culture is central to this view of learning and human development in which culture is said to mediate human activity” (p. 61). *This centrality of culture is what distinguishes this final group of studies from those in previous groups.*

Complementing the centrality of culture, the long-term, historical traditions of societies and communities are also considered an integral part of this perspective. Students are often asked to engage in tasks requiring critical analysis of texts and of the societies that produced those texts; discussion and debate is common. The texts used in this body of work vary, sometimes blending within a single project texts traditionally identified as “classic” or “canon” with texts by and about nondominant communities. Students are considered engaged in reading when they can engage in deep levels of textual analysis and find personal relevance in the texts. Crucially, for work conducted within this phase, reading is done for the purpose of learning something about life, exploring the human experience in a critical way, and connecting past, present, and future.

Gutiérrez has done extensive empirical work grounded in these theories; while much of it is located in out-of-school or after-school contexts (and is therefore outside the scope of this review), some is located in classroom settings. For example, Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda (1999) conducted an ethnographic study of the literacy practices of a dual-immersion combined second- and third-grade classroom. The study was rooted in cultural-historical approaches to literacy, particularly a concept of classrooms as hybrid spaces where tensions between varying discourses and cultural practices are negotiated and sometimes transformed; classrooms that embrace these

transformations are conceptualized as “third spaces” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999, p. 288). In the focal classroom, students generated and investigated their own questions about a sensitive topic (human reproduction) that had arisen out of an authentic incident in the life of the classroom. Students and their teacher engaged in reading alternative texts, as well as reading, writing, and speaking in a variety of codes and registers that blended the discourses of unofficial spaces (e.g., home and community) and official spaces (e.g., school).

Lee (2001, 2004, 2007), similar to Gutiérrez, advocated for a repertoires of practice approach over a cultural mismatch approach to understanding literacy learning, noting that how we understand membership in cultural groups (i.e., as based on race/ethnicity as in cultural mismatch theory, or as based on cultural practices) has implications for how we understand instruction. Lee (2007) articulated how a repertoires of practice approach to literacy engagement differs from other approaches:

While motivational research typically focuses on the individual, a cultural orientation considers how beliefs about competence and efficacy as well as the value attributed to tasks may be shaped both by community level factors as well as the organizational features of settings... how one identifies with a particular practice has strong implications for how one participates and what effort, if any, one uses (p. 124).

Lee drew on a cultural-historical approach to literacy engagement in her Cultural Modeling project. This project, which originated with adolescents and has since been extended to elementary settings, was designed to reduce the risks students face as they

attempt new academic tasks. A Cultural Modeling approach identifies cultural practices, or data sets, in which youth engage in their everyday lives and helps youth draw on these practices productively to accomplish academic tasks.

The original iteration of the Cultural Modeling project (Lee, 2007) was located in a classroom of primarily low-income, African American high school students and drew on African American linguistic practices, particularly the cultural practice of signifying, to engage students in interpreting and analyzing literature. Rather than encouraging students to code-switch between Academic English and African American English (AAE), which runs the risk of teaching students their fullest selves are not valued in school settings, Cultural Modeling embraces AAE (and other nondominant cultural practices), positioning these practices as resources for deep engagement with academic problems. When students in the Cultural Modeling project engaged in literary analysis of complex text, they used AAE rhetorical features (e.g., loud talk, rhythmic prosody, gestures, figurative language, overlapping talk) that positioned the text as an object of play and students as engaged players of a game. Lee (2007) highlighted the connection between using cultural data sets and engagement:

The features of AAE are an index of a point of view and engagement on the part of students. The evidence of engagement is revealed in turn-taking, distribution of interlocutors--including multi-party overlapping talk--as well as in the intonation and prosody of the talk, in the form of particular tonal qualities characteristic of African American English Vernacular. This level of engagement naturally leads to propositions and questions that the teacher cannot predict in advance. (p. 99)

In another iteration of Cultural Modeling (Lee, Rosenfeld, Mendenhall, Rivers, & Tynes, 2004), twenty-five third and fourth graders, all of whom had repeated at least one grade and who were speakers of AAE, drew on features in the African American rhetorical tradition to construct their own written narratives. Students heard African American storytellers, watched video clips of African Americans in film telling stories in a culturally familiar way, and looked at artwork depicting cultural scripts from African American life. Students developed oral narratives and were supported in transforming them into written narratives. Students' narratives included examples of several African American discourse features, including use of dramatic language, field-dependent style (i.e., a tendency to put oneself inside a situation and view story elements relationally), sermonic tone, cultural referents (e.g., soul food), direct address, and a conversational tone. The authors summarized the results of the study as follows:

Our argument is a cultural one. These students gain access to schema and cultural scripts they know well as a scaffold for the production of dialogue, descriptive detail, and actions that capture the internal states of character types they know well. (Lee et al., 2004, p. 52)

While this project focused more on writing engagement than reading engagement, Lee and colleagues highlighted the connections between reading and writing to argue that the project may ultimately have a positive impact on students' reading, as well as their writing; it could also be argued that the film, oral stories, and artwork used in the project represent a broader understanding of text and that, in engaging with these artifacts, students were still reading the world in other ways.

In his work on what adolescents find meaningful in reading, Tatum (2013, 2014) employed an approach called textual lineages, in which students trace what books and other texts have had a significant impact on their lives. Again, I argue that while the term “engagement” is not used here, that is what is explored through Tatum’s questions about meaningful literacy experiences. Tatum applied a sociohistorical understanding of the roles of texts in students’ lives, particularly in the lives of African American adolescent males. Tatum argued that print literacy has historically held a vital role in the lives of African American males, serving as a tool of protection in a prejudicial society. Tatum extended that tradition into the present day, analyzing the texts that have been meaningful both to African American historical figures and to current adolescents. Tatum (2014) defined a meaningful literacy exchange as “reading or encountering print texts that initiate or shape decisions significant to one’s wellbeing” (p. 36). While Tatum’s work focused on texts rather than cultural practices, like the other work in this group, his research is both historical and cultural in orientation and therefore in alignment with the other literature reviewed here.

After analyzing over 3000 textual lineages from middle and high school students in 2006-2007, Tatum used the results to construct a questionnaire to further explore what makes students experience texts as meaningful. Tatum (2013) found that students identified a range of genres of text as meaningful (e.g., classic literature, young adult literature, nonfiction and memoirs, adult fiction), and their comments suggested that “texts that move [adolescents] to feel differently about themselves, affect their views of themselves, or move them to some action in their current time and space are the ones they

remember or find meaningful” (p. 7). While some students made connections to texts based on commonalities in ethnic identity or gender, many made connections that were more personal in nature and either did not mention ethnicity or gender or crossed ethnic and gender lines. While students made connections to texts they encountered in school settings, both high-performing and low-performing students “rarely” or “sometimes” found those texts meaningful. Tatum (2014) noted that teachers, guided by a misunderstanding of culturally relevant pedagogy, often believe that students will find texts meaningful if they share ethnic or gender-based characteristics with the protagonists; the study results suggest this is not necessarily the case. Tatum (2013) advocated for a more complex approach to culturally relevant literacy pedagogy that does the following:

1. Encourages adolescents to reflect on and become introspective about their own lived experiences and histories.
2. Encourages adolescents to make connections across their multiple identities—adolescent, ethnic, gender, and personal.
3. Encourages adolescents to become enabled in some way to be different or do or think differently as a result of the texts.
4. Avoids pigeonholing adolescents by selecting texts based solely on ethnicity or gender; students find value in texts across ethnic and gender lines.
5. Recognizes the need to identify a wide range of texts that are aligned to the needs of adolescents, and not limiting text selection to standards-driven or achievement-

driven imperatives shaped by potentially stifling public policy and school mandates.

6. Honors the voices of adolescents, who can provide valuable insights on the types of text they find meaningful and significant.
7. Includes a wide variety of texts to expand what is generally allowed in stagnant, age-old traditions of high school English curriculum or packaged curricula in middle schools. (p. 11)

Tatum also encouraged the selection of thought-provoking texts that consider challenging themes that are interesting to adolescents, similarly to Ivey and Johnston (2018).

*Summary.* This group of researchers draws on a “repertoires of practice” approach to consider how the cultural and historical practices of communities may serve as resources for engaging students in literacy. Notably, the term “engagement” is used much less frequently in these works than in studies from points earlier on the continuum, although I argue that is what is being explored here, and the term “motivation” is rarely, if ever, used. This group of studies adds terms such as “meaningfulness” (Tatum, 2013, 2014) and “repertoires” (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) that reflect a shift from a consideration of individual minds to a consideration of the practices of communities. Culture is central to and inextricable from these authors’ understandings of meaningful engagement in literacy.

## **Implications**

### **A New Definition of Reading Engagement**

In many ways, this review is an argument for the usefulness of drawing on literature that spans theoretical orientations when studying reading engagement; if the literature is understood as a continuum rather than a binary, researchers may make use of all of the rich scholarship this field has to offer. I locate my own work towards the sociocultural end of the continuum, due in part to my understanding of the ultimate purpose of reading. I want students to think of reading as a means of critically exploring the human experience, something that can connect them to their personal and communal pasts while supporting and guiding their future lives and decisions. This perspective demands a sociocultural approach to the studying of reading engagement. While I do not discount the insights of more cognitively-focused research into the role that engagement plays in supporting the development of individual minds, I argue that the cultural repertoires and social practices of communities are central to understanding reading engagement, and that these must be considered in an authentic, integrated fashion to generate theories and findings that aid practitioners in supporting all students, particularly those from nondominant communities. In other words, while I consider a sociocultural approach to reading engagement to be essential, I also do not believe that taking this approach precludes the gaining of deeper insights through the consideration of the minds of individual learners. To better explicate my own understandings of reading engagement, I present my own definition of the construct which is, in accordance with these views, expansive:

A community of engaged readers draws on the various cultural repertoires of the group (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) to create meaningful relationships to texts (Lee, 2007; Lysaker et al., 2011; Tatum, 2014) and to one another (Ivey & Johnston, 2015; Lysaker et al., 2011). Individuals within the community leverage their cultural (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) and strategic (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) knowledge to find meaning in text (Tatum, 2014), glean understanding about the world (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), life (Tatum, 2013), relationships (Ivey & Johnston, 2015), and their personal goals and intentions (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

I ground this definition primarily in the cultural and social practices of communities; this is reflected in the primacy of these in the definition. While the community is considered first, individuals within the community also receive attention in the second half of the definition. Some of the most important insights from the cognitive end of the continuum are reflected in the inclusion of strategic knowledge, as well as the mention of readers' "personal goals and intentions," which is a reference to the original construct of motivation.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The implications of conceptualizing the research on reading engagement as a continuum are complex. On the one hand, there is value in looking beyond theoretical and methodological silos; evidence from studies that do this would be compelling to broader audiences, including practitioner audiences, possibly leading to a more effective translation of theory into practice. On the other lies a concern about theoretical validity.

Researchers doing work that uses individual minds as the unit of analysis could benefit from a more nuanced consideration of the sociocultural practices that shape the minds of their participants, as well as their own minds. This could begin with even basic descriptions of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participating students, as few studies from sections III and IV do this, with the exception of the research focusing on bilingual learners. However, researchers taking such steps must be careful not to fall into the trap of using cultural and linguistic descriptors as a proxy for cultural practices as these vary across communities (Gutiérrez, 2011; Lee, 2002) or reducing the richness of the sociocultural context to an “add-on” variable, or an additional box on a preexisting model. I believe that it may be possible for scholars grounded in traditional motivational theories and who take the individual mind as the unit of analysis to consider a sociocultural approach without falling into such traps, but at least at moment of this review, this has not yet been accomplished. It is easier to draw on insights from across the continuum when *starting* from a sociocultural approach, which in its expansiveness and consideration of the structures and systems that surround and shape literate activity, allows for multiple scales of analysis. I encourage the field to take up the challenge of considering how best to bring these traditions into productive and meaningful dialogue with one another.

There also exist gaps along the continuum that need to be filled. For example, looking from left to right along the continuum, the focal developmental age of the research tends to rise; the research in sections V and VI is almost exclusively focused on adolescent readers. There are exceptions, such as Lee et al. (2004), but in general much

less work has been done considering the social, cultural, and historical repertoires of communities of elementary learners. In addition, there are few studies across the continuum that consider the engagement of primary-grade readers, in particular.

Finally, the extant research on reading engagement is overwhelmingly centered on the learning experiences of students; the study by Bogner et al. (2002) on first-grade teachers' existing instructional practices represents an important exception. While improving student learning is the ultimate goal of most educational research, the field may benefit from a more thorough understanding of how classroom teachers conceptualize reading engagement, including where teacher beliefs may lie on the continuum, as these likely shape their instruction in the types of engagement-supportive practices they may choose to implement (e.g., CORI, Cultural Modeling) and the ways in which they enact those practices. This work will have implications for teacher learning and professional development; if teacher educators and PD developers have a solid understanding of how teachers conceptualize reading engagement, they can provide experiences which meet teachers where they are to guide them into more nuanced understandings.

### **Conclusion**

This review has examined the existing empirical literature relating to reading engagement in school-based contexts and relevant theoretical literature, with the goal of disrupting problematic binaries that draw a sharp line between work that focuses primarily on the individual mind and work that focuses more on the social and cultural practices of communities. The review has presented a continuum model of the extant

literature, and traced how work located in various phases along the continuum differs in respect to: (1) how the social, the cultural, and the historical are considered (if at all); (2) the types of texts and tasks that are utilized, and what counts as evidence for motivation and/or engagement; and (3) what it means to read. In this review I have also critiqued instances in which, in an effort to bridge theoretical differences, theories have been applied in superficial or problematic ways.

Ultimately, this review advances a sociocultural approach to the study of reading motivation and engagement with elementary learners that draws on the insights of the sociocognitive traditions while maintaining a primary commitment to the cultural practices and repertoires of the local communities of which those learners are a part. Sociocultural traditions offer an expansive understanding of the purpose of reading and, in reconceptualizing cultural lenses on engagement as a focus on practices over characteristics, resist essentializing or deficit-based understandings of nondominant communities; more sociocognitive traditions offer a multidimensional understanding of the relationship between motivation and engagement for individual learners, as well as insights regarding key instructional practices that can support learners to read to gain knowledge about the world. The definition of reading engagement that accompanies this stance therefore brings together key ideas across the continuum to paint an expansive portrait of engaged reading.

**CHAPTER THREE: TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF FIRST GRADE  
STUDENTS' READING MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN AN  
IMAGINED PROJECT-BASED LEARNING SETTING**

**Background**

Students' engagement in reading and other literacy activities represents an important area for study, as reading engagement is related to long-term reading achievement through its effects on reading volume. Engaged readers read more often and more widely (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995), often applying strategies to monitor their comprehension and respond to obstacles (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Readers who are less engaged may not feel as efficacious in responding to obstacles to comprehension, leading them to read less. These differences in reading volume have important consequences for learners' literacy achievement: engaged readers show more rapid improvement on assessments of reading proficiency than do less engaged readers (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie et al., 2001), and these differences generally widen over time in a "rich get richer" effect (Stanovich, 1986).

Much work has been done in the field of reading engagement on the dimensions of individuals' motivations for reading, classroom practices that support reading engagement, and how students' social, cultural, and historical repertoires might be leveraged to support their engagement in literacy practices. This work ranges in theoretical frameworks and corresponding ways of conceptualizing the construct of reading engagement. However, the extant research is overwhelmingly centered on the learning experiences of students.

Little has been done to understand how classroom teachers and other practitioners, such as literacy coaches, reading specialists, and administrators, think about reading engagement. Understanding how practitioners conceptualize engagement and what theoretical lens(es) they may apply in doing so carries important implications for their instruction, as well as for professional development and teacher education. Teacher beliefs about instruction and theoretical approaches shape their instructional decisions (C. N. Thomas, 2013), including in the domain of reading (Borko et al., 1981; V. Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). While there is no existing literature specifically on how teachers' beliefs about reading *engagement* shape their instruction, based on the general literature it can be extrapolated that teachers' beliefs also likely shape the types of engagement-supportive practices and/or models teachers choose to implement, as well as how they enact those practices. Individuals working with teachers in a coaching, professional development, research, or teacher education capacity would benefit from understanding how teachers conceptualize reading engagement, as such an understanding would assist them in providing experiences which meet teachers where they are while simultaneously guiding teachers to grow in their practice (Bryan & Atwater, 2002).

Studying how teachers of students in the primary grades, in particular, conceptualize reading engagement is especially important. Few existing studies on reading motivation or engagement have included primary-grade students or their teachers as participants (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002). This is especially true when considering research that takes a repertoires of practice approach (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) to consider how students' sociocultural repertoires might be leveraged as a

resource to support literacy engagement; this work has been done almost exclusively with adolescent populations.

This study addresses these gaps in the literature by exploring how teachers of students in primary grades conceptualize reading engagement, including what theoretical lens(es) from the extant literature they may apply in their discussions of the concept.

### **Research Questions**

This project explores how first-grade teachers involved in focus groups about project-based learning and its potential relevance to their context think about literacy motivation and engagement. The research questions for the study are as follows:

- 1. How do teachers of primary-grade students conceptualize literacy motivation and engagement?*
- 2. How do teachers talk about the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of engagement?*
- 3. What complexities around social collaboration and cultural practices emerge for teachers, and how do teachers make sense of these complexities?*

Project-based learning, or PBL, is an instructional model that prioritizes motivation and engagement by organizing learning around a series of interdisciplinary projects. While there are many forms or iterations of PBL, the defining features of most PBL models include: (1) projects are based around complex, “driving” questions or tasks, (2) projects involve students in generating questions, making decisions, and solving problems, (3) student autonomy is prioritized, (4) projects culminate in a long-term presentation or product, (5) students have opportunities to work collaboratively during

projects, and (6) projects often have a real-world audience (J. W. Thomas, 2000). The goals and tools of PBL bear much resemblance to other, instructional models grounded in theories of motivation and engagement (Gambrell et al., 2011; Guthrie et al., 1996; Marinak, 2013): teachers seek to engage students in authentic tasks that incorporate a high degree of student autonomy and collaboration and integrate literacy learning with disciplinary learning. Therefore, PBL may be understood as a particular instructional embodiment of the research on supporting literacy motivation and engagement; by examining how teachers think about PBL in particular, insight can be gained into how they think about designing instruction to prioritize engagement in general. Because PBL is not the focus of this study, features that are unique to project-based learning, or to a particular conceptualization of project-based learning, are not considered.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Reading Engagement**

Engagement is a notoriously difficult concept to define (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Extant reviews of the research on reading engagement conceptualize the existing literature as falling into one of two primary theoretical currents or camps, the sociocognitive and the sociocultural (Hruby et al., 2016). Work that applies a sociocognitive perspective focuses on the minds of individual learners, while work that applies a sociocultural perspective focuses on the practices or repertoires of the larger communities of learners. Many literacy scholars have written about the incompatibility, or “seeming incommensurability”, of the cognitive and the sociocultural in an attempt to reconcile the two (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004).

I argue that the theoretical distinctions in the existing literature are more nuanced than a simple dichotomy, and that they may not be as incompatible as they appear at first glance. In the previous chapter, I presented a theoretical model that arranges the extant literature on reading engagement along a continuum (see the reproduction of the model from the previous chapter in Figure 2 below). The continuum ranges from scholars who approach reading engagement from a primarily cognitive lens and who consider the individual mind as the unit of analysis through those who apply a primarily sociocultural lens and who consider the practices of the community as the unit analysis; however, it is important to note that few scholars are truly located at either end of the continuum and that much variation exists across the perspectives represented in the middle. To accompany this model, I also offered my own understanding of reading engagement, which is expansive and brings together insights from across the continuum:

A community of engaged readers draws on the various cultural repertoires of the group (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) to create meaningful relationships to texts (Lee, 2007; Lysaker et al., 2011; Tatum, 2014) and to one another (Ivey & Johnston, 2015; Lysaker et al., 2011). Individuals within the community leverage their cultural (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) and strategic (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) knowledge to find meaning in text (Tatum, 2014), gleaning understandings about the world (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), life (Tatum, 2013), relationships (Ivey & Johnston, 2015), and their personal goals and intentions (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Understanding the literature in this way has important implications for studying

how classroom teachers and other practitioners (e.g., literacy coaches, reading specialists, and administrators) conceptualize reading engagement. Practitioners may draw on a variety of theoretical lenses when considering how to best support the reading engagement of the diverse students they teach. These lenses, which are often grounded in each practitioner's personal and professional Discourses (Gee, 2015) as well as experiences "on the ground" teaching, may be diverse and may not fit neatly into either a sociocognitive or sociocultural box. The ways in which practitioners conceptualize reading engagement are likely to then affect the types of engagement-supportive practices they choose to integrate into their instruction. For researchers seeking to work with teachers, whether in a research, professional development, traditional teacher education, or other capacity, it is important to understand where teachers are coming from and which theoretical perspective(s) they are drawing on to engage in activities that both meet teachers' needs and expand their thinking.

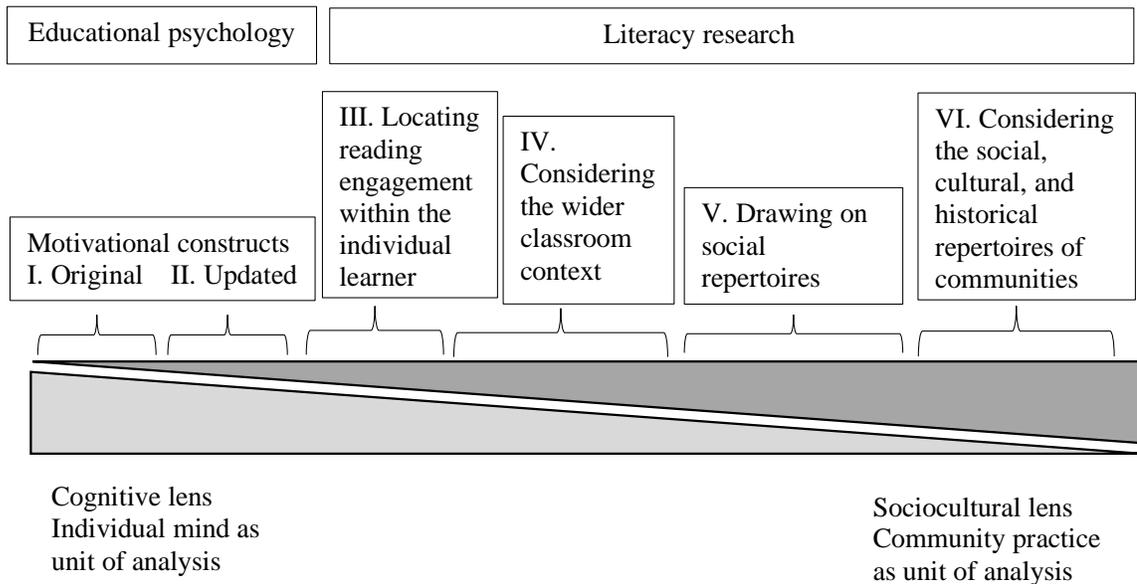


Figure 2. A continuum of perspectives on reading engagement, reproduction.

I now offer an overview of the continuum model (Figure 2) in some detail, as it grounds the data analysis that follows. The model presents extant scholarship on reading engagement in six major phases that are organized on a continuum, with work taking a more cognitive perspective (unit of analysis: individual mind) toward the left and work taking a more sociocultural perspective (unit of analysis: practices of community) towards the right. The first two phases represent work from the field of educational psychology, where study of the concepts of engagement and motivation originated; the other four phases represent work from the field of literacy that emerged following Wigfield's (1997) establishment of the domain-specificity of engagement. From left to right, the six major phases are:

- I. **Original motivational constructs (educational psychology).** Study of motivation preceded study of engagement within educational psychology, and

traditional theories of motivation are very much focused on the individual mind. Indeed, traditional motivational research argues that whether an individual displays characteristics of motivated behavior is determined by how that individual would answer two primary questions: “Can I do this task?” and “Do I want to do this task and why?” (Miller & Faircloth, 2008, p. 311). The concept of motivation is made of a constellation of constructs, most of which derive solely from “inside the head” (e.g., interest (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006), intrinsic motivation (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004), and the needs for competence and autonomy in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)), while other constructs acknowledge some external influences (e.g., self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), extrinsic motivation (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004), attribution theory (Schunk, 1991), expectancies for success (Pajares, 1996), and the need for relatedness in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)).

- II. **Updated motivational constructs (educational psychology).** In 2018, an anthology on theoretical perspectives on motivation was published in which scholars updated seminal theories (e.g., self-determination theory (Reeve et al., 2018), self-efficacy (DiBenedetto & Schunk, 2018; Usher & Weidner, 2018), expectancy-value theory (Tonks et al., 2018), goal theory (Liem & Elliot, 2018)) in an attempt to better account for sociocultural influences on motivation. In these updated theories, the individual mind remains the unit of analysis; this focus can be seen in the ubiquitous use of terms such as sociocultural “factors” or “influences” on individual learners.

- III. Locating reading engagement within the individual learner (literacy research).** The initial wave of research on engagement within the field of literacy drew heavily from motivational research within educational psychology; this heritage is reflected in these studies' concern with the factors that affect individual students' motivations for reading. Two major theoretical models of reading engagement were presented (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie et al., 2012), both of which conceptualized reading engagement as a mediator between instruction and individuals' reading achievement and which considered engagement as modifiable by classroom practices. These models also subsumed the construct of motivation under that of engagement, understanding motivation to be what activates engaged reading behavior. Empirical research applying these models focused on: (1) identifying and measuring the dimensions of children's motivations for reading such as social comparison (e.g., Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995; Watkins & Coffey, 2004), grades (e.g., Watkins & Coffey, 2004), self-efficacy (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2007), and work avoidance (e.g., Schiefele et al., 2012), and (2) exploring the relationship between motivation for reading and reading achievement for both monolingual (e.g., Baker & Wigfield, 1999) and bilingual (e.g., Taboada et al., 2009) readers.
- IV. Considering the wider classroom context (literacy research).** The next phase includes work predicated on the assumption that students' engagement in reading, while grounded in the mind of the individual student, may be encouraged or discouraged by the practices offered by classroom context. Guthrie, Wigfield, and

colleagues argued that the dimensions of motivation for reading identified in previous work were inherently social, and that the social context of the classroom could therefore be leveraged to improve learning (Hruby et al., 2016). This work was articulated in their seminal intervention model, Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), as well as in interventions developed by other researchers. CORI research identified the following classroom practices as supportive of students' motivations for and engagement in reading: thematic content goals, student choice, hands-on activities connected to reading, interesting texts, and opportunities for collaboration (Wigfield et al., 2014). Research on other interventions found additional support for: the setting of knowledge goals (Cantrell et al., 2014; Schunk & Rice, 1991, 1993), the provision of specific feedback (e.g., on the success of strategy use) and rewards (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008; Schunk & Rice, 1991, 1993), autonomy support (Marinak, 2013; Taboada et al., 2010; Taboada Barber & Buehl, 2012), collaboration (Ivey & Broaddus, 2007; Marinak, 2013; Miller & Meece, 1997), open tasks (Turner, 1995), tasks that integrate reading, writing, and knowledge development (Ivey & Broaddus, 2007), texts that are high-interest as well as culturally relevant (Ivey & Broaddus, 2007; Marinak, 2013; Taboada et al., 2010), and strategy instruction (Cantrell et al., 2014; Cho et al., 2010; McCrudden et al., 2005; Taboada et al., 2010).

- V. Drawing on social repertoires (literacy research).** This phase considers how students might draw on their social practices to engage in reading, as well as how social collaboration might support a positive literacy community and a democratic

society, in addition to supporting the individual learner. In other words, the unit of analysis in these studies shifts toward the community. However, the cultural and historical repertoires of communities do not feature heavily in this body of work: In the words of Hruby et al. (2016), these researchers define the prefix *socio-* in the word “sociocultural” as referring primarily to sociality (i.e., interpersonal relationships) rather than to society (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 616). Many of these researchers (e.g., Gambrell, Hughes, Calvert, Malloy, & Igo, 2011; Ivey & Johnston, 2013, 2015, 2018; Lohfink & Loya, 2010; McElvain, 2010) draw on transactional models of reading (e.g., McElvain, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1983) in their understandings of reading engagement.

VI. **Considering the social, cultural, and historical repertoires of communities (literacy research).** Researchers in this final phase of the continuum apply a “repertoires of practice” approach, which focuses on students’ “ways of engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices” (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 22). This approach refutes a common assumption in educational research that members of the same ethnic group automatically engage in similar cultural practices; an assumption which often leads to the essentializing of ethnic communities and which can perpetuate a deficit model of cultural variation in learning. For researchers taking a repertoires of practice approach, culture is central to understanding learning as it mediates all human activity; culture is *not* a mere variable of the individual. Many scholars in this group draw on cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) in their studies of

situated learning (Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Lee, 2007; Lee et al., 2004); others examine the cultural and historical traditions of literacy engagement even if they do not explicitly draw on CHAT as a theoretical framework (Tatum, 2013, 2014). While these scholars explore questions I argue are directly related to reading engagement, the term “engagement” itself is used with less frequency in this phase than in phases IV or V; instead, terms such as “meaningfulness” (Tatum, 2013, 2014) and “repertoires” (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) are used, reflecting a shift from a consideration of individual minds to a consideration of the practices of communities.

These six phases form the theoretical basis for the codes applied in the first layer of analysis of the focus group data, which I turn to following an explanation of the role of teacher sensemaking in this study, as well as the study context and data collection methods.

### **Teacher Sensemaking**

In my analysis, I also draw on the literature on teacher sensemaking. Sensemaking is a concept that originated in the field of organizational studies to describe the ways that individuals work to make sense of changes in their environments, and it has been applied in educational research to explore how teachers make sense of policy changes and other shifts in their contexts (Allen & Penuel, 2015; Coburn, 2001). As the participants in this study were invited to imagine the significant change of creating a project-based approach in their first-grade classrooms, their responses can be considered acts of sensemaking.

Sensemaking happens when individuals experience either ambiguity (confusion

over multiple ways of interpreting a change) or uncertainty (lack of information about a change) (Allen & Penuel, 2015). In the context of this study, in which teachers were asked to imagine what it might be like to implement a comprehensive project-based curriculum in first grade, ambiguity could exist for teachers if the representations of teaching and learning presented by PBL (e.g., the engagement-supportive practices of providing opportunities for social collaboration and authentic tasks) conflicted with those emphasized by the state and/or district, or if teachers perceived contradictions in goals. Uncertainty could exist for teachers in that this curriculum was still under development; many key decisions in the design process, including decisions that might affect student engagement such as what texts to use and how to ensure they would be both interesting and culturally relevant, had not yet been made.

Sensemaking is also inherently social and historical. It is social in that it occurs in a social context in which groups of people work collectively to make meaning of new changes and practices; these social interactions can shape the sensemaking process and the varying ways in which changes are taken up (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). The focus group interviews present a social context in which teachers could collectively imagine and make sense of the process of implementing a PBL approach. The nested nature of school contexts is especially important for teacher sensemaking, as “overlapping contexts interact with each other and situate implementing agents’ attempts to make sense of... education policies” (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 409). The focus groups represented different classrooms within the same schools, as well as different districts, some of which were nested within the same state educational system.

Finally, sensemaking is historical, as individuals look back on past experience when making sense of present or imagined experiences (Spillane et al., 2002; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Because of its social and historical nature, sensemaking provides a useful lens for illuminating ways in which teachers might consider engagement as social and/or historical.

Sensemaking emphasizes teachers as active participants in these contextual changes: “Teachers actively mediate norms, belief systems, and practices that have diffused from the institutional environment, socially constructing and reconstructing them as they put them into place in their own context” (Coburn, 2001, p. 147). Sensemaking therefore aligns with sociocultural perspectives on learning (including engagement), which consider how people act on and change their contexts, as well as how contexts affect people (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, sensemaking offers a perspective that frames teachers’ responses as “the interplay of action on interpretation rather than the influence of evaluation on choice” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). The focus is on what teachers notice and how they make meaning of those noticings to develop routines and culture over time (Coburn, 2001). This framing is helpful as it positions teachers as having power in policy implementation, while also resisting any deficit-based perspectives that focus on changes or choices teachers do not make over those that they do attend to.

One method for analysis that is often paired with a sensemaking approach is actor-oriented analysis (Penuel et al., 2014). Actor-oriented analysis is designed “to produce an account that links teachers’ decisions... to what they interpret to be salient curricular purposes and structures and how these interpretations are shaped by prior

experience and their local context” (Penuel et al., 2014, p. 752). Because of its focus on teachers’ interpretations and decision-making, actor-oriented analysis makes a natural complement to a sensemaking approach. I detail how I employed an actor-oriented approach in the data analysis section of the Methods, below.

## **Methods**

### **Data Collection**

In 2016, first-grade teachers in several districts in the Northeast and the Midwest who were not currently teaching using a PBL framework came together in a series of focus groups to discuss their understandings of the affordances, challenges, and necessary supports to implementing PBL in their current contexts. These focus groups were held as part of a larger process to inform the design of a comprehensive project-based curriculum for first grade (University of Michigan Grant Number N020619, awarded by the Lucas Educational Research Foundation to Dr. Nell Duke, Principal Investigator, Dr. Anne-Lise Halvorsen and Dr. Eve Manz, Co-Investigators). Classroom teachers and administrators<sup>2</sup> came together across districts (see Table 1) for a series of focus groups in which practitioners were presented with a general vision of project-based learning and asked to offer their responses as to its challenges and affordances for their students, as well as give some information on the current curricular practices and salient features of their context (see Appendix B for protocol).

Schools were selected for participation to sample a wide range of demographics:

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<sup>2</sup> Five of the six focus groups included 1-2 administrator participants, with the exception being Adams, which only included classroom teachers.

schools varied based on location (Midwest/Northeast, urban/suburban/rural), percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (FARL), student racial diversity, and achievement on state standardized assessments of math and reading (See Table 1).

Table 1

*School Demographics*

<u>School<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>No. Participants</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>% FARL</u>	<u>Racial/ethnic demographics</u>			<u>Achievement on state standardized tests relative to the state average</u>	
				<u>White</u>	<u>Black/African American</u>	<u>Latinx</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Maple	5	Northeast	67%	27%	25%	27%	Below	Below
Rockport		Northeast	84%	5%	3%	91%	Below	Below
Adams	5	Northeast	87%	29%	5%	56%	Above	Above
Mountainview	4	Midwest	55%	90%	0%	4%	Above	Above
Riverway		Midwest	69%	89%	0%	4%	Below	Below
Ridgeview	6	Midwest	49%	94%	5%	1%	Above	Above
Eastwood		Midwest	49%	89%	2%	6%	Above	Above
Washington	5	Midwest	33%	66%	16%	3%	Below	Below
Jefferson		Midwest	78%	60%	20%	7%	Below	Above
Lincoln	6	Midwest	58%	88%	5%	4%	Unknown	Unknown
Silverleaf		Midwest	64%	43%	49%	4%	Above	Below

<sup>1</sup>All school names are pseudonyms.

Focus groups were held during the Spring of 2016 and addressed the topics described earlier. The focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed by a graduate student member of the research team.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis was conducted in three cycles (Saldaña, 2013). The methods used in each cycle were informed by the results of the preceding cycle(s). Analysis was structured according to two complementary perspectives: a perspective in which concepts from the extant literature were applied directly to participants' talk, and an actor-oriented perspective (Penuel et al., 2014) that took as a starting point the understandings of

participants. The First and Second Cycles sought to understand how well participants' talk and ideas were aligned with established concepts about reading engagement in response to RQs 1 (How do teachers of primary-grade students conceptualize literacy motivation and engagement?) and 2 (How do teachers talk about the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of engagement?). These cycles therefore took a more deductive approach in which existing theories were applied to the data. The goal of the Third Cycle was to better understand, from participants' perspectives, some of the complexities that emerged in the First and Second Cycles in response to RQ 3 (What complexities around social collaboration and cultural practices emerge for teachers, and how do teachers make sense of these complexities?). The Third Cycle was therefore conducted from an actor-oriented perspective and was more inductive in nature, starting with the data and searching for patterns and themes in participants' sensemaking. I now describe each cycle in detail.

**Immersion in data.** First, I read the transcripts in their entirety and bounded them to include only data relevant to the research questions of this study and exclude any irrelevant information (e.g., the current instructional programs being used for mathematics instruction in participants' settings) or information that might be proprietary to the particular vision of PBL being proposed in the focus groups. I then drafted a memo to capture initial ideas about what might be important in each case, as it related to participants' understandings of motivation and engagement.

**First cycle: Within-phase coding.** For the First Cycle of coding, I read the reduced transcripts a third time and coded them using an a priori coding scheme based on

the theoretical framework presented earlier (see Appendix C for the code book, which includes the list of codes, as well as definitions and representative examples for each). During the first read, I coded the transcripts for which of the six phases (I/II: motivational constructs; III: locating engagement within the individual learner; IV: considering the wider classroom context; V: drawing on social repertoires; VI: considering the social, cultural, and historical repertoires of communities) were reflected in participants' talk (note that, for the purposes of this coding cycle, since the updated motivational constructs did not represent a major departure from the originals, Phases I and II were considered as one).

Then, I read the data coded at each phase separately and coded for specific theoretical ideas represented in each phase. For example, Phases I/II subcodes included the various types of engagement presented in educational psychology research (i.e., affective, behavioral, cognitive, emotional, agentic). Phase VI subcodes included "cultural practices and repertoires" and "academic experiences as shaping life trajectories." For "cultural practices and repertoires," data were further coded as to whether participants' talk reflected a perspective in which those practices were positioned as resources for engagement, or a perspective in which the focus was on differences between the practices of school-based Discourses (Gee, 2015) and students' cultural practices. For example, talk in which a participant said a student might draw on his background knowledge of his father's profession as a builder in a project incorporating measurement was coded as "social and cultural practices as resources." Talk in which a participant expressed concern that none of her students had ever been to a museum was

coded as “describing differences in social and cultural practices.”

Next, I reread data coded at each within-phase code and examined the data for internal and external homogeneity (Patton, 1990). I recoded pieces of data if they did not hang together appropriately, and wrote a memo to capture emergent themes within that code. In some cases, I collapsed codes if the information within them was sufficiently homogeneous. For example, the codes for “self-efficacy and related beliefs” and “need for competence” were collapsed.

**Second cycle: Cross-phase coding.** Upon completion of the First Cycle of analysis, it became clear that the relative proportion of participants’ talk falling in Phases V and VI (i.e., considering the social, cultural, and historical as mediators of engagement, in ways that are consistent with sociocultural theory) was relatively small. I decided to further explore the ways the social, cultural, and historical were considered across the data set in the Second Cycle, including ways in which these might be considered as more of a factor or variable of the individual than as a resource or repertoire. I proceeded with this analysis in a manner that was informed by the six phases, without being strictly tied to them: For each dimension (i.e., social, cultural, historical) I generated a continuum of ways that it might be defined or considered, ranging from “not at all” to the ways most aligned with sociocultural theory (roughly corresponding to the phases identified in the theoretical model applied in this study). For example, the ranges for the social and cultural dimensions were as follows (see Tables 2 and 3):

Table 2

*Coding Structure for Social Dimension of Engagement*

Participants' comments:	<i>Do not consider the social; focus is on the individual and cognition (e.g., self-regulation, stamina for independent reading)</i>	<i>Consider the social as a characteristic of an individual (e.g., introversion, extroversion)</i>	<i>Consider the social as a characteristic of a context (e.g., classroom structures and routines that are supportive of collaboration)</i>	<i>Consider the social as in sociality, defined as: "interpersonal relationship, interaction, and collaboration—typical in sociocognitive or social constructivist theory" (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 616)</i>	<i>Consider the social as in society, defined as: "institutional, procedural, employing cultural artifacts—typical in social constructionist theory" (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 616)</i>
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Table 3

*Coding Structure for Cultural Dimension of Engagement*

Participants' comments:	<i>Do not consider the cultural; students treated as a homogenous group</i>	<i>Consider the cultural as practices (or lack thereof) that may hinder an individual's ability to engage</i>	<i>Consider the cultural as a characteristic of an individual (e.g., race, ethnicity, language spoken)</i>	<i>Consider the cultural as valued practices that provide resources for engagement</i>
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Then, using my preexisting coding from my phase-level analysis for support, I combed back through relevant codes at each phase to look for references that made some reference to the social, cultural, and/or historical. For example, for the “focus is on the individual and cognition” code within the social dimension, I looked back at the “need for autonomy” code from Phases I/II and the “autonomy support” code from Phase IV; for the “social as a characteristic of a context” code, I looked back at the “social collaboration” code from Phase IV and “SES” code from Phase III; for the “social as

sociality” code I looked at the “social collaboration” code from Phase IV and the “engagement as affecting the social community of the classroom” code from Phase V. I grouped the data within each code according to common themes and generated a 1-2 sentence summary of each group that captured the theme, as well as several representative participant quotations.

**Third Cycle: Actor-oriented analysis.** The Third Cycle was designed to explore some of the complexities that emerged from Cycles One and Two around social collaboration and cultural practice (see Results section for more detail on these complexities), placing central the perspectives and sensemaking efforts of participants. To take this actor-oriented perspective (Penuel et al., 2014), I applied sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995). I first identified episodes of sensemaking that were relevant to the complexities around social collaboration and cultural practice; again, these complexities are important to explore due to the extant work on literacy engagement that indicates community practices can be profound resources for engagement in literacy. To do this, I used the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo to highlight data coded as relevant to these complexities (i.e., data coded at: “social and cultural practices as resources,” “describing differences in social and cultural practices,” “social collaboration,” and “teacher support and expectations”). I then included the context of each of the highlighted data excerpts, defined as starting from the interviewer question that preceded the highlighted excerpt through the following question or major shift in subject posed by either the interviewer or a participant. Using these boundaries, I identified 39 episodes of sensemaking, ranging from four to 54 participant turns, related to complexities around

social collaboration and cultural practices.

I identified two episodes that incorporated a relatively large number of participant turns and that included a wide range of sources of information to use to begin building my code list. Following recommended procedures for an actor-oriented analysis (Penuel et al., 2014), I read these episodes with an eye toward participant talk around salient curricular purposes and structures, prior experience either with approaches similar to PBL (and thus incorporating engagement-supportive practices) or teaching in general, and characteristics of the local context. I also looked for expressions of ambiguity or uncertainty that might indicate triggers for sensemaking activity (Weick, 1995). I read each episode line by line, generating new codes as necessary to capture participants' thinking. Using this provisional list of codes as a starting point, I then read the remaining episodes, adding, modifying, and collapsing codes as necessary to best reflect the data (e.g., knowledge of research or from teacher preparation, hypotheses about the benefits and drawbacks of PBL). I read the data at each major code or theme and coded for subthemes in both what sources of information participants used in sensemaking (see Table 4) and how participants moved through complexity (see Table 5); for example, subthemes under participants' knowledge of the local context included but were not limited to: time constraints, curricular mandates, and the nature of first grade.

Table 4

*Sources of Information Used in Sensemaking*

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subthemes</u> (presented in order of prevalence)	<u>No. References</u>		<u>Example</u>
		<i>Related to complexity in social collaboration<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Related to complexity in cultural practices<sup>1</sup></i>	
Goals for students	Reading, Other social-emotional, Work with others, Engagement, Ownership or confidence in knowledge, Independence, Math	14	12	So there's like human life skills that they need to take away from first grade. You can't go to second grade if you don't know how to drink from a water fountain. -Maple/Rockport
Knowledge of the local context	Current curricular practices, Accountability, Time, Interactions with the broader community, Nature of first grade, Class size, Initiatives, Technology	25	53	We are so curriculum driven with the demands that we are under and the rigor that we're under, and the new math series we have and the new—and the reading materials we have, now we're on to science. I love the concept. I was a very dramatic teacher myself. I loved it and I can teach it. I can do it all, with just one theme, but that's not how we're—the world is anymore, for us anyway here in... We are very driven by the curriculum. -Ridgeview/Eastwood
Knowledge of students	Abilities, Background knowledge and experiences,	59	64	I think they would take charge. That's my--I'm thinking of a kid just like that. He's pretty

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	Demographics, Trends in engagement, Behaviors, Personalities, Needs			quiet, doesn't say a whole lot. But when you give them a group project he will be the first one to say No that's not right we have to do--you know so he kind of then takes some charge. He took some initiative. -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Knowledge from research or from teacher preparation	None- this theme occurred too infrequently to have subthemes	4	3	And I know there are some studies research out there that says the more connected the curriculum is for those students the more likely they are to learn from it, really engage in it, and truly understand it. -Washington/Jefferson
Past experiences teaching	With PBL or similar approaches, In general	14	21	So--um--and we also have done more science projects in the past. Um teachers haven't always like them because they involve having animals in the classrooms. But that--kids really liked that too. -Adams
Past personal experiences	As a parent, As a former student	5	2	And personally growing up doing group work in high school and things like that I hated it. Because I was the kid always doing the work. So there's always that balance too. -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Understandings of the essential characteristics of a PBL approach	Essential characteristics: Requires collaboration, Requires	12	10	And I also I think about those kids that with project based I think a big component of it has to be experiences

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	interdisciplinary connections, Requires certain background knowledge to be successful			because I think some of the kids I think going back to experiences. What we think that the kids know and should have had they don't. -Washington/Jefferson
Understandings of the potential affordances of a PBL approach	Will help student learning, Will help student engagement, Will help student social-emotional skills, Allows for different students to shine, General benefits, Allows for connection to students and communities	25	28	Well I also think in a project based thing you also get kids who flourish in different areas. So you might have a low kid who isn't the greatest reader but he is a great...drawer and he can draw that picture. So I think it really--if you're doing project based and you're getting kids into something that they're good at I think it can really help them to flourish and then show other people that... and it also lets me know hey you might not read as well as I do but you have your strengths. -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Understandings of the potential challenges or drawbacks of a PBL approach	Literacy and language proficiency of first graders, Classroom management, Stigma	1	4	I mean I don't think I would feel uncomfortable, but it would be challenging with the students that come in with such limited English. -Maple/Rockport

<sup>1</sup>These quantitative descriptions should be interpreted in light of the fact that the whole episode was coded as relating to either the complexity in social collaboration or the complexity in cultural practices; 12 episodes included both and therefore overlap exists

Table 5

*Ways Participants Make Sense of and Move Through Complexity*

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subthemes</u> (presented in order of prevalence)	<u>No. References</u>		<u>Example</u>
		<i>Related to complexity in social collaboration<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Related to complexity in cultural practices<sup>1</sup></i>	
Proposed necessary supports and modifications to the PBL approach	Structures, routines, and procedures, Modification and differentiation, Explicit instruction, Visible expectations, Teacher collaboration, Technology and resources, Alignment with standards, Buy-in, Teacher disposition	23	20	But, even thinking about my class and Mrs. X's class. I teach a challenged bilingual program, she teaches a class of mostly lower struggling ELLs. We're going to go at different speeds and need and... Her class that would need different supports than my class will need. -Maple/Rockport
Critically examine own thought processes	N/A	2	2	We did bring up all boys? What about our girls? Is-- I mean--do we--it was interesting. We thought about kids that it would benefit. It was male-orientated. Is there anything to that? -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Confidence in abilities as a professional	N/A	11	11	I feel if we had project based that that's something that we could...put all that effort in to relate it. And then get a nice piece at the end. You know what I mean. Because we have to do it anyways. We're filling in the gaps as it is. -Adams

<sup>1</sup> These quantitative descriptions should be interpreted in light of the fact that the whole episode was coded as relating to either the complexity in social collaboration or the complexity in cultural practices; 12 episodes included both and therefore overlap exists.

Once this coding was complete, I returned to the 39 episodes of sensemaking that were identified, sorting them based on whether they addressed social collaboration, cultural practices, or both, and examined the groups with attention to what participants attended to and what sources of information they drew upon to make sense of each type of complexity. I wrote analytic memos throughout this stage to capture my understandings of how teachers made sense of uncertain or ambiguous elements of an imagined curriculum, especially as they related to teachers' understandings of student engagement, and how teachers drew on their past experiences to imagine how a PBL approach may (or may not) support the social and cultural dimensions of student engagement.

### **Credibility**

I took several steps to increase the credibility (Eisner, 1991) of this study. Participants were selected to represent a wide range of school contexts, including geographic location, student demographics, and performance on standardized tests. I maintained an audit trail (Bazeley, 2013) of my process and decision-making throughout my analysis. I engaged in comparison and triangulation of results (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) across the six cases represented by the six focus groups, and actively searched for negative cases (Creswell, 2013) that would provide evidence disconfirming my themes. In the findings that follow, I am careful to report when a theme was only present in a small number of focus groups or when the majority of the evidence for that theme came only from a small number of cases. I also report evidence that provides counterexamples to my stated themes. I also engaged in peer debriefing (Bazeley, 2013) of my results. In the process of preparing this paper, I shared my results both with

colleagues who had been involved in the larger study of PBL and who had been present at the interviews but who had not been involved in this analysis, and with colleagues at conference and other professional settings, and actively incorporated their feedback into both the analysis and the interpretation of the findings. Finally, the combination of complementary perspectives (i.e., direct application of theory and actor-oriented) was designed to ensure that I interpreted the data from multiple angles and considered alternative explanations for my initial interpretations.

### **Results**

I present the results of these analyses by research question, including: (1) three themes in the ways participants conceptualized motivation and engagement, (2) a description of the range of ways in which participants considered the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of engagement, and (3) an analysis of two sources of complexity that emerged for teachers when considering how their students might engage with a PBL approach, and what sensemaking teachers did to move through those sources of complexity.

#### **RQ 1: How Do Teachers of Primary-Grade Students Conceptualize Literacy Motivation and Engagement?**

For the purposes of this analysis, I report three overarching themes in the ways participants conceptualized motivation and engagement, especially in the domain of literacy. These three overarching ways each represent the combination of two of the phases in the continuum model (see Figure 2). Participants: (a) described engagement as located within individual mind and as multidimensional (Phases I and II), (b) described

engagement as varying by characteristics of the learner and as modifiable by instructional context/practices (Phases III and IV), and (c) sometimes discussed engagement as being mediated by social, cultural, and historical practices and repertoires (Phases V and VI). The number and relative percentage of total data references falling within each overarching theme, as well as extant subthemes, are reported below in Table 7. I then unpack the subthemes for each major conceptualization.

Table 6

*Participants' Conceptualizations of Motivation and Engagement*

<u>Theme</u>	<u>No. and % of Total References</u>	<u>Subthemes</u>
A. Engagement as located within individual mind and as multidimensional	175/321 = 54.5%	Motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) Dimensions of engagement: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, affective, agentic Purpose of engagement
B. Engagement as varying by characteristics of the learner and as modifiable by instructional context/practices	118/321= 36.8%	Engagement as directly related to achievement Relevant characteristics of the learner: gender, ability or current achievement, language proficiency, mental or behavioral health status, migrant status, personality, special education or disability Instructional practices: social collaboration, stimulating or authentic tasks, content or knowledge goals (including making interdisciplinary connections), autonomy support and student choice, teacher support and high expectations, interesting text, and feedback and rewards
C. Engagement as being mediated by social, cultural, and historical practices and repertoires	28/321= 8.7%	Engagement as affecting the social community of the classroom and beyond Opportunities for self- and other-construction Influences on social imagination and behavior Cultural practices as resources for engagement Historical traditions of communities Academic experiences as affecting life trajectories

**Engagement as located within the individual mind and as multidimensional.**

Approximately half (54.5%) of participants' talk reflected a more cognitive orientation; participants articulated a view of engagement that is primarily situated in the mind of the individual learner, and that is multidimensional (Phases I and II). Participants regularly discussed learners' motivation (16 references), both under past and current conditions and under the imagined conditions of a PBL approach. For example, one participant from Maple/Rockport described a thematic unit she was currently teaching on animals and habitats, and how it was "incredibly motivating," particularly when students were able to read texts that related to their personal animals of interest. Another participant from Adams thought that a PBL approach "would motivate [learners] a lot more and they would be a lot more excited about learning and about doing their work." Comments referring to extrinsic motivation (e.g., incentives for "doing the right thing," Adams) were roughly equal in number to comments referring to intrinsic motivation (e.g., "wanting to do it because they're good at it," Washington/Jefferson), with 5 and 4 references, respectively.

Many of the comments reflected understandings of the different dimensions of engagement from the extant literature in educational psychology. Participants from across all six focus groups described instances of cognitive and emotional engagement, either actual or imagined. Participants also described instances of behavioral engagement (across 5 focus groups), and affective and agentic engagement were each mentioned in one of the focus groups.

Related to cognitive engagement (11 references) (i.e., learners' valuation of an

academic task, self-regulation, ownership, and goal setting), participants felt that a PBL approach might help students: find a “purpose” for learning or see the “point” of it, have ownership over their learning, or feel empowered. Participants also described wanting to develop stamina for independent reading and writing, and general self-regulation abilities. Learners’ emotional engagement (i.e., interest, enjoyment, enthusiasm, satisfaction, pride) was also regularly mentioned by participants (17 references). Participants talked extensively about the enjoyment and excitement for learning they felt learners would experience in a PBL approach, and offered examples of other instructional activities and routines they had found to result in similar enthusiasm in their current contexts. One participant offered this example of the type of engagement she strives for in her literacy instruction, which blends the cognitive and emotional dimensions: “Independence. When they feel so independent when they got that word that they've been stuck on all week and they finally got it and they run up and want to read it to you” (Riverway/Mountainview).

Indicators of behavioral engagement, such as attendance, putting forth effort, time on task, homework completion, preparedness, and class participation, were also regularly mentioned (19 references). Participants imagined that a PBL approach might result in increased participation, increased attendance, staying in school long-term, and increased work completion on the part of their first graders, although they expressed some concerns about students talking too much, staying on task, or possibly producing lower quality of work. One school in the Ridgeview/Eastwood focus group described an existing, explicit system for measuring and tracking student engagement that focused exclusively on

behavioral indicators:

I just look to see if they're engaged in whatever is going on at that particular time. Ms. K's up doing a lesson, and they're all looking that way, and they're not under the table, and they're not there sharpening their pencil, you know they're engaged. I can't really know if they are, but if it looks like they are, then I give them a plus.

Later in the conversation, a participant in the same group indicated that not asking questions in class would be another indicator of engagement (ostensibly, because the student would be too deeply immersed in the task at hand to ask questions). While this degree of explicitness in defining engagement was unique to the Ridgeview/Eastwood case, discussion of behavioral engagement was prevalent across all but one focus group, and more references were made to this type of engagement than to any other.

Deakin-Crick's (2012) conceptualizations of passive and deep engagement appeared rarely in participants' talk. When these did appear, participants described passive engagement, or engagement for the purpose of conforming to a school culture, more frequently than deep engagement, or a deep and personal commitment to learning (3 references and 1 reference, respectively). For example, a participant from Maple/Rockport offered the following:

I think first grade you're really learning how to be students and how to participate in a school environment. And, if we, like you were saying, can motivate them and help them make those connections at the start, then they don't have that school anxiety and they want to be there and they, you know, could be leaders rather than

intimidated to come to school.

This utterance provides an example of passive engagement; students were described as engaging as leaders for the purpose of participating effectively in a school environment. For contrast, a participant from the same site also offered a reference to students' "love of reading" that represents deep engagement. While the direct application of Deakin Crick's conceptualizations of the two types of engagement might make it seem as though participants were focused on a shallower version of engagement, the actor-oriented analysis offered in the discussion of RQ 3 complicates this perspective.

Finally, participants frequently made reference to the three universal needs articulated by self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017): need for competence, need for autonomy, and need for relatedness. Of these, the need for competence was most common, with 13 references, and the need for relatedness was least common, with one reference. Participants described first graders' need for the security and efficacy support offered by classroom routines and structures, and often described students' need to feel they could be successful in an academic task, particularly in front of peers: "Kids don't wanna lead because they're afraid of not knowing... the answer and looking stupid because they don't know it" (Riverway/Mountainview). Participants described autonomy and independence as something that first graders "truly like" (Lincoln/Silverleaf) and which supports their development of reading stamina (Washington/Jefferson).

**Engagement as varying by characteristics of the learner and as modifiable by instructional context/practices.** Approximately one third (36.8%) of participants' talk reflected a conceptualization of engagement as varying by characteristics of the learner

and as modifiable by instructional context/practices (Phases III and IV). Participants across five focus groups made direct connections between engagement and achievement, such as one participant from Adams's assertion that "reading comprehension might improve. If they are reading something they're interested in versus a silly phonics reader that doesn't make any sense."

The interview questions from the focus group directly encouraged participants to consider how engagement under a PBL approach might vary by child characteristics (*Are there specific students or kinds of students who would benefit from a PBL approach? What about students it might leave behind?*). As a result, participants discussed this extensively. Characteristics of students that participants found relevant included: gender, ability or current achievement, language proficiency, mental or behavioral health status, migrant status, personality, special education status or disability, and socioeconomic status. Participants' comments tended toward more positive predictions for male students than for female students; one said that a more hands-on approach "could be the way of engaging [male students] and keeping them to school" (Ridgeview/Eastwood). There was a general consensus across all six groups that traditionally higher-achieving students would be very engaged in PBL, but there was much debate over whether traditionally lower-achieving students would be engaged, or what might support lower-achieving students to engage. For example, within the same focus group, participants said that they would "really worry" about lower-achieving students and also that the same students would be able to show their strengths in a PBL approach. Participants also offered many comments about how bilingual learners, students of different personalities, and students

from varying socioeconomic groups would respond to a PBL approach; these will be explored in more detail in RQ 2 below, as they reflect participants' understandings of social and cultural dimensions of engagement.

Classroom practices participants described as supportive of student motivation and engagement included (in order of most to least references): social collaboration, stimulating or authentic tasks, content or knowledge goals (including making interdisciplinary connections), autonomy support and student choice, teacher support and high expectations, interesting text, and feedback and rewards. Participants did not mention culturally relevant text or strategy instruction as motivating or engaging. (For a representative description for each practice, refer to Table 7.) Of these practices, social collaboration presented the most interesting opportunities for further exploration, as participants were often conflicted as to whether this practice would support or hinder first graders' engagement. These are explored in more detail in RQ 2, as part of the discussion of the social dimension of engagement.

Table 7

*Classroom Practices Participants Described as Potentially Supportive of First Graders' Motivation and/or Engagement*

<b>Practice</b>	<b>No. Ref.</b>	<b>Representative Quote(s)</b>
Social collaboration	25	I think it might um motivate some students to come to school. Um if they're doing something exceptionally exciting for the project that day you know. Like they might put the pressure on a parent to say, you know I have to be there because either a group is depending on me. -Washington/Jefferson
Stimulating or authentic tasks	20	I think about those kids that... if they were actually out there in their community, they saw the things, they knew they were gonna talk to the everything's the real world. The kids that can comprehend in first grade but can't read, you know what I mean?... This would be exactly what they need. -Ridgeview/Eastwood
Content or knowledge goals	20	I think it's just so much more motivating when it's just authentic and has a real purpose. -Maple/Rockport
Autonomy support and student choice	17	And I know there are are some studies research out there that says the more connected the curriculum is for those students the more likely they are to learn from it, really engage in it, and truly understand it. -Washington/Jefferson
Teacher support and high expectations	15	To go off there I think it's with choice...when I was in school you were told, "You are writing about this"--so they have more flexibility to choose what they want, and when you're writing about something that is close to you that you love, you're going to write better. -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Interesting text	8	I do think that it's at six and seven years old, where some of the children who struggle in that classroom setting, it really does help them to know these are our expectations. This is what we're gonna do. This is what will happen if this happens. -Riverway/Mountainview
Feedback and rewards	2	Sort of related to that, just with the [unit] that I'm using right now, it's on animals and habitats. Umm, and I think it's an incredibly motivating one. You know, one of my kids read a book about sharks. That was like the best day ever for him. -Maple/Rockport
		I think the biggest thing for me is incentive. Like we have in my class I give them tickets if they're doing the right thing. And then we raffle off. And it's like a huge motivator. We have a compliment cup. And once they get a hundred compliments they get to choose what reward they want. -Adams

**Engagement as mediated by social, cultural, and historical practices and repertoires.** A small percentage (8.7%) of participants' talk discussed engagement as being mediated by social, cultural, and historical practices and repertoires. While this happened rarely, it represents an extremely important area for further analysis, as the extant research on sociocultural repertoires and engagement that has been conducted primarily with adolescent students indicates that building on such repertoires of practice can be highly supportive of engagement. The ways in which participants described building on, or imagined building on, their students' sociocultural repertoires are discussed in detail in RQ 2, along with some ways in which participants referred to the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of engagement that did not express a repertoires of practice perspective.

## **RQ 2: How Do Teachers Talk About the Social, Cultural, and Historical Dimensions of Engagement?**

Participants talked about the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of engagement in a variety of ways that ranged from a lack of consideration, through consideration of a dimension from a "factor" or "variable" perspective, and finally to consideration of a dimension from a repertoires of practice perspective. This range differs in subtle ways based on the dimension under consideration, and maps roughly onto the phases of the continuum model, as described in the Analysis section above. Results are presented by dimension (i.e., social, cultural, historical).

**Social.** Participants considered the social dimension of engagement in the following different ways: lack of consideration (focus on the cognition of an individual),

consideration as a characteristic of the individual student, consideration as a characteristic of a context, consideration as in sociality, and consideration as in society (see Table 2).

***Focus on the individual's cognition.*** At times, participants' focus was on the individual and their cognition, independently of other members of the classroom community; these instances therefore represent times in which the individual mind was conceptualized separately from the social context. Participants described a need for first graders to learn to work independently and develop self-regulation capabilities, including stamina for independent reading (9 references). For example, several participants from the Riverway/Mountainview focus group described the process of supporting their students to build 30 minutes of stamina for independent reading. Participants stated that first graders enjoy this gradual building of independence and responsibility, with one participant admitting that "we [teachers] don't allow them enough" independence (Lincoln/Silverleaf). However, one participant did state that developing independence can be difficult for some students, particularly those that struggle to concentrate or to regulate their behavior.

***Social as a characteristic of the individual.*** Participants often described the social dimension of engagement as being a characteristic of an individual (e.g., personality). Participants articulated a concern that students who are shy or introverted would have difficulty engaging in the types of collaborative learning activities typical of PBL, or that these students would allow more talkative students to "take over" or dominate the task or conversation (5 references). At the intersection of the social and the cultural, several participants described students' home experience and values as not supporting their

development of social skills (5 references): “Forty percent of the kids didn't go to preschool. So, they can't work with a partner without crying and fighting” (Maple/Rockport). Students were “not taught at home how to work with others” (one participant specifically cited board games as an experience that students were lacking that would have taught such skills) or “don't get” guidance in how to give back to the community; one participant critiqued students' families for not expecting children to say please and thank you.

*Social as a characteristic of a context.* Participants also considered the social as a characteristic of a context, either the classroom or the broader community. Participants articulated some complexity around the practice of social collaboration: on the one hand, participants wanted to develop their first graders' abilities to collaborate and interact socially with one another (often saying that these are skills learners will need for life, or that working together will help students learn and accomplish more) (15 references), and on the other, they expressed concern that first graders may not be capable of such interaction (12 references), or that they would need extensive teacher support to be successful (7 references). For example, one participant wondered:

How do you work with kids? How do you work in groups? How do you resolve conflicts that don't resolve then?... They don't have those skills. Especially if you're going to get them into a project-based learning thing, where they are working with each other. They need to be able to problem solve, even if it's just a matter of okay we're them rock, paper, scissors. You have to give them those skills (Ridgeview/Eastwood).

In terms of the larger community, participants saw societal structures, such as socioeconomic status (SES), as a factor of the learner that has implications for the learner's engagement (note that, while participants referenced society here, they do it in a way that focuses on a variable of society rather than on a societal resource). For example, low income was articulated as a reason why students had not had certain experiences teachers viewed as fundamental, such as going to museums. It was also seen as something that restricted students' access to the community, such as through difficulties in transportation (2 references). Participants argued that low SES restricted students' access to technology, which hindered their ability to engage in certain kinds of projects or academic tasks (2 references). Another administrator participant described the low SES of the school population as "our biggest hurdle." Finally, one participant linked low SES and a need to keep the students "busy" to avoid behavior issues:

We have a huge free/reduced population, and we just know the kids need to be going all the time. There's no down time, and so we do have a core group of kids that I see every day, for some reason or another. I think it's much due to stuff just keeps them busy (Ridgeview/Eastwood).

***Social as in sociality.*** Participants also frequently considered the social as in sociality, defined as: "interpersonal relationship, interaction, and collaboration—typical in sociocognitive or social constructivist theory" (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 616). Many participants believed that engaging in social collaboration would help students develop leadership abilities, especially students who have not traditionally experienced much academic success. The nature of working on a project together would allow these

students to “shine” and “rise to the occasion” in ways not often seen in traditional instruction. Students would learn how they can accomplish more and better things when working together (6 references). The social relationship between teacher and student was also viewed as a resource for engagement (3 references). Practices such as teacher-student reading conferences were viewed as particularly beneficial by participants in one focus group:

*Participant:* Some of them just need that conferring time with you just to have that time. Because they don't get that time any other place you know to tell you about that favorite book.

*Participant:* Yeah, a little connection.

*Participant:* That is the only time that they read.

*Participant:* Yeah or even have someone even care about them reading.

(Lincoln/Silverleaf)

In this exchange, participants explicitly linked social relationships to increased reading engagement.

***Social as in society.*** Finally, participants occasionally considered the social as in society, defined as: “institutional, procedural, employing cultural artifacts—typical in social constructionist, Soviet activity theory” (Hruby et al., 2016, p. 616). This differs from thinking about societal factors, such as SES; here, students were conceptualized as having agency and the ability to effect changes on their social context, as well as vice versa. Participants articulated a goal of helping students understand how their actions affect others in the community, including the wider society. They wished to develop

students who were kind and empathetic, who took responsibility for their own actions and how they affected others. Participants believed an approach that incorporates lots of social collaboration, such as PBL, would help them accomplish this goal (5 references).

**Cultural.** Participants considered the cultural dimension of engagement in several distinct ways. Participants often considered the cultural as a characteristic of an individual (e.g., race, ethnicity, language spoken). Participants also considered the cultural as in cultural practices; at times these were seen as practices that might hinder an individual's ability to engage (especially in situations where participants perceived a lack of a particular cultural practice in students' experiences), and at others cultural practices were viewed as valuable resources to support students' engagement (see Table 3).

*Culture as a characteristic of the individual.* Participants referred to the cultural as a factor or characteristic of the individual on several occasions. For many participants, language(s) spoken was seen as a proxy for culture; when asked how different students might respond to a PBL approach, many participants talked about emergent bilingual students (who they usually termed ELLs) and how their language status might mediate their engagement with a PBL curriculum. There was a lot of contradiction in participants' descriptions of how bilingual students would experience a PBL approach, even within the same focus groups or by the same participants. While several participants stated that the collaborative nature of PBL activities would support students' development of language and background knowledge (5 references), they also worried that the reading, writing, and speaking demands would be overly challenging for bilingual learners (5 references). For example, several participants from Washington/Jefferson expressed the following:

*Participant:* I worry about our--some of our ESL students. Sometimes with the vocabulary--although that would be a good thing for them— [*Participant:* I think it will be because you'll be able to connect it] --or their experiences--their experiences are so different sometimes. Um. And I also I think about those kids that with project based I think a big component of it has to be experiences because I think some of the kids I think going back to experiences. What we think that the kids know and should have had they don't. You know they don't know a zoo.

In contrast, one participant in a dual-language classroom seemed to connect her students' bilingual status and their high level of reading achievement, saying that her students, who must read at grade level in English to qualify for the dual-language program, were generally “really high” and reading above the texts used in her school's current reading curriculum (Maple/Rockport).

*Cultural as practices or experiences.* When considering the cultural in terms of practices or experiences, participants took diverging views. The more common viewpoint, with a total of 16 references, focused on the ways in which the cultural practices and experiences of their students differed from the expectations of school. It is worth noting that the majority of these statements were located in two of the six focus groups, particularly Adams; this may not be a widespread perspective. Participants expressed concern that their students hadn't: been to zoos, museums, forests, or local parks; seen snow; learned traditional Anglo nursery rhymes; learned who their mayor is, or learned the order of the English alphabet (6 references). Two participants critiqued students' families for not sitting down and doing homework with them in the evenings or

reading with them.

This perspective was especially prevalent when discussing how bilingual learners might experience a PBL approach. Participants often compared students' English proficiency to an imagined standard, describing students and their families as having "limited English," "struggling," "challenged," lacking in experiences, and unable to read/write in English (8 references). Participants in one focus group specifically located the school's "disconnect in connecting to the community" in the fact that most students at that school are from immigrant families: "They don't feel like they belong... A lot of them come like 'my country...' No this is your country, you were born here. But because they are from an immigrant family... it presents another challenge" (Adams). Interestingly (and perhaps typically for groups of predominantly White teachers), participants avoided talking about race and ethnicity: across all 6 focus groups, only once were these mentioned, and in that case it was simply to say that the materials for the focus groups needed to feature someone other than "two White males" on the cover (1 reference).

At other times, although less frequently with a total of five references, participants described their students' cultural repertoires as valued resources for engagement. Several participants described how when students are given opportunities to draw on their cultural knowledge and experiences, it supports their engagement: they'll enjoy learning more, make connections to real life, and may write better (3 references). One participant articulated this theme:

With project-based learning, we might be able to maybe not necessarily fit an

academic need or click in with an academic need, but more something they already had. They had prerequisite knowledge. You're making a life connection. Then, that leads to the explanation. My dad is a builder. I already feel like I know something about that, but now I'm actually going to learn how to measure halves and quarters. The only reason I made that connection was because my dad's a builder. (Riverway/Mountainview)

Another group described at length a project several of the participants had done a few years ago, while teaching fourth grade, in which the theme was immigration and students researched their own family migration stories and the culture(s) of their countries of origin. They found that learning about family cultural history was engaging for students, resulting in much student and family participation. Finally, participants at Adams described how the community in which the school was situated offered many cultural resources to engage students in learning:

*Participant:* We talked about the park...that was a mess years ago. And it got built up...I found a picture of it online. I'm like, this is what it used to look like. And this is what it looks [like] now. And that's because the community came together and they said, we need to do something to beautify, you know, our community.

*Participant:* So many things to tap into around here.

*Participant:* Yeah.

*Participant:* There's a very--there's a lot of active organizations that they could really, cultural things everything—

These statements indicate that participants at Adams saw their community and local context as a potential resource for engagement, even if those resources were as of yet untapped.

**Historical.** References to the historical dimension of engagement were rare: only three are made throughout all six focus groups. The first has already been reported under considerations of culture: the participants from Adams describing the fourth-grade immigration project and how engaging it was for students and their families to learn about their personal histories. In the second, participants from Maple/Rockport projected into the future to consider how connections students make during a project might be useful to students, decades from now:

I think in... I mean any district, but I think that ours in particular and Rockport as well. I think when kids can make real life connections. You know, I think sometimes when... not that schooling is isolating. But, it's like I go to school and then I go home. I go to school and then I go home. And, sometimes it's so hard to connect that things we're doing here are going to affect your entire life. If we can find a project that really you know resonates with them and they can own and they can see like in ten years, in twenty years I want to go to college and I want to do this or I want to do this and I learned about it in first grade. That...that is so powerful. And, I think that sometimes... not that we miss opportunities to make those connections.

In the third and final reference to the historical, participants from Adams talked about the historical traditions of writing instruction within communities of varying SES and how

those had led to divergent expectations and emphases, with higher SES communities having a history of emphasizing voice and personal narrative, and lower SES communities having a history of writing to answer standardized-test style text-dependent questions.

### **RQ 3: What Complexities Around Social Collaboration and Cultural Practices Emerge for Teachers? How Do Teachers Make Sense of These Complexities?**

Two sources of complexity emerged for participants when considering how their students might engage with a PBL approach that incorporated motivational practices such as autonomy support, interdisciplinary connections, and authentic tasks. The first source of complexity related to social collaboration, which has been well-established in the literature as a practice that supports engagement. The second source of complexity related to how participants conceptualized students' cultural practices; these have also been shown to be a potential resource that can be leveraged to support engagement. To present each source, I first provide an overview of the various and nuanced ways that participants conceptualized social collaboration and cultural practice, before delving into the sources of information participants drew upon to make sense of the complexity. I conclude with a deeper dive into a single, extended sensemaking episode that integrated both sources of complexity.

**Sources of complexity.** For teachers, complexity emerged when thinking about social collaboration in a PBL setting. Teachers recognized that engaging in projects requires students to work with one another, and also that collaboration can be challenging for first graders; they also described wanting to develop students' capabilities for

independent work and self-regulation, in addition to collaboration. Participants were especially concerned about how students who have not had many experiences requiring them to work together might effectively engage in collaborative project work. To use Lincoln/Silverleaf as a case of this complexity, participants articulated some of their goals for first graders, saying “We want them to gain independence” and “Teaching them how to work in groups.” They felt that bringing students together to collaborate on projects would get kids to “flourish in different areas,” but also worried that students, particularly those with behavior issues, might “ruin it for their group.” Finally, participants from Lincoln/Silverleaf also expressed concern that “there's kids that haven't played board games... at home or have been able to handle you know working together with someone else on something.”

Complexity also emerged when considering the cultural experiences that students may or may not have that would provide what teachers viewed as necessary background knowledge to engage successfully in projects; teachers wondered how they would build this background, especially given time and other constraints of their context. Participants from Adams described “constantly trying to build background” for their students who had not seen snow, been to a zoo, or experienced a museum, especially given severe contextual budgetary limitations on field trips.

In both of these complexities, teachers were primarily attending to their students' success, and what tools, experiences, and scaffolds they as educators would need to provide to ensure that success. In the case of social collaboration, teachers wanted their students to experience the benefits of social collaboration while still developing the

capacity for independent work that would enable them to be successful in school long-term; they imagined scaffolds and structures they might provide to facilitate students to collaborate effectively and successfully while maintaining space in the instructional day for the development of self-regulation and independence. In the case of considering cultural practice, teachers wanted to ensure that all students would have sufficient background knowledge of the topics relevant to projects to engage successfully in the project; this desire required teachers to both assess students' background knowledge and imagine ways they might build it where necessary.

**Making sense of complexity.** To make sense of these complexities, teachers drew on a variety of sources of information (see Table 4 above), including their: goals for students, knowledge of the local context, knowledge of students, knowledge gained from teacher preparation or from research, past experiences (both in teaching and their personal experiences), and understandings of PBL (i.e., essential characteristics, potential affordances, and potential challenges).

**Goals for and knowledge of students.** One such source of information was teachers' goals for students, including academic goals (e.g., "To learn how to read," Adams), engagement-related goals (e.g., "To like learning and see the point in it," Adams), and social-emotional goals (e.g., "To be socially appropriate," Ridgeview/Eastwood). Another was their knowledge, both about the local context (e.g., accountability, current curricular practices) and about their students (e.g., demographics, background knowledge and experiences, personalities, trends in behavior, and abilities). In fact, teachers drew on their knowledge of their students more extensively than on any

other source of information when making sense of these complexities.

***Past experiences and understandings of PBL.*** Teachers frequently drew on their past experiences teaching, either with other interdisciplinary approaches similar to PBL or in general, and sometimes drew on other past experiences such as in their teacher education programs or in parenting. At times, participants combined this knowledge with their understandings of the imagined PBL curriculum, including its essential characteristics, potential affordances, and potential challenges or drawbacks. For example, one participant from Riverway/Mountainview remembered a project she had done when she was teaching sixth grade in sharing her ideas about the affordances of PBL: “They’ll really enjoy it... it took an extremely long time but what they did was amazing. I feel like they learned a lot – I didn’t guide them at all.” These references to past experience make sense, as retrospective thinking is often a part of sensemaking (Weick, 1995); Penuel and colleagues (2014) also argue that implementing new curricular materials (such as an imagined PBL curriculum) requires teachers to draw connections between curricular materials and structures they have experience with and those of the proposed curriculum.

***Imagined supports, scaffolds, and modifications.*** Teachers also moved through these complexities by drawing on more imaginative or future-oriented sources of information (see Table 5). For example, they expressed ideas about the types of supports, dispositions, and scaffolds that might be necessary for their students to successfully engage in projects, and suggested ideas and propositions for modifying the approach to mitigate some of the complexity. To return to the case of Lincoln/Silverleaf, to mitigate

their concerns about the challenges of social collaboration, participants proposed explicitly teaching students “their roles in doing the project” and creating an “accountability factor... so that you could see that everybody is doing a part in in in the project.” To help their students gain background knowledge about their neighborhood and local context, participants from Adams proposed “tap[ping] into” the cultural organizations of the community, and expressed a desire for support and division of labor in doing so: “But we have been doing all the work. And that's what makes it exhausting, you know what I mean?”

*Confidence in professional abilities.* Participating teachers also expressed confidence in their own abilities as professionals to navigate complexity and help their students succeed. This last element of professional confidence is closely tied to the supports teachers proposed as potential additions to the curriculum framework. For example, to navigate complexities around social collaboration, participating teachers expressed confidence that addressing challenges with collaboration and other behavioral concerns is “elementary. I mean you do it throughout your whole entire day” (Lincoln/Silverleaf) or that “when we develop... a very deliberate set of directions” students will be successful (Riverway/Mountainview). Such expressions of confidence were slightly less frequent when teachers considered how they might support their students’ development of background knowledge, but they were still evident: teachers at Adams stated, “I feel if we had project based that that's something that we could...put all that effort in to relate it. And then get a nice piece at the end. You know what I mean. Because we have to do it anyways. We're filling in the gaps as it is.”

**Exploring a sample episode of sensemaking.** To illustrate teachers' sensemaking, I will now analyze an extended episode of sensemaking from Adams that integrated both a discussion of social collaboration and the cultural practices of bilingual learners (for full transcript, see Appendix D). As a reminder, providing opportunities for social collaboration and leveraging cultural repertoires of practice have both been shown to support the literacy engagement of elementary students, including students of nondominant communities.

In the first part of this episode, participants were asked to imagine how a bilingual learner might benefit from a PBL approach. In so doing, participants drew on their understandings of the essential characteristics of PBL (i.e., “There would be opportunities to work in partners”) as well as the potential affordances of a PBL approach (e.g., “The end project would give--would be another way to show what they know... another form of assessment”). Participants drew on their knowledge of their students' background knowledge and experience and language proficiency, hypothesizing that ELLs would gain background knowledge and vocabulary they might not have (e.g., about snow), and that opportunities to work in partners or small groups would provide beneficial opportunities to practice language. Teachers related these opportunities to their knowledge of current constraints in their local context: one participant said, “There's not enough time in the day to do that [practice language].” They also drew on their knowledge of trends in their students' affective states and engagement while participating in certain kinds of academic tasks, hypothesizing that the focus on learning content through projects might reduce some anxiety students may have regarding their language

proficiency and provide alternative ways for ELLs to demonstrate their learning:

*Participant:* I think with our ELLs they get so frozen on where to start because they're aware of the language. But the focus would be on learning about the topic not learning about the language. That's--like that would just be happening because of it. So I think that would kind of ease some anxiety to be honest.

*Participant:* I think they'd be more successful with this than with what we do now.

To summarize, in the first part of this episode, participants drew on their knowledge of PBL, of their students, and of the context to imagine how PBL might support bilingual learners' language development, reduce their anxiety, and offer different ways for bilingual learners to demonstrate their learning.

In the second part of the episode, participants were asked how higher-achieving students may benefit from a PBL approach. Participants again drew on their knowledge of the context, discussing how the range of abilities in their classrooms sometimes left the higher-achieving students feeling less challenged and positioned in a role of helper for the lower-achieving students:

*Participant:* Yeah I know, I feel so guilty I feel like they're [higher-achieving students] totally just like ignored. Like they meet the benchmarks. Their scores are great. So it's like the lower kids that--

*Participant:* They're not being as challenged as much as they can because they are meeting the skills.

*Participant:* Right. They could kind of take this and run with it. Like. You know.

And it could be as challenging for them as we wanted it to be. Um they could get a lot more out of it than they could what we do now because--now they're helping the lower kids.

Participants drew on their understandings of the potential affordances of PBL, stating that PBL would allow the higher-achieving students to “take this and run with it.” They proposed two ways of making this happen: creating heterogeneous groups in which students of various abilities “could all help each other,” and scaffolding opportunities for students who read at a higher level to help those who read at a lower level to access information in interesting texts. One participant then connected this latter suggestion back to ELLs:

Because a lot of the--well we have more and more second language learners--I mean second--they might not be identified as ELL but a lot of our families don't speak read English at home. So you wouldn't believe how many kids say, ‘My mom and my dad can't help me with my homework.’ And they don't read at home. And they don't do their homework.

Following this comment, the interviewer asked a new question and the episode ended.

From an outside researcher's perspective, it is initially unclear how the conversation transitioned from the benefits of heterogeneous reading groups to the home literacy practices of bilingual learners, and through this frame it is possible to dismiss this comment as simply a deficit-based conceptualization of the cultural practices of ELLs. However, an actor-oriented perspective complicates this view, helping to illuminate the perspective of the participating teacher in a more nuanced way. By looking at the first

part of the episode from an actor-oriented perspective, it is clear that participating teachers were concerned with their ELL students' success, including their learning of content information and their affective states while engaging in academic tasks; these topics had all been discussed within the past eight to ten minutes, so they were fresh in the mind of the teacher who made this comment. Her use of the word "because" indicates that she saw a direct relationship between the potential utility of heterogeneous reading groups and her knowledge of her students' home literacy practices. For this teacher, the use of heterogeneous reading groups would allow her ELLs to gain content knowledge that they might not otherwise get by reading in English at home; knowledge that would support their successful engagement in projects.

### **Discussion**

In discussing the results, I first present the discussion of research question one, then discuss research questions two and three simultaneously to bring the complementary layers of analysis into dialogue with one another.

#### **RQ 1: How Do Teachers of Primary-Grade Students Conceptualize Literacy**

##### **Motivation and Engagement?**

In discussing how teachers conceptualized literacy motivation and engagement within this context, I first locate teachers' understandings within the frames provided by the extant literature on engagement, including: (1) explicating the degree to which teachers' understandings focused on the individual mind vs. the practices of communities, (2) comparing the range of student characteristics to which teachers attended to those identified in the literature, and (3) identifying which of the established

engagement-supportive practices teachers described.

Teachers' conceptualizations of engagement were concentrated primarily in the mind of the individual learner, with relatively little discussion of how the social, cultural, and historical dimensions may serve as resources for engaging first graders in reading. Of the various types of engagement identified by work in educational psychology, participants made most frequent references to behavioral engagement, indicating that they often conceptualize engagement in terms of student behavior and participation. Aspects of cognitive and emotional engagement, such as enthusiasm and self-regulation, also featured prominently in participants' descriptions. Interestingly, only one reference was made to first graders' abilities to influence their own learning contexts, or agentic engagement, and it was made from a negative perspective (i.e., the participant described how a student who was bored might distract others). This begs the question of whether participants consider first graders to have agency in shaping their instructional contexts, or if student agency was simply not perceived as relevant to teachers' sensemaking processes.

In their sensemaking activity around how student engagement might vary across the children they teach, participants attended to a broader range of student characteristics than have been identified in the existing literature on reading engagement. The literature has explored variance in reading engagement by race/ethnicity, language status, gender, and disability, and to these considerations participants added mental or behavioral health status, migrant status, and personality. In this way, these participants did what so many teachers are best at: they considered the whole child, including affective characteristics as

well as cognitive ones. As someone who draws on sociocultural theories, I would also encourage teachers (and educational researchers) to think not only about characteristics of individual learners, but also about the practices of the communities to which the learners belong.

Participants demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of many of the practices identified in the extant literature as supportive of reading engagement at the elementary level, particularly the provision of knowledge goals and interdisciplinary connections, stimulating or authentic tasks, and autonomy support. This indicates that teachers possess a robust knowledge of a variety of practices that would support student motivation and engagement. Participants did not attend to some other practices, including the provision of strategy instruction and culturally relevant texts. Given how infrequently participants' conceptualizations reflected culture, it is perhaps unsurprising that participants did not reference culturally relevant text; this indicates a potential area for growth.

**RQs 2 And 3: How Do Teachers Talk About the Social, Cultural, And Historical Dimensions of Engagement? What Complexities Around Social Collaboration and Cultural Practices Emerge for Teachers, and How Do Teachers Make Sense of These Complexities?**

In their considerations of the social and cultural dimensions of engagement, participants articulated two primary complexities. First, regarding social collaboration, participants described holding two simultaneous goals of developing their first graders' ability to collaborate and supporting self-regulation and independence, and wondering

what types of supports they would need to provide to support first graders in collaborating effectively, which they noted is often a challenge. Second, regarding how participants thought about how their students' social and cultural practices might support their engagement in PBL, participants sometimes conceptualized social and cultural practices as resources for engagement and sometimes thought about the ways in which students' social and cultural practices may not have aligned with those of the school context. I will now unpack each of these complexities, before delving into a discussion of the historical dimension of engagement.

**Considering the social.** Participants described two main social goals for their first-grade students: to develop their independence and self-regulation, particularly in terms of stamina for independent reading, and to develop capabilities for working collaboratively with others. The development of self-regulation and independence can be understood as a counterpoint to the goal of developing interpersonal competence and collaborative ability. At the heart of these goals is participants' knowledge of the nature of first grade, a year which one participant described as "pivotal." To be successful in second grade and subsequent schooling, students will need to manage their own engagement in academic tasks, understand how to conduct themselves in a school setting, and develop skills for interpersonal collaboration and conflict management. Teachers must hold and address these goals simultaneously, prompting sensemaking work (Allen & Penuel, 2015). Participants also felt that supporting students' growing capabilities for collaboration would require teacher time and mental resources; this was seen as especially the case for students who may not have practiced such collaboration in out-of-

school settings, such as the home. This last concern was sometimes articulated in what could be seen as a problematic way that locates a failure to collaborate in students' backgrounds, including socioeconomic background and perceived lack of experiences with culturally-bound activities such as playing board games. It also raises the question of what teachers understood to be the characteristics of the kind of collaboration required by academic tasks and projects, that they would believe their students have not experienced collaboration in home-based play; the data does not offer sufficient detail to illuminate these characteristics. An actor-oriented perspective complicates this view by placing central teachers' concern for their students' success in school, as well as their confidence that they would be able to implement scaffolds to support their first graders' effective engagement in both collaborative project work and in independent reading.

To return to Deakin Crick's (2012) constructs of "passive" and "deep" engagement, an actor-oriented analysis also complicates the notion that engagement for the purposes of learning how to "do" school or be successful in a school environment is somehow more "passive" or less important than other types of engagement. Participants' emphasis on the vital importance of preparing students to be successful in school settings highlights the utility and significance of what might otherwise be termed "passive" engagement.

Participants frequently and repeatedly extolled the potential of social collaboration to give voice to students who might usually be less successful in school settings, such as students who have histories of low achievement. This theme indicates that participants were considering issues of power in the classroom and how social

collaboration might empower students; participants were taking a critical stance. However, participants' considerations extended only to concerns of achievement and personality, rather than to deeper societal structures that traditionally empower students from White, middle-class backgrounds while disempowering others (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; McIntosh, 1990). The exception to this trend is when the participants from Adams hypothesized that there is a difference in the types of writing students are asked to do based on the socioeconomic background of those students, with students from more affluent areas (including the participants' own children) being encouraged to write personal narratives and develop their own voices, while students from less affluent areas (such as the town in which Adams was located) being required to write only in response to text-dependent questions; this discussion indicates a deeper consideration of historical inequities in literacy instruction and their effects in the present day, as well as some concern on the part of participants that the writing curriculum offered to students of lower socioeconomic status is less engaging. Given participants' goals for developing empathetic citizens with a deep sense of social responsibility, for teachers to consider wider societal inequity seems especially important.

**Considering the cultural.** Participants tended to consider the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of engagement as factors of the individual, rather than from a repertoires of practice perspective. When participants considered their students' repertoires of practice, complexity emerged: participants sometimes considered students' cultural practices as resources for engagement, and at others as different from school-based practices in ways that might hinder students' success. For example, the comment

from the Riverway/Mountainview participant about drawing on an imagined student's knowledge of construction due to his father's occupational practices represents the most authentic example of considering cultural practices as resources; even this example is limited, however, in its focus on parental practices rather than on practices shared across generations within a community. However, many participants also articulated a concern that students, especially those from diverse linguistic or socioeconomic backgrounds, lacked background knowledge and experiences participants consider prerequisites to successful engagement in PBL. These statements could be understood as reflecting a deficit perspective that sociocultural theorists remind us is often the result of an approach that reduces culture to a static factor (Nasir, Rosebery, Warren, & Lee, 2006). This trend could also be considered a legacy of cultural mismatch theory, which "locates its explanation of the underperformance or underachievement of nondominant students in the nonalignment of the cultural practices of the home and school" (Gutiérrez et al., 2009, p. 218) and which facilitates the long-term labeling of certain students as "at risk" or "low achieving." However, an actor-oriented perspective reminds us that teachers' first concern is assessing whether this imagined curriculum will meet their students' needs and be accessible and supportive of their students' success; in evaluating this, teachers draw on their knowledge of their students, including of their background knowledge and experiences. A repertoire of practice perspective highlights the systemic nature of this problem: teachers, researchers, and other stakeholders are all participants in a system that is overly focused on "schooled" ways of being that are rooted in Anglo, middle-class cultural expectations, to the detriment of the wellbeing of students of nondominant

communities. The participants at Adams were beginning to recognize this systemic issue in their critique of how writing is used for very different purposes in districts of different socioeconomic status. To connect back to teachers' sensemaking, the very framing of the American system of education may lead educators to make sense of student engagement using knowledge that, while in some ways is very extensive (e.g., knowledge of students' personalities, interests, and patterns of engagement), in other ways may be incomplete. Perhaps what is needed is for teachers, who are deeply caring professionals with students' best interests at heart, to learn more about their students' cultural repertoires of practice (including cultural ways of using language and literacy) so that they are better able to resist systemic tendencies to position nondominant students as deficient and draw on that knowledge of practices to navigate the complexities of meeting the needs of all students (Moje et al., 2004; Purcell-Gates, 2002).

**Considering the historical.** Participants very rarely referred to the historical dimension of engagement, but when they did, their comments offered much insight. The clearest example of a reference to the historical is the discussion of writing instruction and community SES at Adams, discussed above; in this discussion, participants critically examined the historical trends in writing instruction and the implications those trends had for their own students. In the literature, the historical is also conceptualized as the centuries-long traditions of literacy practices in a community; for example, Tatum's (2014) and Muhammad's (2015) work on the literacy traditions of African Americans that date to the nineteenth century and earlier. Participants did not make any comments in a similar vein, although they did discuss how learning about cultural-historical traditions

in food and music had proven engaging for students in past experience (Adams). Participants also considered the long-term implications of the engagement fostered by a PBL approach for students, such as when participants from Maple/Rockport imagined making connections that will resonate with students ten years from now. This type of consideration of how academic experiences might affect life trajectories is also represented in Tatum's (2014) work on meaningful literacy exchanges that shape the lives of African American adolescent males.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited in several important ways. First and most importantly, the interview questions used in these focus group interviews were not designed with these research questions in mind; the participants may have other conceptualizations of literacy motivation and engagement that were not elicited in the conversations about PBL. Second, the focus groups each represent a single moment in time. It is possible that participants' conceptualizations evolved as they continued to explore the idea of PBL. Third, participants in this study may have experienced reactivity; that is, an awareness that they were being interviewed and their responses recorded. This awareness may have affected their responses.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study offer implications both for research and future work with teachers in teacher education and professional development settings. In terms of research, it is worth remembering that this study took place within a context in which participants were not directly asked about their conceptualizations of motivation and

engagement, including literacy-specific motivation and engagement; the participants were asked how they thought about implementing a curricular approach that incorporates many of the features identified in the extant literature to be supportive of engagement. The breadth and depth of participants' responses even in this less directive context is promising for the quality of discussion that might be had if future studies were conducted that aimed to elicit explicit and targeted discussion on these topics. How teachers conceptualize reading engagement remains understudied; future research might also specifically examine how contextual differences affect teachers' conceptualizations, as well as how teachers enact these understandings in their actual classroom instruction.

The implications for future work with teachers are profound. Participants in this study were just beginning to consider cultural and social practices as resources for engagement; the fact that they did this, but rarely, indicates a fruitful area for future professional development. The prevalence of factor-based conceptualizations, particularly of the cultural dimension of engagement, is concerning, as is the absence of discussions of culturally responsive teaching moves such as incorporating culturally relevant texts into literacy instruction. These findings are reflective of broader, systemic trends in the nature of education in the United States. To address those trends will require shifts in the perspectives used in teacher education, as well as professional development. Those working with pre-service teachers are therefore encouraged to incorporate readings and perspectives from scholars approaching literacy and reading engagement from a sociocultural perspective to further support teachers' ability to think about engagement in a way that frames students' social, cultural, and historical repertoires as assets to support

their engagement in meaningful classroom literacy practices. As teachers' first priority is their students' success, those working with teachers to expand their conceptualizations of cultural practice may find that a generative place to begin.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored how 31 first-grade practitioners involved in a total of six focus groups imagining what it might be like to implement project-based learning (PBL) in their settings conceptualized literacy motivation and engagement. In this study, PBL was considered a particular embodiment of the instructional practices identified as supporting literacy engagement, as it integrates literacy learning with disciplinary learning in a collaborative process of inquiry. A three-layered process of analysis was conducted to explore: (1) the various theoretical lens(es) teachers applied in thinking about how young learners engage in literacy activities, (2) the ways in which teachers talked about the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of engagement, and (3) what complexities around social collaboration and cultural practices emerged for teachers, and how teachers made sense of them. Results indicated that teachers primarily conceptualized motivation and engagement in terms of the mind of the individual learner and considered behavioral and cognitive indicators of engagement. Teachers experienced complexity when considering the social and cultural dimensions of engagement, such as when thinking through how they could best support first graders in engaging in social collaboration. Teachers also sometimes considered students' social and cultural repertoires of practice as resources for engagement, and sometimes considered how students' repertoires might differ from those that are aligned with or expected in school-

based settings. To make sense of these complexities, teachers grounded their thinking in their concerns for students' success, both in first grade and in school as a whole, and drew on their knowledge of their students, of instructional practice, and of the context to imagine ways that they as professionals could provide students with the supports and experiences necessary to engage successfully in project-based learning.

**CHAPTER FOUR: CONCEPTUALIZING AND DESIGNING INSTRUCTION  
FOR LITERACY ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO THIRD GRADE  
TEACHERS**

**Background**

Students' engagement in reading has important and far-reaching consequences: for the literacy development and achievement of individual learners (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cox & Guthrie, 2001), for the social imagination and social behavior of young readers (Lysaker et al., 2011), and for the development of a supportive academic literacy community (Ivey & Johnston, 2015). Indeed, reading engagement has been identified as a crucial mediator of the effects of reading instruction on students' reading competence (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

There is extensive research on the topic of reading motivation and engagement, including attention to: the dimensions of reading motivation (Schiefele et al., 2012; Wigfield et al., 1996), intervention research identifying a range of practices proven to support students' engagement in reading (Taboada Barber et al., 2015; Wigfield et al., 2014), and how teachers might leverage students' social (Ivey & Johnston, 2013) and cultural (Lee et al., 2004) practices in service of literacy engagement. However, very little work has examined how teachers themselves think about reading motivation and engagement, and what sorts of practices they might use—including practices that may not yet have been identified in the literature—to support their students' engagement in reading.

Understanding teachers' conceptualizations of reading engagement is an important

first step, as these conceptualizations (like other teacher beliefs) shape their instruction and the ways they act to support students' reading engagement within their classrooms (Borko et al., 1981; C. N. Thomas, 2013). This study addresses this gap in the literature by exploring practitioners' perspectives on reading motivation and engagement, including both how they think about these constructs, and what they do to promote students' engagement in their literacy instruction.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. *How do teachers conceptualize and make sense of literacy motivation and engagement? What sources of information do they draw upon to construct their understandings?*
2. *How do teachers enact literacy instruction in support of literacy motivation and engagement?*

### **Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

As a researcher, I take a stance on the study of reading motivation and engagement that is primarily sociocultural, but which also considers insights from extant research that is more cognitive in orientation. I understand culture to be central in supporting students' engagement in reading. I also believe that those interested in reading engagement (researchers and practitioners alike) benefit from beginning with a consideration of their students' cultural repertoires of practice, or "ways of engaging in activities stemming from observing and otherwise participating in cultural practices," (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 22) and how they might leverage those repertoires in service of literacy

engagement. However, there is much to be learned from work that is more cognitive in orientation and considers deeply how motivation and engagement are operationalized within the mind of the individual learner. I therefore draw on the work of scholars across this theoretical continuum to inform my thinking and guide my approaches to the study of reading engagement. In keeping with this theoretical stance, I define reading engagement as:

A community of engaged readers draws on the various cultural repertoires of the group (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) to create meaningful relationships to texts (Lee, 2007; Lysaker et al., 2011; Tatum, 2014) and to one another (Ivey & Johnston, 2015; Lysaker et al., 2011). Individuals within the community leverage their cultural (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) and strategic (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) knowledge to find meaning in text (Tatum, 2014), glean understanding about the world (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), life (Tatum, 2013), relationships (Ivey & Johnston, 2015), and their personal goals and intentions (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

I now briefly describe the relationship between the constructs of reading motivation and reading engagement. I then review the extant literature on the instructional practices proven to support elementary learners' engagement in literacy, as well as the work that considers students' social and cultural repertoires of practice as resources for engagement.

### **Relating Motivations for Reading, Reading Engagement, and Reading Achievement**

In the domain of reading, motivation is understood as a catalyst that activates engaged reading behavior, with that engagement then mediating the outcomes of

instruction on student reading achievement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie et al., 2012). Motivation for reading is multifaceted (Watkins & Coffey, 2004; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995) and is positively related to reading achievement for both monolingual (Baker & Wigfield, 1999) and bilingual learners (Taboada et al., 2009). Because the dimensions of motivation for reading are inherently social, the social context of the classroom can be modified to better support students' reading motivation and engagement, and thus, their reading achievement (Hruby et al., 2016).

### **Instructional Practices That Support Reading Engagement**

A large body of work has identified a series of instructional practices that benefit the reading motivation and engagement of elementary learners. This work is summarized in Table 8 below; the table presents each practice alongside its research base and whether it has been found to benefit monolingual learners, bilingual learners, or both.

Table 8

*Instructional Practices Proven to Benefit Elementary Readers' Motivation and Engagement*

<u>Practice</u>	<u>Selected research base</u>	<u>Who does it benefit?</u>
Thematic content or knowledge goals	Cantrell et al. (2014) Schunk and Rice (1991, 1993) Wigfield et al. (2014)	Both monolingual and bilingual learners
Student choice and autonomy support	Marinak (2013) Taboada et al. (2010) Taboada Barber and Buehl (2012) Wigfield et al. (2014)	Both monolingual and bilingual learners
Tasks connected to reading are authentic, hands-on, or open	Guthrie et al. (2006) Ivey and Broaddus (2007) Turner (1995)	Both monolingual and bilingual learners
Interesting and culturally relevant text	Ivey and Broaddus (2007) Lohfink and Loya (2010) Marinak (2013) Taboada et al. (2010)	Both monolingual and bilingual learners
Social collaboration	Guthrie et al. (1996) Ivey and Broaddus (2007) Lohfink and Loya (2010) Marinak (2013) Miller and Meece (1997)	Both monolingual and bilingual learners
Specific feedback and rewards	Marinak and Gambrell (2008) Schunk and Rice (1991, 1993)	Monolingual learners
Strategy instruction	Cantrell et al. (2014) Cho et al. (2010) McCrudden et al. (2005) Taboada et al. (2010) Wigfield et al. (2014)	Both monolingual and bilingual learners

**Considering the Social in Designing Instruction for Reading Engagement**

Some of the extant literature on reading engagement, particularly work conducted with adolescent populations, delves more deeply into the role of students' social repertoires in supporting their motivation for and engagement in reading. These studies go beyond considering the social in terms of the practice of social collaboration. Instead, students engage in literacy activities to build relationships, to be a part of a community—and that community evolves as a result of their engagement. As Ivey and Johnston (2015)

explained:

This line of research is not simply more focused on the social than on the individual, it theorizes the process of engaged reading quite differently... It assumes that reading, like other language events, is relational and dialogic and provides opportunities for self- and other-construction (Ivey & Johnston, 2015, p. 301).

Work that takes this perspective has found that opportunities to develop relationships with others centered around reading support the development of situational interest (Gambrell et al., 2011). This line of research has also shown that engaged reading (particularly of texts that center interpersonal experiences, or that are contemporary and self-selected) positively influences readers' social imaginations (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Lysaker et al., 2011) and supports the development of equitable literacy communities that promote trust and student agency (Ivey & Johnston, 2015). In other words, the relationship between reading engagement and the building of a literacy community is bidirectional.

### **Considering the Cultural in Designing Instruction for Reading Engagement**

Similarly, work that considers students' cultural repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) as resources for engagement in literacy also has largely been conducted with adolescents. This body of work understands culture to be the central mediator of human activity, including literacy activity (Pacheco & Gutiérrez, 2009). An example of work from this tradition is Lee's (2007) Cultural Modeling project, which supported African American adolescents in drawing on the African American English practice of

signifying to engage in complex literary analysis. This project has since been extended to the elementary grades, using features of the African American rhetorical tradition to engage third and fourth graders in writing narratives (Lee et al., 2004).

### **Studying Teachers' Conceptualizations of a Complex Construct: Teacher**

#### **Sensemaking**

In addition to the literature on reading engagement, I also draw on the concept of sensemaking in my analyses. Reading motivation and engagement are incredibly complex constructs; they are multidimensional (Schiefele et al., 2012), their relationship to one another is debated (Ivey & Johnston, 2015), and attempts to define engagement in particular have been described as being obscured by “conceptual haziness” (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 3). Sensemaking, a concept that originated in organizational studies, has been applied in educational settings to study how teachers and other practitioners make sense of changes in their contexts. Given the complexity of the constructs of reading motivation and engagement, I argue that teachers need to engage in sensemaking to work out both what they think about reading motivation and engagement, and what they currently do or plan to do in their instruction to support them.

Sensemaking occurs within a social context; groups of people collaborate to make meaning of new practices and other changes in their contexts, and those interactions shape the sensemaking process (Coburn, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002). The context of this study, in which a group of researchers, administrators, and teachers met both in a large group setting and in one-on-one coaching conversations to explore ideas around motivation and engagement, represents a rich environment for sensemaking activity. The

particular relationship between the two focal teachers in this study (described in detail below) adds to this richness. Sensemaking is also historical in that teachers look back on past experiences and other sources of knowledge when making sense of new experiences (Spillane et al., 2002; Weick et al., 2005). Finally, sensemaking is particularly valuable in educational research because it positions teachers as active agents of change who attend to and interpret certain factors and develop routines and culture over time (Coburn, 2001; Weick et al., 2005). In the analyses that follow, sensemaking plays out as a focus on the different types of knowledge that teachers draw upon to construct their understandings of motivation and engagement and to make instructional decisions.

### **Methods**

This case study of two third-grade teachers examines how those teachers conceptualized reading motivation and engagement, including what sources of information they drew upon to construct their understandings, and how they designed and enacted literacy instruction in support of motivation and engagement.

### **Context**

**School setting.** This study took place within an urban school district in the Southeastern United States. This district is known for being on the forefront of school reform efforts and is unusual in that nearly all of its public schools are run as charters granted by a variety of organizations. The year preceding this study, the district earned an overall grade of C on the state performance evaluation.

The participating school, Red Cedar Charter School, had its inaugural school year in 2014-2015 and understood the inclusion of students with special needs to be a part of

its mission; about 20-25% of the children enrolled at Red Cedar had Individualized Education Plans, and the school had a prioritized application process for children “at risk of reading disabilities;” that is, students whose parents indicated on their application that they were concerned about their child’s reading development and who were willing to come in for a diagnostic screening. The school also made efforts to situate disciplinary learning within a process of authentic inquiry. At the time of this study, the school enrolled approximately 150 students in grades K-3, 60% of whom were male and 40% of whom were female. Approximately 50% of students were African American; the next two largest ethnic groups were White (30%) and Hispanic/Latinx (15%). Almost six percent of students were classified as “Limited English Proficient,” and half of the students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch. However, free lunch was provided to all students without regard to qualification.

**Participants.** The study enrolled seven participating teachers of grades one through three; all teachers identified as women, five identified as White, one identified as African American, and one identified as both Indigenous and White. For the purposes of this analysis, I selected two teachers as cases: Sara and Hermione<sup>3</sup>, who together were responsible for teaching third grade. I selected Sara and Hermione as cases for several reasons. The first was their co-teaching relationship, which was unique in the school. Sara served as the general education teacher, and Hermione served as the special education teacher; each teacher had her own classroom. Their co-teaching relationship evolved over my time at Red Cedar. Initially, Hermione provided push-in instruction in

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<sup>3</sup> All teachers’ names are self-selected pseudonyms.

Sara's classroom, to both special and general education students. Over the two months I was at the school, Hermione's role shifted to providing more pull-out instruction in her own classroom and to working exclusively with students identified as either special or gifted education. My second reason for choosing Sara and Hermione as focal cases was my initial observations about the differences in the ways that each conceptualized and enacted instruction for reading engagement, an observation that was borne out by the analyses reported here.

*Sara.* At the time of this study, Sara was an experienced teacher who held certifications in Elementary Education and as a Reading Specialist. Sara was in her fourth or fifth year of teaching; the year of the study was Sara's first year of teaching third grade, as her previous experience had been in first grade. In my conversations with Sara, she often contrasted the experiences of teaching first graders and third graders. Sara identified as White.

*Hermione.* At the time of this study, Hermione was a first-year teacher who held certifications in Elementary and Special Education and who was working towards certification as a Reading Specialist and in Gifted and Talented Education. Education was a second career for Hermione, who entered the profession largely due to her own experiences raising multiple children who were identified as "twice exceptional," or both as gifted and as having disabilities. Hermione identified as both White and Native/Indigenous.

**Researcher positionality.** I identify as a White woman, and at the time of this study had four years of classroom experience in the city where the study was located, as

well as a year of experience as a reading specialist in a clinical setting. I had provided professional development (PD) on the topic of general literacy methods to the entire school over the summer, and had been positioned as an expert on the topic by the school principal and Director of Curriculum and Instruction. I had also engaged in some coaching activities with teachers in the month prior to the start of the study and had therefore started building relationships with teachers and administrators before the study began. In the larger study, I served as both lead researcher and literacy coach.

In many ways, these identities and experiences placed me in a position of power; I was White, I was both an experienced teacher and a literacy specialist, I was affiliated with a prestigious university, and I had been sponsored in my entry into the school context by administrators. However, as a coach, I was not in a position of evaluating the teachers. The administrators had agreed that, while they might see my field notes on any classroom observations (in reality, they never requested these), the coaching sessions I held with teachers would be fully confidential and nothing teachers said to me could be used for the purposes of evaluation. My role as PD provider and coach was also not contingent upon my role as researcher; as part of my relationship with the school, I would have provided these services to any teacher identified by the administrators, regardless of that teacher's participation in the study. As noted above, I had already provided some PD to the entire school and had engaged in some preliminary coaching sessions with teachers prior to the start of this study (which are not sources of data for this report).

In the group PD sessions, my role was lead facilitator. I asked teachers to engage in preparatory activities such as reading brief, practitioner-oriented articles and selecting

examples of student work. I led conversations and activities during the sessions. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant activity was the creation of mind maps representing teachers' understandings of motivation and engagement. I asked teachers to respond to three prompts for each construct: (1) what does the term mean?, (2) what does it look like?, and (3) what determines if a child is motivated/engaged? Those maps were then used to scaffold a large group conversation in which we co-constructed collective maps for each construct. I also requested feedback from teachers after each session, using that feedback to modify future sessions.

In my coaching work with teachers, I framed my role as a sounding board, as a person with whom teachers could puzzle through any dilemmas they might encounter in their literacy instruction, whether related specifically to motivation and engagement or not. While the teachers were aware of my research and the questions I was interested in pursuing, I was intentional in encouraging teachers to direct the conversation toward whatever topics they thought might be useful at the time. The coaching sessions therefore varied widely in terms of format and topics discussed; at times I co-planned specific lessons with teachers, at others I thought through issues of logistics and time in structuring a literacy block, and at others served as a listening ear for some of the challenges of being a novice teacher. Throughout, I maintained expectations for confidentiality, and therefore do not report here any comments which teachers specifically requested remain private.

## Data Collection

Over the two-month period of this study, I made four week-long visits to Red Cedar. The data collection activities conducted at each visit, as well as the data collected that is relevant to the research questions of this study, are summarized in Table 9 below. Data types collected included: demographic information, individually-created mind maps for the terms “motivation” and “engagement” (total of 2), videotapes of classroom observations (total of 2), classroom observation protocols (total of 5), and audio recordings of coaching sessions (total of 6).

Table 9

### *Schedule of Data Collection Activities*

<u>Visit</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Data collected</u>
1 (week of 9/10/17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study recruitment and consent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic information</li> </ul>
2 (week of 9/24/17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group PD workshop: Understandings of reading motivation and engagement (attended by both Sara and Hermione)</li> <li>• Observations: one each of Sara and Hermione’s literacy instruction</li> <li>• Coaching sessions: one each with Sara and Hermione</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field notes and memo from group PD workshop</li> <li>• Individual mind maps for terms “motivation” and “engagement” (2)</li> <li>• Videotapes of each observation (2)</li> <li>• Observation protocol for each observation (2)</li> <li>• Audio recordings of each coaching session (2)</li> </ul>
3 (week of 10/8/17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations: one each of Sara and Hermione’s literacy instruction</li> <li>• Coaching sessions: one each with Sara and Hermione</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation protocol for each observation (2)</li> <li>• Audio recordings of each coaching session (2)</li> </ul>
4 (week of 10/22/17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group PD workshop: Collaboration (attended by Sara only)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Observation of Hermione’s literacy instruction<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Coaching sessions: one each with Sara and Hermione</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation protocol for each observation (1)</li> <li>• Audio recordings of each coaching session (2)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Hermione was absent from school the day of the second PD workshop. Sara refers to an article I had asked teachers to read in preparation for this workshop in her coaching session for this visit, but that is the only way in which this visit is relevant to the research questions for this study.

<sup>2</sup> Sara had one fewer observation due to the occurrence of standardized test activities in her classroom during visit 4. She requested to have a coaching session during that visit, regardless.

## **Data Analysis**

To analyze my data, I engaged in a recursive process of (a) immersing myself in data, (b) creating analytic memos about patterns and initial observations in the data, (c) explicating my observations and assertions through the creation of draft cases, (d) checking those assertions through systematic coding and triangulation, and (e) revising the cases.

**Immersion in and preparation of data.** To immerse myself in the data and prepare it for analysis, I engaged in several steps. For the observation data, I watched each teacher's observational video from Visit 2 and created narrative field notes that captured (1) what happened on a moment-to-moment basis and (2) my initial analytic thoughts upon viewing the video. For the coaching sessions, I listened to each audio recording and created a log of topics discussed at the level of a rough transcription. The purpose of creating this log was to identify which portions of the session were relevant to the research questions for this study; as mentioned earlier, the teachers directed these conversations, and oftentimes our talk was not directly related to reading motivation or engagement (e.g., a discussion with Hermione in which I gave her suggestions on how to support a student in checking her own spelling during writing instruction). Following the creation of each log, I also wrote a brief analytic memo for each coaching session. I then used these logs to select relevant excerpts of each coaching session, and I transcribed

these verbatim. Finally, I read through my field notes from the group PD workshop on understandings of motivation and engagement, reviewed the memo I had written immediately following the workshop, and studied the mind maps Sara and Hermione had created during the workshop.

**Creating analytic memos.** Following my initial immersion in the data, I read through the data a second time and created analytic memos to capture emerging patterns and ideas. I began with the observation data, reading each teacher's observation protocols and creating memos to capture patterns across the two observation protocols and the video observation. These memos also included inventories of engagement-supportive practices used (e.g., ways in which the teacher provided students with opportunities for choice or social collaboration) and texts used in class (e.g., titles of books, whether they were trade books or leveled readers, whether they were fiction or nonfiction). I then turned to the data from coaching sessions, creating detailed memos on teacher sensemaking, as well as my role in the conversation. Topics addressed in these memos were informed by my theoretical framework, particularly the work on teacher sensemaking, as well as my desire to understand how my role as coach may have shaped the conversation. They included: (1) What facets of literacy engagement are salient to teachers at this time? What are teachers attending to? (2) Are there any times in which the teacher expresses uncertainty (lack of information) or ambiguity (conflicting ideas or information)? (3) Are there ways in which I directed the conversation, or suggestions I made, that were welcome/unwelcome? and (4) In considering subsequent coaching, what topics or ideas were taken up (indicates that teacher perceived them as relevant or

useful)? Lastly, I read each teacher's mind map for the terms "motivation" and "engagement" and created a memo reflecting patterns in each teacher's understandings and noting commonalities and differences between the two teachers.

**Constructing assertions through the drafting of cases.** I used my collection of analytic memos to begin outlining my preliminary observations or assertions (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) about overall themes in the data. I also developed an initial code list that could be used for systematically checking those assertions. I read through the memos, writing a draft case description for each teacher that was organized according to data type. As I encountered new possible patterns (or exceptions to patterns), noteworthy concepts, or other ideas I thought might be worth tracking, I wrote them down to construct a provisional list of codes for my systematic coding. This code list reflected both ideas from the extant literature that I saw present in my initial read, such as use of the pedagogical practices of *choice* and *social collaboration* or the ideas of *uncertainty* and *ambiguity* from the sensemaking literature, and ideas that I noticed emerging in the data, such as *experiences as a parent*.

**Checking assertions through systematic coding and triangulation.** I next read and coded each coaching transcript using my start list, as well as my observational field notes and protocols and the mind maps teachers created on the concepts of motivation and engagement (the final list of codes used is provided in Appendix E). While coding, I added codes (e.g., *repeated reading as an indicator of engagement*) and modified codes (e.g., broadening my initial *knowledge goals* code to include *all types of goal setting*). I also grouped codes according to two different strategies. Most codes were grouped under

the type of teacher knowledge they represented. I did this specifically to maintain a focus on teacher sensemaking and the types of understandings and expertise teachers draw on when making sense of complex constructs such as reading motivation and engagement. For example, *parenting experiences, teaching experiences, childhood experiences, understanding of own strengths and areas of growth as a teacher, teacher engagement, and comparing teaching style to others* were all grouped as “knowledge of self.” Other types of teacher knowledge included: knowledge of context, knowledge of students, relational knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and practices, beliefs about engagement, and indicators of engagement. In considering broader themes in teachers’ conceptualizations of motivation and engagement and what teachers considered to be indicators of either, I found it helpful to bring in some of the classifications of engagement from educational psychology (Appleton et al., 2006; Christenson et al., 2008; Skinner et al., 2008; Skinner et al., 2009). Specifically, I grouped the indicators teachers described as representing: (a) behavioral engagement (e.g., *paying attention, perseverance, producing writing*), (b) cognitive engagement (e.g., *making connections, understanding purpose*), (c) emotional engagement (e.g., *enthusiasm, having fun*), or (d) disengagement (e.g., *work refusal*). Lastly, I also coded for expressions of uncertainty or ambiguity, again in keeping with my theoretical framework of teacher sensemaking.

I then engaged in several types of triangulation. First, I created a matrix to check which themes were present in which types of data. In cases in which themes were only present in one data type, I engaged in a process of critical questioning about why that might be so. For example, there was evidence of feedback and rewards throughout

Hermione's observations, but this did not come up as a topic of conversation in her coaching sessions. This may have been due to the teacher-directed nature of the coaching sessions and to Hermione's level of expertise; as a beginning teacher, she was often concerned with more macro-level issues (e.g., how to structure a block of literacy instructional time) and may not have been ready to attend to the finer points of her teacher talk. I checked my assertions using a process of if-then tests (Saldaña, 2013). For example, *if* my initial assertion about choice and interest being central organizing principles for Hermione's instruction were correct, *then* I would expect to see these themes appear across most data sources. This proved to be the case: both choice and interest were present in all three observations and two coaching sessions.

**Revision of cases.** Finally, I revised my draft cases in light of the results of my systematic coding and triangulation efforts. In so doing, I also reorganized the cases to present data according to themes, rather than data type or source.

### **Credibility**

I took several measures to increase the credibility (Eisner, 1991) of this study. First was my prolonged engagement with the participating school; while the study itself took place over two months, I was involved with the school in some capacity and engaged in the building of relationships with the faculty and administrators there for a total of four months. Second, I engaged in structural corroboration (Eisner, 1991) by including multiple types of data (i.e., mind maps, observational videos, observational protocols, audio recordings of coaching conversations) and by specifically looking for evidence that would disconfirm my working hunches and assertions throughout my

analyses. In selecting which of the seven participating teachers from the larger study I would include in this analysis, I specifically chose two cases that I thought would represent contrasting ways of thinking about motivation and engagement. In my results, I present the results of this negative case analysis (Creswell, 2013) alongside evidence supporting my interpretations. I also engaged in the triangulation (Miles et al., 2014) and if-then testing (Saldaña, 2013) described above. Finally, in this report I take care to clarify my own positioning and how it may have shaped the conduct of the study and my interpretations of the results (see Methods section).

### **Results**

To present each case, I integrate themes in participants' understandings of reading motivation and engagement with themes in their enacted and reported practices for supporting motivation and engagement. In presenting themes, I include both data from observations and data from coaching sessions, while maintaining clear identification of sources. The reason for offering this integrated discussion of results, rather than separating them out by research question, is that participants' ideas about motivation and engagement were incredibly closely bound to their practices. This was especially the case in the coaching sessions, during which participants were making sense of (a) what they had done in the instruction I had observed, (b) their reasoning for making those decisions, and (c) what they might do in their future literacy instruction. To maintain a strict separation between enacted practices and the construction of understandings would be to strip teachers' sensemaking activity of the context that makes it meaningful: what they actually did, or planned to do, in the classroom.

I begin by reproducing the mind maps created by each teacher during our group PD session on their understandings of reading motivation and engagement. I initiated the PD workshop by asking teachers to draft these maps, without situating their creation within any particular discussion or problem of practice; the maps thus represent how teachers thought about the constructs of motivation and engagement when asked to do so in a relatively decontextualized way. I accompany these maps with an analysis of participants' comments from coaching sessions that spoke directly to their conceptualizations and what they described as indicators of motivation or engagement.

I then provide a snapshot of how each teacher organized her instruction, the major themes in both her practices (observed and reported during coaching conversations), and her sensemaking activity, before delving into each theme in detail. Figures 4 and 6, which accompany each teacher's "snapshot," provide a visual representation of the themes in each teacher's practice and how the themes related to one another. In discussing the themes, I present them in order according to how salient they were to the participant, with the most important "central principle(s)" around which each teacher organized her instruction presented first. Table 10, reproduced below, presents a brief summary of how each teacher approached a variety of practices and presents the practices alphabetically.

To provide some orientation to the findings, a major theme was that both Sara and Hermione understood reading engagement as mediated by students' social identities and practices; this was evidenced to some extent in their mind maps, and to a greater extent in their observed and reported instruction. However, the ways in which this understanding was enacted varied based on the central principle(s) around which each participant

organized her instruction.

Table 10

*How Participants Enacted Engagement-Supportive Practices*

<u>Practice</u>	<u>Sara</u>	<u>Hermione</u>
Accessibility and differentiation	Present but not a major theme	A theme in how teacher thought about planning for instruction
Choice	Some choice in text for read to self, but highly teacher-controlled Choice seen as reward for work completion	Central organizing principle: lots of student choice in both procedural aspects of students' learning experience and in allowing students to direct learning Choices often connected to interests Choices were partially controlled by teacher: "It's giving them choices you're okay with"
Collaboration	Not as present in current enacted instruction, but teacher planned for incorporating more in future Something that would "make other structures more meaningful"	Not present, no indication of plans to incorporate (note: small case load may have influenced this)
Considerations of culture	No connections	"Nerdy T-shirts" connected to popular culture, but no talk about other cultural practices
Feedback	Related to strategy use "Noticing and naming" (Johnston, 2004)	More general in nature, less "noticing and naming" (Johnston, 2004) Immediate
Goals	Related to strategy use Set jointly with student	Related to learning about a particular content area or producing a certain amount of text Sometimes set jointly with student Sometimes came from IEP
Interest	Rarely present	Central organizing principle: driving force of instructional practice and foundation for relationships with students

Relationships with students	Instruction highly personalized Something that teacher wanted to improve	Instruction highly personalized A priority; based on knowledge of child's interests
Rewards	Provided for sustained work time, meeting expectations Choice as reward Extrinsic rewards (i.e., Dojo points)	Break time as reward for work completion, perseverance
Strategy instruction	Central organizing principle: extremely important to all aspects of instruction; affected practices for grouping, structures for independent reading, purpose/goals for reading	Rarely present in teacher's own instruction Presented more as an outgrowth of push-in instruction in Sara's classroom- in service of instructional coherence
Structure and routine	To set expectations for students and hold students accountable for reaching those expectations; grew to include structures for students being accountable to one another Sometimes related to strategy use Intended to facilitate student success with increased choice and collaboration- in reality, may have over-constrained these and impeded engagement Related to need to make instruction accessible	Teacher did not have "the most" structure, by own understanding Saw reducing "structure" as means of holding space for student choice and following student interest, thereby supporting engagement
Talk	Positioned students as knowers and experts who would be successful Affirmed reading achievement and strategy use Positioned teacher as a learner	Positioned students as knowers and experts who were all "brilliant" Positioned teacher as a learner

## Sara

**Sara's conceptualizations of motivation and engagement.** Sara did not provide definitions for either motivation or engagement on her mind maps (reproduced below in

Figure 3). Instead, she offered detailed descriptions of indicators of each construct, as well as what would determine whether a child is motivated or engaged in learning. For motivation, a common theme in her responses was student creativity; Sara believed that students who were motivated would create new ideas and extensions, particularly in response to problems. For engagement, a common theme in Sara's responses was students' understanding of the purpose or goal behind an activity. She also believed that students who were engaged would converse with one another, asking questions and having discussions that were "focused on [their] work," indicating that Sara understood engagement to be mediated by students' social practices.

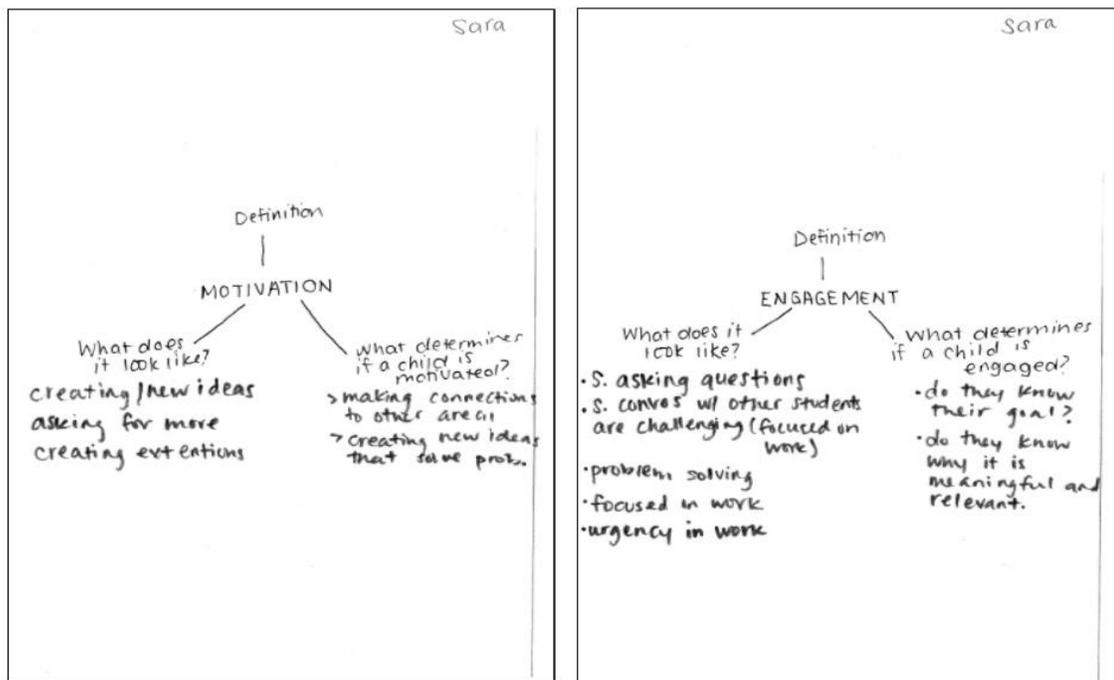


Figure 3. Sara's mind maps.

In our coaching sessions, Sara offered few comments that spoke directly to her understanding of reading motivation and engagement. She sometimes spoke of particular

practices as “motivating” for students in what the research literature would term an extrinsic way, such as using a reward system (Coaching 3). Sara also considered the social dimensions of engagement, recognizing that students might be motivated to share interesting words or written work with one another (Coaching 3) or that aspects of students’ personalities might support their engagement in paired academic tasks (Coaching 3). Indicators of engagement that Sara described included: behavioral indicators (e.g., “gobbling up their books;” reading with expression, Coaching 1), cognitive indicators (e.g., “being really involved in their books,” Coaching 2; understanding the purpose of independent reading, Coaching 1), and emotional indicators (e.g., enjoying reading, Coaching 1).

**Snapshot of Sara’s instruction.** The central principle around which Sara organized her literacy instruction was instruction in strategies for decoding and comprehension. Sara created a variety of routines and structures to support her students’ learning of literacy strategies, as well as to hold them accountable for practicing those strategies during independent reading time. Most of Sara’s goals for her students, including the goals she guided students to set for themselves, were related to strategy use, as was her feedback to students. Sara’s talk positioned all her learners as capable. Sara also engaged in sensemaking activity around the role of student choice in her classroom. In our final coaching session, Sara engaged in deep reflection about how her relational understanding of her students might better inform her instruction. Opportunities for students to engage in literacy activities related to their interests were less common in Sara’s classroom.

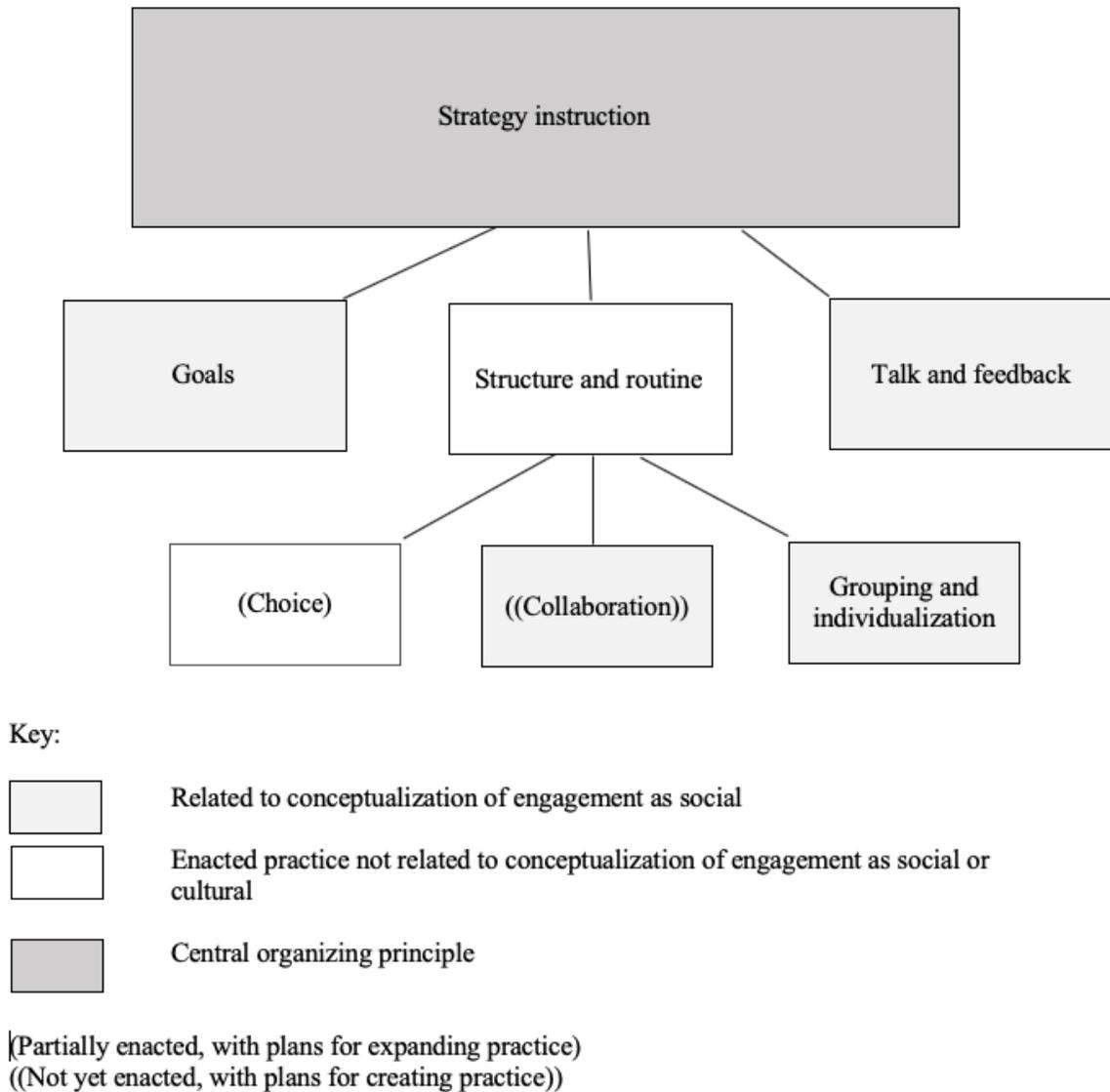


Figure 4. Visual representation of Sara's instructional priorities.

**Central organizing principle: Strategy instruction.** Sara structured her literacy block by combining a Guided Reading approach (J. Richardson, 2009) with Boushey and Moser's (2009, 2014) Daily 5/CAFÉ system. The language used in this and the following section about "CAFÉ menus/strategies," "Read to Self," and the vocabulary tool called the "Word Collector" comes from Boushey and Moser's approach, which integrates mini-

lessons on strategy instruction with periods of student self-selected reading (alone and with others), as well as work on writing, word work, and listening to reading through audiobooks or read-alouds.

Sara placed a high value on strategy instruction; all of her literacy instruction during Guided Reading was organized around practicing strategies. In teaching strategies, she was careful to emphasize that their purpose is to assist in comprehension (“That helps [good readers] understand what they read. Do you want to understand what you read or just read a bunch of words?”, Observation 1) or, in the case of using a vocabulary tool called the “Word Collector,” (Boushey & Moser, 2009, p. 85) to gain word knowledge and find interesting words to use in writing (Coaching 3). She made sure to ask students what they were going to practice before they began reading, and provided explicit feedback on their strategy use as and after they read. Sara also occasionally linked her strategy instruction with students’ self-selected reading; for example, during her second observation, Sara linked her target strategy of identifying fiction and nonfiction to students’ self-selected reading by asking students to choose two books from their book boxes and explain whether they were fiction or nonfiction and how they knew.

My coaching conversations with Sara supported my observations that strategy instruction was a central concept around which she organized her literacy instruction. She reported that she would typically group her students for Guided Reading flexibly, according to target skill or strategy (Coaching 1). Sara perceived a difference between teaching first grade and teaching third in the types of strategies that were emphasized, with first graders typically needing more accuracy or decoding-focused strategies, and

third graders typically needing more comprehension-focused strategies. Since Sara had recently moved from teaching first grade to teaching third grade, managing this shift was a frequent topic of conversation (Coaching 1, Coaching 2).

***Strategy instruction intersecting with the social dimensions of engagement.*** In our first coaching conversation, Sara described her reasoning for wanting to group students for Guided Reading instruction according to their strategy needs: if the students in a group all have the same goal, then the fact that they might have different texts seems less important, and students are less likely to label their books as “baby books” or their assigned strategy as a “baby strategy” (Coaching 1). These comments indicated that Sara was attending to the social dimension of reading and some of the consequences of grouping approaches on students’ identities as readers and on their relative social positionings in the classroom community, while maintaining her focus on strategy instruction.

***Creating structures and routines to support choice and social collaboration.*** In my coaching conversations with Sara, she went into great detail across multiple sessions about the kinds of routines and “structures” (Coaching 3) she created to support her students in reaching her high expectations for them. These expectations were often based in her understandings of what an ideal system of Guided Reading groups and student-directed center work should look like. For example, in our second coaching session, Sara continued discussing the structures she was building around choices in text for Read to Self. She described a process in which she would set goals jointly with students, guide them toward a particular type of text she thought might help students meet those goals,

and then check in on students' progress at their next Guided Reading group. In that session, Sara spoke of self-selected reading as a reward that she planned to use when students had completed the tasks for which they were accountable: "But if they're in there, and focusing, and finishing it they can read whatever they want afterwards" (Coaching 2). Sometimes these structures included accommodations and modifications for students who would need additional support in accessing tasks and reaching Sara's expectations. For example, when I suggested creating some mixed-ability pairings during reading centers, Sara talked about what scaffolds she would need to provide to ensure her students' success: "[We] would definitely need to take some time probably out of Guided Reading to teach like, right now if they had the mixed-ability pairing they would just copy whatever the higher kid was writing... But I mean that would be possible, we would just have to take that time to like, teach really how to do that, not just copy the other person's work. Or like, tell the other person what to do. We could do that" (Coaching 2). Interestingly, in later sessions, Sara's structures for accountability were less about holding students accountable to her as their teacher, and more about holding them accountable to their peers. For example, she created a structure for the use of the Word Collector tool in which students would be responsible for sharing the words they found with each other at the start of each Guided Reading group, even if Sara was not present (Coaching 3). Again, Sara was considering how students might engage not just with literacy events or with the content of texts, but also with each other; she was thinking of engagement as a social phenomenon.

*Setting goals for strategy use and gaining knowledge.* Sara often framed the purpose of students' reading as being to practice strategies, rather than to enjoy a story or learn content. In our first session, she expressed her intention to "give them all an overall purpose that does help that other comprehension strategy," and described the "purpose of Read to Self" in terms of students having time to practice applying strategies independently: "They get the purpose of Read to Self now. And like, once they have their strategies and their comprehension, they're using their stickies or whatever they're doing, being like, if you're down there, when you come back tomorrow, since I meet with four of these groups, like I need to see one of your books that you have done this new strategy on" (Coaching 1). Later in the conversation, I—knowing that knowledge goals have been identified as supportive of reading engagement (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004)—brought this up to her and suggested that she give students not only a strategy goal, but a knowledge goal as part of their purpose for reading. Sara's response again indicated the differences she perceived between teaching first and third grade: "That's what I need help with. This comprehension piece... I can do the littles, but this stuff is like... like having them understand why this is meaningful and relevant to all their other books, when to use it and when not to, and these comprehension strategies is overwhelming for me" (Coaching 1). This theme of setting goals for strategy use remained consistent throughout Sara's second and third coaching sessions. When discussing how using nonfiction texts had benefited her students' engagement, Sara's focus remained on how nonfiction text provided a better "ground" for students' application of the strategy of identifying main idea and details, rather than on how students may have read to learn about the world

through nonfiction text (Coaching 2). She also articulated a goal of having students practice the same strategy (e.g., identify main idea and details) across all of her Daily 5 reading centers (Coaching 3).

However, strategy practice was not the only goal Sara set for her students' reading. In her first observation, she told the students at the start of their Guided Reading lesson, "We're going to read to find out about....", suggesting a knowledge goal; this language was part of the scripting for the Guided Reading lesson materials (Observation 1). In her third observation, Sara asked a student before he started to read, "What is this text going to teach you?" (Observation 3).

***Teacher talk and feedback.*** Sara's talk reflected an attention to positioning indicating a consideration of the social dimensions of engagement. Sara used talk to position all readers as capable. She used compliments such as "rock star reader!" to affirm students' general reading achievement (Observation 3), and used language that made it clear that all students could and would use strategies successfully: "You're going to read and I'm going to listen to you use all the strategies we have been practicing" (Observation 3). Even when students made mistakes, Sara found ways to position them as knowers. For example, when a student incorrectly identified a fiction book as nonfiction, Sara responded, "That's true, people can do all of these things. Did this story really happen?" (Observation 3). In addition to positioning her students as knowers, Sara made sure to also position herself as a learner. In my first visit to her classroom, Sara introduced me to her (understandably curious) students as "my teacher" and told them that she, too, has things to work on (Observation 1).

Sara rewarded students for following routines and procedures, sustained work time, and knowing what their assigned reading level was. She used praise, high fives, and class “Dojo points.” She also provided specific praise when students applied strategies during reading, “noticing and naming” student behaviors (Johnston, 2004): “Good job using the title to figure out what it means” (Observation 3). This was something I complimented her on during our first coaching session, and Sara told me it had been a major goal of hers during work with a previous literacy coach at another school; Sara was very pleased to hear it had become a “natural” part of her talk (Coaching 1).

*Sensemaking around opportunities for student choice.* My observations of Sara’s classroom revealed limited choice. Students could choose which books to read during Read to Self, but at the time of my visits they were constrained to choosing books aligned with their independent reading level, as determined by an informal reading inventory (i.e., one student could select books from the “C” or “D” boxes, Observation 1).

In our coaching sessions, however, Sara made sense of these instructional choices and described a plan to broaden opportunities for choice over time. In Sara’s sensemaking around student choice, and when it might be appropriate to introduce elements of choice into her instruction, she drew on her understandings of her students, particularly what might frustrate or overwhelm them (i.e., when choice in text was introduced too early, Coaching 1) or her knowledge of the instructional supports she has built for each student (i.e., frequency of teacher-led Guided Reading groups, Coaching 1). In contextualizing her decisions around providing student choice, Sara attended to her

students' needs. She reported that having students select books based on level was not her typical practice, but that giving students more flexible guidelines (e.g., the "five-finger" rule) had been too overwhelming for them. Restricting their choice was not her ideal, but rather a decision Sara made in response to her students' needs: "And I've never done that before and it like kills me but it's, this is a different class, different year, this is where we have to start" (Coaching 1). Her goal, at least for kids who could manage the "freedom," was to have them select five books based on level and two books "just for fun" at any given time. When I asked Sara if all her students would receive this freedom, she made some very complex comments about her "lowest" readers. At first she said, "I think they're mainly gonna have just-right books in their book box," which I interpreted as saying that she might need to restrict their choices more than typically developing readers. However, as Sara continued to think through her plans with me, her talk changed to reflect an opinion that, because they would be receiving additional teacher support through more frequent small group instruction, Sara's "lowest readers" would also be able to pick two fun books because she would feel confident that they were getting what they need (in terms of leveled text) in their daily teacher-led reading.

Sara also described offering more student choice in her writing instruction than she did during her reading instruction. For example, I observed her offer students a choice of writing task (Observation 3), and she described providing regular "free write days" in the subsequent coaching session (Coaching 3).

*Personalization of instruction and relationships with students.* Sara also reflected a consideration of the social dimensions of engagement through the ways in

which she individualized her instruction for students, and how she thought about understanding her students relationally as a potential foundation for engagement. Sara's instruction was highly personalized. For example, she created individual CAFÉ (strategy) menus (Boushey & Moser, 2009) for each student, updating them regularly with strategies she thought would help that particular student read successfully (Observation 1). Each student also had their own personal book box that they filled with self-selected texts for Read to Self (Observation 1). When a new student arrived in her classroom in October, Sara took time to teach him personally about the book boxes, learn about his reading interests, and hear about his book choices and why they interested him (Observation 3). However, Sara felt that she still had much room to grow in establishing relationships with her students. She contrasted her own knowledge of students' personalities with that of Sheila, another teacher participating in the study:

I don't know, like we were just so, like what are your numbers, and like what are whatever, and that was just so the focus, that I'm so skill based. And I think it makes me strong in like, an instructional area, but I think I could be stronger instructionally if like that relationship piece was also tied in there, a little more than I have been... I definitely have a lot more growing to do in that, cause I don't notice those things off the bat like Sheila does. Like I wouldn't be like, oh yeah, I'm going to pair Eliza<sup>4</sup> with this person cuz she's creative, and this person struggles, and gets tired, I'd be like, well no because SHE is good at doing this and HE is good at doing this skill-wise, so let's put them together. (Coaching 3)

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<sup>4</sup> All student names are pseudonyms that have been selected with cultural relevance in mind.

These comments connected directly to a discussion of using collaboration to support student engagement, which I detail now.

*Sensemaking and planning around social collaboration.* Sara engaged in sensemaking activity around the practice of social collaboration, both in terms of how it might support student engagement and in terms of what she would need to do to incorporate more collaboration into her instruction. In our third session, Sara referenced an article I had shared in the group PD about the benefits of social collaboration for engaging African American students in reading. Sara said that it made her think about how her students like to collaborate, and how she had seen them collaborate successfully in math, but they hadn't been given many opportunities to collaborate in literacy. She said, "Collaboration would make those other things, like the other structures we have so much better, like and more meaningful to me" (Coaching 3). Interestingly, the person Sara identified as benefiting from collaboration in this statement was herself, not her students. Sara again drew on her experiences as a first-grade teacher and contrasted them with her present experiences, saying that when she was more comfortable with the content her students had more space to collaborate.

Later on in the same session, Sara returned to the theme of collaboration by describing her ideas (which she came up with in consultation with Sheila) about using a whole-class Word Collector to "motivate [students] in Read to Self and Listen to Reading," including her plans to establish a routine of allowing students to add words to the collector and "share for a bit about it so to give them ownership" (Coaching 3). When I complimented her and Sheila on this idea, Sara made the comments presented above

about how Sheila was better able to spot aspects of students' personalities and other non-cognitive traits that would help them support one another. Sara articulated an understanding that these non-cognitive abilities may be particularly important for kids with special needs. She again connected back to the article from the group PD to explain how mixed-ability pairings might work well if they were done based on some of these more personality-based criteria: "Yeah, even that, like with your- with the article, if it's like, you're right, if a kid who is really good at like encouraging somebody else when they're struggling to read and they're really frustrated, that is a good pair, even if they're a super high reader" (Coaching 3). It appeared that reading more about social collaboration had inspired Sara to broaden her thinking around grouping students beyond her earlier professed preference of grouping by strategy needs, to also consider more social aspects of grouping practices. This conversation led to Sara making a commitment to creating a buddy reading station as part of her reading center work.

### **Hermione**

**Hermione's conceptualizations of motivation and engagement.** In her mind maps (see Figure 5), Hermione provided definitions of each construct, as well as indicators and ideas about what might determine if a child is motivated or engaged. Hermione's definition of motivation, as well as her use of the descriptors "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" motivation, bear much resemblance to definitions from the literature; for example, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) define motivation as "personal goals, desires, and intentions" (p. 404). This is unsurprising, given Hermione's revelation during the workshop that she had recently completed homework on the topic of motivation and

engagement for a university course (Field notes, Group PD 1). Hermione's conceptualizations of motivation also got at the concept of task value (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) and the importance of setting specific goals, although Hermione did not specify what she envisioned the ideal purpose or goal of a learning activity should be (e.g., achievement versus mastery goals in goal theory) (Liem & Elliot, 2018). Hermione's conceptualizations of students either having or not having a reason for doing something also address amotivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This idea of purpose or goal continues as a thread throughout Hermione's definition and indicators of engagement. Interestingly, Hermione's mind maps do not reference the social dimension of engagement, even though this would prove prominent in the practices she enacted to promote engagement in her instruction.

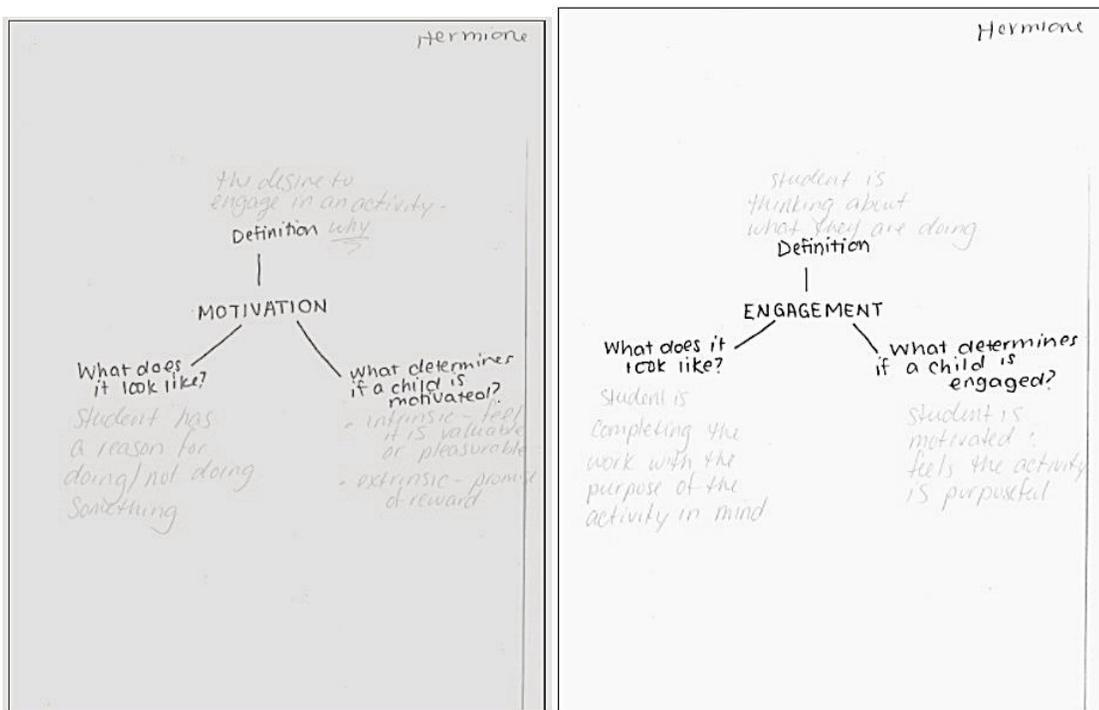


Figure 5. Hermione's mind maps.

In her coaching conversations, Hermione described a complex view of motivation and engagement that built on a variety of sources of information, including her knowledge of her students and her personal and professional experiences, especially her experiences as a parent of “twice exceptional” children. Hermione understood engagement to be connected to learning and growth; she described an interaction with a child in which she reminded the child that, to get better at reading, they needed to read books “again and again and again,” just like when they were little and would beg their parents for a reread (Coaching 1). This description of parents and children interacting around text also indicates that Hermione was considering engagement as social in nature. Hermione also conceptualized engagement as changeable, such as when her son’s motivation for handwriting grew over time in response to needing to write legibly for a video game to function properly (Coaching 3). Indicators of engagement that Hermione described included: behavioral indicators (e.g., paying attention and repeated reading, Coaching 1; perseverance, Coaching 3), cognitive indicators (e.g., “really think[ing] about a text,” Coaching 1), and emotional indicators (e.g., “having a blast,” Coaching 3). Hermione also described some indicators of disengagement, such as melting down (Coaching 2) and work refusal (Coaching 3).

**Snapshot of Hermione’s instruction.** In thinking through how best to engage her students, Hermione drew regularly on her knowledge of her students, including their areas of strength, interests and passions, exceptionalities, personalities, preferences, self-efficacy beliefs, and past instructional experiences. Hermione organized her instruction around student interests, and considered the provision of extensive opportunities for

student choice to be closely bound to that commitment. Hermione prioritized the building of relationships with students, and had a unique practice for initiating those relationships that connected to her students' knowledge of and interest in popular culture. Hermione often contrasted the degree of structure in her classroom to that of other teachers, and related her decisions about how much structure to provide to her ability to follow student interests and offer choices. When setting goals for her students, Hermione considered both their interests and what students were expected to learn and do according to their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and curricular standards. Her teacher talk and the feedback she provided to students considered their identities and positioned them as knowers and experts. As the special education teacher, Hermione also engaged in sensemaking around the accessibility of her instruction and how she could differentiate and modify learning in response to student needs. Possibly because of the small size of her case load (Hermione taught ten students across the school day, rarely with more than three students at the same time), opportunities for peer collaboration were rare in Hermione's classroom.

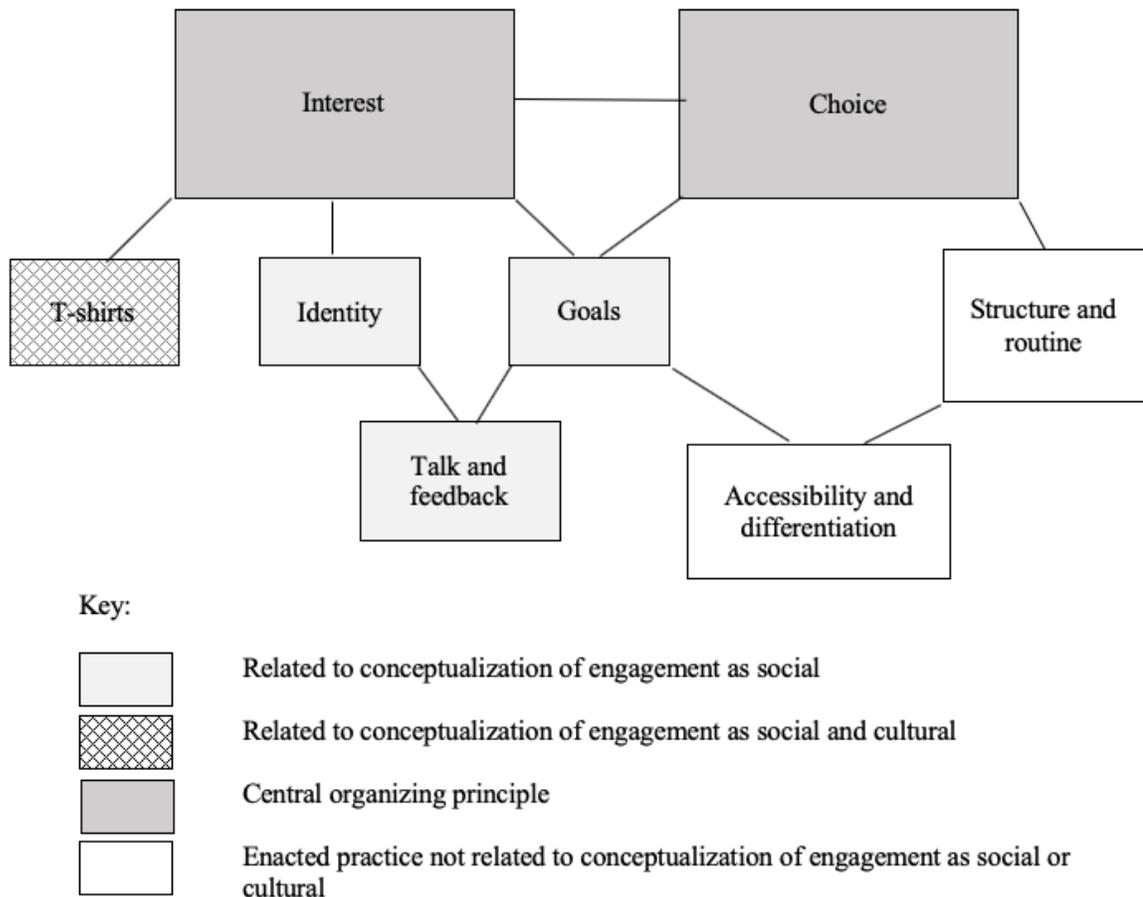


Figure 6. Visual representation of Hermione's instructional priorities.

**Central organizing principle 1: Interest.** For Hermione, interest was central to engagement: student interest came up again and again as both a driving force of her instructional practice and as a foundation for her connections and relationships with students. Hermione offered a variety of opportunities for students to pursue their interests, whether through selecting a topic for a brief free-write activity (Observation 3) or by guiding one of her students, Immanuel, to design an independent research project on a topic of his choosing: mammals (Observation 1). Hermione often located texts and resources aligned with student interests in the moment, such as when she quickly located

a text on bugs for a student named Jamal (Observation 3), or when she printed pictures of robots off her computer for a student when she noticed how taken he had become with a robot toy during his break time (Observation 3).

***Central organizing principle 2: Choice.*** Choice was another central concept around which Hermione organized her instruction, and was closely connected to her commitment to follow student interests; Hermione also directly credited her provision of choice with her success in engaging particular students. In my three observations of Hermione's instruction, I noted that she routinely offered students controlled choice, both in terms of what task students did and in how they did it. For example, she offered a choice of two activities at a word work center, a choice of two texts to read during a break period, and choices about where to sit in the room (Observation 2, Observation 3). In working one-on-one with Immanuel on a largely student-directed project about mammals, Hermione offered Immanuel the option of doing his project on mammals in general, or selecting a particular mammal to research and write about (Observation 1). Hermione did not, as a general rule, ask students to justify or explain their choices, although she sometimes evaluated them, such as telling one student their choice of a long word for a spelling activity was "excellent" (Observation 3).

In my coaching conversations with Hermione, she again spoke of the importance of offering students choices, both in terms of instructional tasks and in contextual factors such as where to sit or of a choice of stuffed animal to read to; she also added some detail about what makes a choice workable for both the student and for her: "I'll let them... you know, self-select what they're writing about, or... sit on the fun chairs... So that's- and I

mean, I've always been about... choice, but it's also, make sure you give them two choices you're okay with" (Coaching 3). Hermione attributed the success she had experienced in engaging Eliza, who had previously been reluctant to come to Hermione's classroom for pull-out instruction, in the writing of a book on poetry that incorporated opportunities for Eliza to have choice in the topic and format of her poems.

***Creating relationships with students around cultural connections.*** In our final coaching session, Hermione described an instructional practice that captures much about her emphasis on building relationships with students that are based on a deep knowledge of their interests and passions: the wearing of "nerdy T-shirts" that align with shows, movies, video games, and other popular culture elements of interest to her students (e.g., Batman, Minecraft, Scribblenauts). She said the shirts, of which she had collected over 100, were "one of the ways I *get* my kids" and forge connections with children who might initially be shy or reluctant to talk (Coaching 3). While other teachers and school professionals had criticized her shirts for being unprofessional in the past, Hermione was a fierce advocate for them and had secured the support of the administration in deviating from the faculty dress code in service of supporting her relationships with her (and others') students. This practice, and the emphasis on teacher-student relationships as a foundation for engagement, indicates that Hermione conceptualized engagement as both social and cultural.

***Reducing "structure" to build space for engagement.*** A theme of my coaching conversations with Hermione that was also supported by informal comments she made during my observations was her willingness to allow for less "structure" (Coaching 3) in

her lessons and to adapt her instruction on-the-fly in response to students' needs in service of their motivation and engagement. This represents a major way in which Hermione's instructional approach differed from Sara's. For example, during my second observation, Hermione admitted to having planned her lessons in the minutes before students arrived. She seemed to have mixed feelings about this aspect of her teaching, as it both caused her some anxiety and was a source of pride in her own professional identity and unique teaching style. During the lesson, Hermione later said to me, "I've developed this thing where I'm like [*adopts panicked tone*], 'I'm totally unprepared!' [*tone returns to normal*] But I actually am prepared" (Observation 2). This willingness to allow for more looseness in her teaching, and to adapt her instructional environment in response to her students' needs, also played out in the physical organization of her classroom. Initially, Hermione's classroom furniture was organized much like Sara's, with several tables each surrounded by three to four chairs. In my later visits, and as Hermione began to spend more time in her own room, Hermione switched out some of the traditional chairs for large yoga balls and wiggle seats (Observation 3). Hermione also had a large and comfortable tan sofa to which she added some tactile throw pillows; students who were engaged in self-selected reading or taking a brief break were welcome to use this space (Observation 3). In discussing this characteristic of her instructional style during our final coaching conversation, Hermione said, "I'm gonna let kids take breaks, and I'm gonna let them sit on bouncy seats, and I'm gonna... you know? And I may not have the most structure, but, it's, it's how I work with my [kids]" (Coaching 3). Later in that session, Hermione returned to this topic, crediting her choices with Eliza's

marked improvement in writing engagement (Eliza had requested to remain in Hermione's room and write beyond her allotted Special Education minutes). In this part of the conversation, Hermione seemed to create a distinction between "structure" and student choice: "And again, it has to do with, you know, I'll give them breaks, I'll let them... you know, self-select what they're writing about, or... sit on the fun chairs." When I offered my own assessment, saying, "You can't teach with an iron fist," Hermione agreed wholeheartedly, saying, "And I DON'T, and I can't, and that's just not me, and I can TRY, and I fail. Because I eventually just go [*tone becomes dejected, sighs*]." I encouraged Hermione, saying that the choices she offered were making a positive difference in her students' motivation; she replied, "I feel like it does" (Coaching 3).

***Setting knowledge goals.*** Hermione, in juxtaposition to Sara, often asked her students to read in response to a knowledge goal. That goal was sometimes general (e.g., asking Jamal, "What was something you learned in this book?", Observation 3) and sometimes specific (e.g., asking Immanuel to read to find out what mammals eat, Observation 1). She also set up situations where students read with a knowledge goal in mind that responded to something that happened during their reading; for example, when Immanuel struggled to understand the word "marsupial" in his assigned text, he and Hermione then located and read some online text to learn what marsupials were (Observation 1).

***Teacher talk and feedback: Considering student identity.*** Hermione's teacher talk reflected a consideration of students' identities and their positioning in her classroom, again indicating that Hermione was considering social dimensions of

students' engagement. She often emphasized students' intelligence; she used "brilliant" as a personal compliment on several occasions (Observation 2), telling students they "are" brilliant rather than saying that something they are doing is brilliant. She rarely noticed and named specific student actions and behaviors to provide feedback on them. She did do this with Jackie's decoding of a particular word, saying, "Nice! You recognized that 'bossy E' that time" (Observation 3), and she sometimes provided specific feedback on students' progress toward work completion (Observation 3). Hermione's talk also reflected consideration of both her and her students' identities. For example, she made a point of asking students about their preferred names and encouraging other students to use them (Observation 3). She used her talk to position herself as a learner alongside her students, such as using first-person plural pronouns regularly (e.g., "We need to look that up," Observation 1) and telling Immanuel, "You helped me learn something today" (Observation 1). She also admitted when she didn't know something or when she made a mistake (Observation 2).

Hermione frequently referenced her own experiences as a parent and how they informed her understanding of what might motivate or engage students with various learning profiles and needs. For example, she detailed how a video game called *Scribblenauts*, in which the player writes objects into existence by writing out what he or she wants to see into the game controller, proved "a great motivational tool" for Hermione's son (who has dysgraphia) to engage in writing (Coaching 2). This experience taught Hermione that immediate feedback, especially in a context with authentic consequences, could be motivating to students.

*Sensemaking around accessibility and differentiation.* Finally, Hermione, as a special education teacher, engaged in extensive provision of accommodations and modifications to ensure her students would be able to access and engage in learning, given their various exceptionalities. For example, Hermione considered whether to modify Jackie's writing assignment in the same way she modified Eliza's, drawing on her goals for Jackie's development of self-efficacy and independence:

Honestly at this point I'm not sure that I... really should be modifying cause it's a free write, and so I'm thinking that with her that... she should be writing what she wants to write, and then we're scaffolding it back and working on these, that we're working on those supports for her, for her to be more self-sufficient in her writing.

(Coaching 2)

### **Discussion**

In discussing the themes present in the results, I first delve more deeply into similarities and differences between the two cases, including complexity in how Sara and Hermione approached the creation of structure and the provision of opportunities for student choice and interest. I then offer three overarching themes: (1) that teachers hold varying understandings of motivation and engagement that are rooted in their own experiences and knowledge, and that teachers' instructional practice may differ accordingly, (2) that teachers' conceptualizations may shift over time, especially in response to conversations and collaborations with other teachers, and (3) that asking teachers about their conceptualizations in decontextualized ways may not reflect the true richness of their thinking and practice.

### **Looking Across the Two Cases**

**Similarities in the two teachers' instruction.** Both Sara and Hermione understood motivation and engagement as social, and incorporated practices reflecting this understanding. For example, both teachers considered issues of positioning in the ways they talked to students, often using their discourse to position themselves as learners and their students as knowers or experts. Both teachers also set goals for students' reading that were related to gaining knowledge or content understanding. Sara and Hermione personalized their instruction in a variety of ways that reflected their instructional priorities; Sara, in line with her emphasis on strategy instruction, personalized students CAFÉ strategy menus and independent reading boxes, while Hermione personalized students' knowledge goals and expectations regarding the format and nature of academic tasks, in line with her role as Special Education teacher. This high degree of personalization was also likely influenced by the overall ethos of the school context, which emphasized the unique strengths and needs of each child.

Importantly, results indicate that the teachers in this study were only just beginning to consider students' cultural repertoires of practice as resources for engagement in literacy. While Hermione did address culture in a particular way with her "nerdy T-shirts," culture was still not a central component of her instruction, and culture did not seem to be a lens through which Sara approached her instruction at all.

**Differences in the ways teachers approached the creation of routines and structures.** There is some complexity in the ways that teachers think about creating both structures that support student engagement and provide opportunities for student choice

and autonomy. Both Sara and Hermione used the word “structure” in discussing the types of routines they chose to implement in their classrooms. In Sara’s case, “structure” referred to her expectations for what students would do and when, and how she would hold them accountable for meeting her expectations; for example, by establishing a routine in which students would share the words they had added to their personal Word Collectors at the start of each Guided Reading group. Sometimes those routines facilitated student engagement, such as when the Word Collector routine supported social collaboration. However, at other times, those routines seemed to impede engagement, such as when Sara’s structures around goal setting directed students almost exclusively to setting goals related to strategy use over knowledge/content goals.

Hermione, on the other hand, talked about “structure” as something she did not have “the most” of. For Hermione, having “less” structure was a way of holding space for students’ choices and interests. Hermione was creating routines to support her students’ engagement, just as Sara did—but, Hermione perceived her instructional decisions and routines as a lack of structure rather than simply a different kind of structure. She also connected those choices back to her own engagement as a teacher, suggesting that to impose a high degree of structure would lead her to become discouraged and less successful. Teachers may hold different ideas about what the ideal balance of teacher-created “structure” or routine and student choice or autonomy might be; this ideal is influenced by teachers’ personal styles and their own engagement.

#### **Differences in ways in which teachers approached choice and interest.**

Complexity also exists in the ways in which Sara and Hermione thought about creating

opportunities for student choice and interest. For Hermione, these were both central priorities of her instructional approach, while for Sara they were areas either (a) she was actively working on expanding (in the case of choice) or (b) that were not as salient (in the case of interest). Both teachers controlled choice to a certain degree to make it a more sustainable practice in their classrooms and to ensure their goals for students were still being met even as they supported student autonomy. Hermione described this as “giving [students]... choices you’re okay with” (Coaching 3), while Sara used choice as a reward for completing expected tasks. Sara also expressed a desire and a plan to incorporate more student choice in service of engagement. The reasons for participants’ differential emphasis on interests are more complex. For Hermione, interest was so central largely due to her experiences as a parent, in which she witnessed firsthand the power of following her sons’ interests in supporting their engagement. While it is less clear why Sara did not consider student interest to be as salient to her instruction, it is possible that her careful consideration of students’ strategy development and sequencing of her instruction in those strategies could have taken precedence.

### **Overarching Themes**

**Varying understandings of and practices promoting motivation and engagement.** Perhaps the most straightforward finding of this study is that teachers may hold a variety of views on reading engagement and may prioritize different facets of engagement than their colleagues. Both Sara and Hermione held a view of motivation and engagement as social, and had a wide range of practices and approaches that they employed, or planned to employ, to support their students’ literacy motivation and

engagement. These included: building relationships with students, capitalizing on students' interests, providing high-quality strategy instruction, setting goals for both content learning and strategy use, providing opportunities for student choice and agency, creating contexts for collaboration, and using teacher talk that positioned students as literate knowers. However, the practices that each teacher prioritized in her instruction varied, based on the different knowledges and experiences each brought to the table. Sara, for example, drew on her experiences as a first-grade teacher in constructing her goals for incorporating engagement-supportive practices, such as social collaboration. She knew from her first-grade experience that collaboration was both possible and beneficial for students. Sara drew on her knowledge of her current third graders, however, in thinking through what collaboration might look like (e.g., having buddy reading but with Sara selecting the partners), or when it might be appropriate to introduce opportunities for collaboration to her students. Hermione, on the other hand, drew on her experiences as a parent to describe why tasks that provide authentic contexts for reading and writing, such as the Scribblenauts game that would allow her son to write new objects into existence within the world of the game, are motivating for children.

**Conceptualizations and practices as malleable over time.** Teachers also learn from their colleagues, including about different facets of motivation and engagement. The clearest example of this was Sara's commentary on how she, in speaking with Sheila, learned something about the role of interpersonal dynamics in shaping student engagement. In our conversation about Hermione's "nerdy T-shirts," she told me that her former mentor teacher particularly admired this practice and "wish[ed] she'd thought of

it” (Coaching 3). These instances indicate that teachers’ own conceptualizations of motivation and engagement may change over time and in conversation with others, and that is therefore worthwhile to facilitate opportunities for such conversations through avenues such as professional development or communities of practice.

**Decontextualized assessments of teachers’ conceptualizations as insufficient.**

Simply asking teachers to articulate their views about constructs as complex as motivation and engagement in the abstract, as I did when I asked teachers to construct their mind maps, may not get at how teachers think about the constructs in practice. In other words, asking about constructs in relatively decontextualized ways may not reflect the richness of what teachers actually know and do. For example, Hermione’s indicators of motivation and engagement from her mind map were all internal to the learner (i.e., inside the student’s head); while work completion is an observable behavior, there is no way for a teacher to know through observation if the student has a purpose or reason for doing so. She also did not address the social or the cultural in either of her maps. However, in her instruction and in the views she articulated during our coaching conversations, Hermione’s understandings of these concepts went beyond the mind of the individual learner to also include the teacher-student relationship, expressions of student enthusiasm for learning and student agency, and some consideration of the role of culture in supporting student engagement. While Hermione’s practice of wearing the T-shirts that aligned with students’ popular culture affinities may not conceptualize the role of culture in the same ways as sociocultural theorists and literacy researchers do (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lee, 2007), she still was considering culture in ways her colleagues (past

and present) were not. In other words, while Hermione thought of reading engagement through a sociocultural lens, these views were not captured by a task that asked her to articulate her thoughts in the absence of concrete contexts involving real students and real practices. Sara, on the other hand, mentioned social collaboration in her mind maps (i.e., students have conversations with each other about work) but expanded greatly on this topic when given the opportunity to engage in sensemaking around how collaboration was and could be operationalized in her classroom.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited in several important ways. First is participant reactivity; that is, participants may have considered both my role as coach and the fact that they were participating in a research study when considering their responses to prompts and questions, and may have modified those responses accordingly. I attempted to minimize this potential by establishing and maintaining clear expectations for confidentiality, as well as defining my role to exclude any evaluative responsibilities.

Finally, it is important to note that the results of this case study cannot be generalized to teachers in any educational context, including to other public charter school contexts in the United States. The understandings of reading motivation and engagement participants held, and the ways in which they enacted their instruction to support reading motivation and engagement, were deeply influenced by the context in which they taught and may have shifted over time as changes occurred in their context and in their own experiences as educators. However, this case study does provide insight into participants' conceptualizations and instructional practices at the time of this study,

and findings may inform future research and design of teacher education and professional development experiences.

### **Implications**

Previous research has identified a variety of ways teachers might support students' motivations for and engagement in reading, including ways teachers can build on students' social and cultural repertoires of practice to promote literacy engagement. This case study examined how primary-grade teachers themselves think about reading motivation and engagement, including the extent to which teachers conceptualize engagement as social and cultural, and what sorts of practices (established or novel) they use to support their students' engagement in reading. The findings of this study offer implications for future research and for teacher education and professional development.

### **Implications for Research**

The findings of this study indicate that research on teachers' conceptualizations might paint the richest, most accurate portrait when teachers' thoughts and understandings are solicited in situated, contextualized ways. Researchers are encouraged to couch conversations about complex and abstract constructs such as motivation and engagement within the classroom lives of teachers and the students with whom they learn every day. The findings of this study suggest that the literacy coaching cycle may be a fruitful context in which to conduct such conversations.

Additional research on teachers' conceptualizations of reading engagement is needed, particularly across a variety of contexts (e.g., public, charter, and independent schools) and grade levels and with teachers of a range of cultural backgrounds and

professional experiences.

While many of the engagement-supportive practices employed by the teachers in this study have been supported in the literature, the particular ways in which teachers enacted them proved creative, responsive, and unique. Hermione's practice of wearing "nerdy T-shirts" aligned with students' interests represents a practice currently undocumented in the literature; while this practice may not suit every teacher's style, it still represents an important contribution that could only have been made by working directly with and learning from practitioners. More research should explore the particular ways in which teachers design and take up engagement-supportive practices and adapt them to their contexts, as well as any additional practices teachers might devise to support student engagement that are as of yet not documented in the literature, and disseminate these ideas for a practitioner audience.

### **Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development**

Teacher educators and professional development providers should consider how they might best support teachers in growing their capacity to consider students' social and cultural repertoires of practice as resources for engagement in literacy. This may be particularly important when teachers may not engage in the same social and cultural practices as their students. The teachers in this study also learned from each other and from the other participants in the larger study. Teacher educators and professional development providers should design learning contexts for teachers that engage teachers in productive collaborations with one another, so that professional knowledge and creativity might be freely shared.

## **Conclusion**

This qualitative case study of two third grade teachers in an urban, public charter school examined how those teachers conceptualized reading motivation and engagement and how they made sense of those conceptualizations, as well as how they enacted literacy instruction to promote student motivation and engagement. The goal of the study was to identify what teachers of the primary grades currently think about and do regarding reading motivation and engagement, with particular attention to the ways teachers might consider engagement as social and/or cultural in nature. Data sources included classroom observations, transcripts of individual literacy coaching conversations, and individual “mind maps” created during a PD session on reading motivation and engagement. Analyses applied concepts from the extant theoretical and empirical literature on reading motivation and engagement, as well as the literature on teacher sensemaking.

Findings indicate that teachers held complex understandings of reading motivation and engagement that were informed by their experiences as teachers and parents, their knowledge of their students and the context, their pedagogical knowledge, and how they understand relationships between themselves, their students, and other professionals in their context. Importantly, the complexity of teachers’ conceptualizations was not adequately assessed by the decontextualized task of creating a mind map; complexity was reflected more richly in the coaching conversations, which were situated in teachers’ current and planned instruction. Teachers understood engagement to be tied to students’ social identities and practices, and created instructional practices that

reflected that understanding through the lens of the central principles by which teachers organized their literacy instruction. Teachers enacted a wide array of practices in support of students' motivations for and engagement in literacy, including practices not yet documented in the extant research literature. Finally, teachers were just beginning to consider students' cultural repertoires of practice as potential resources for reading engagement; this represents an important area for future teacher education and professional development.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Overarching Research Questions and Rationale

This dissertation study explored the following overarching research questions, over a series of three articles:

1. *How have reading motivation and engagement been conceptualized in the research literature?*
2. *How do educators, particularly teachers of the primary grades, conceptualize reading motivation and engagement? What sources of information do they draw upon to construct their understandings?*
3. *How do educators, particularly teachers of the primary grades, enact literacy instruction in support of student motivation and engagement?*

These three topics represent important areas for investigation for a variety of reasons.

First, engagement and motivation are complex constructs that have been conceptualized in the literature in multiple, nuanced ways; mapping these conceptualizations allows for a deeper understanding of the theories underlying each, and allows researchers to draw on work from different traditions in ways that are both pragmatic and informed.

Understanding how teachers and other practitioners conceptualize reading motivation and engagement is important because teacher beliefs influence their instructional practice; teacher educators and professional development providers need to know where teachers are in their thinking to design experiences for teacher professional learning that will be both accessible and expansive. Including teachers of the primary grades as participants is particularly important because they represent an underresearched group in the field of

reading engagement, particularly in research that takes a repertoire of practice approach (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Finally, understanding what practitioners do to support reading motivation and engagement is vital because teachers may use established practices in creative ways, or may design practices that are not yet documented and that should be made available to others.

In bringing these three articles together, I begin by consciously revisiting the narrative from the introductory chapter and sharing some of my lessons learned on being a White researcher who takes a sociocultural perspective on reading engagement, and on teaching and learning more broadly. I then offer a summary of the major findings and implications across the three papers, as well as the limitations of the dissertation, before concluding with a brief explication of how this work has shaped my research agenda as I continue my academic career.

### **What I Learned: On Being a White Researcher Working Explicitly with Issues of Culture**

The experiences leading to the dissolution of my original study and all the work in which I engaged following those experiences have taught me much about what it means to be a White researcher working with sociocultural theories and facilitating explicit conversations around race, cultural practices, teaching, and learning.

First and foremost, I need to be mindful of my privilege when doing this work. When collaborating with others, I need to make my intentions in talking about race and culture extremely clear and explicit and engage in intentional, ongoing work to develop and maintain trust. This careful attention to positioning and relationship-building must

come before anything else. At the time of the original study, I felt I had done this. However, upon reflection I realized that I had done so with some participants and collaborators (i.e., the DCI and certain teachers) but not sufficiently with all participants, and that I had not conceptualized this trust-building process as something that would require constant care and attention throughout the research, not simply at the outset.

The legacy of research that essentializes and exploits nondominant communities is strong—it requires little thought to call to mind a host of examples ranging from the exploitation of Henrietta Lacks in medical research to educational studies that locate differences in academic achievement in the backgrounds of “at risk” students, rather than in the educational contexts that fail to serve and sustain nondominant students and their communities. I must acknowledge this legacy in my work, and make careful efforts to demonstrate how I resist such harmful practices not just in my words, but in my actions. I also need to be mindful of the risk-taking that is inherent in conversations about race and culture, particularly in the current political climate, and build in safe exit points for those who do not wish to engage in such conversations for reasons of personal or professional vulnerability.

Second, I need to be more aware of differences in norms between academic contexts and practice contexts. This was one of the suggestions made to me by the DCI and the principal at the termination of the original study, and it is an insightful one that is also supported by the literature on collaboration between researchers and practitioners (Penuel, 2007). The DCI in particular, who holds a doctorate in education and is therefore familiar with both contexts, highlighted how conversations around race and culture occur

more regularly in academic contexts, where people are often engaged with the work and ideas of scholars such as Lisa Delpit, Victoria Purcell-Gates, and Gloria Ladson-Billings, among others, in ways that are not always possible in practice contexts. Even my focus on the content of the article over the title is indicative of my socialization into the norms of academic contexts. I tend to gloss over titles as they are not how I remember articles: instead of remembering articles by their titles, I remember them by the author and the year, as they are cited in academic writing. However, this may not be the case for someone who spends most of their time in practice contexts. In my future work, including my own writing as well as my selection of resources to use when working with preservice and inservice teachers, I need to be careful not to create or cite splashy or attention-getting titles that essentialize the identities of the subjects of those articles. I need to consider article titles, not just content, when putting articles on syllabi or when sharing them in professional development settings.

In the narrative tradition of social work, there is a way of thinking about critique that conceptualizes it, not as a judgment or an attack, but as a gift from a person experiencing some form of oppression to another person who may, wittingly or unwittingly, be participating in that oppression (Reynolds, 2014, 2018). My experiences in conducting and closing my original dissertation study offer several examples of how the critique I was given by my collaborators was, in fact, a gift. In telling me how my choice of article caused her pain, Clara gave me a gift. In explaining how she thought I could do better in future, the DCI gave me a gift. In telling me that I was operating according to the norms of academia instead of those of the context in which I was

working, the principal gave me a gift. These gifts helped me become a better researcher and collaborator with practitioners by making me more aware and critical of the unspoken assumptions that underlie some existing work, and that I need to actively resist in my own thinking and work with researchers and practitioners.

### **Considering Literacy Engagement Through Social and Cultural Lenses: Summary of Findings and Implications**

Taken together, the findings of the three articles illuminate how researchers and practitioners have conceptualized literacy motivation and engagement, especially through social and cultural lenses. There is much complexity in the ways in which concepts from sociocultural theory have begun to permeate both the research literature and the conceptualizations of practitioners. Some recent literature on engagement that originates in paradigms focusing on the individual mind attempts to apply sociocultural theory without changing the unit of analysis. This sometimes leads to: (a) reducing social and cultural practices to a factor of the learner or a box added to an existing model, or (b) using race and linguistic proficiency as a proxy for culture.

This factor-based approach to thinking about the sociocultural is sometimes present in the ways practitioners think about the social and cultural dimensions of reading engagement; for example, the PBL focus group participants talked about how English Language Learners might experience a PBL curriculum in ways that referenced students' cultural practices and experiences as (a) somewhat monolithic and (b) often different from the experiences expected by the culture of school. At other times, culture was present in practitioners' conceptualizations as references to popular culture, or not at all,

as was the case in Hermione and Sara's instruction, respectively.

However, another common theme across both empirical articles is teachers' genuine concern for students' success, both in their classrooms and beyond. Teachers are deeply caring professionals who work tirelessly to consider students' strengths, needs, personalities, and interests in crafting literacy instruction that will promote student engagement. They have already begun to consider how students' cultural practices and experiences might support students' engagement and success in academic tasks, and engage in frequent and deep sensemaking around how they can support dimensions of engagement such as social collaboration and choice in their practice. That sensemaking often includes reflections on the role of structure and routine in the classroom, which raises the question of what it might look like to support teachers in thinking of creating space for collaboration and choice as a kind of structure in itself. The findings of this dissertation suggest that there is much to be done to make authentic and integrated ways of considering the cultural repertoires and social practices of communities, such as Lee and colleagues' (2007; 2004) Cultural Modeling project, accessible to practitioners so they might more regularly reflect such deep considerations in their instruction. It is my firm belief that teachers will embrace these ideas, if introduced to them in careful ways that meet teachers where they are, preserve teacher agency, and make explicit how a repertoires of practice approach differs from the essentializing perspectives they may be more familiar with as part of their daily work in U.S. schools.

### **Going Forward**

In my own future research, I plan to collaborate with practitioners to support them in leveraging their students' social and cultural repertoires of practice in service of literacy engagement. My first step will be to translate the findings of this dissertation into articles for researcher and practitioner audiences. I plan to conduct more research on teachers' conceptualizations and practices, both with teachers who are members of nondominant communities and with White teachers. To ensure my work is conducted ethically and equitably, I plan to consider questions of power and positioning throughout, and to utilize methodologies designed to position practitioners as true collaborators, rather than participants, such as design-based research, design-based implementation research, and co-design (Fishman, Penuel, Allan, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2013; Penuel, 2007; Penuel, Coburn, & Gallagher, 2013). These methodologies also take as a starting point the problems of practice identified by practitioners themselves, meaning that my research agenda will need to be flexible and responsive to the local contexts in which I land.

I also encourage the field, in taking up these and similar questions, to ensure that the perspectives of teachers of color and of other nondominant communities are represented in this work; researchers and practitioners in positions of privilege have much to learn from our colleagues. However, I also recognize that the majority of teachers (particularly of the elementary grades) are White, and that this is unlikely to change as quickly as one would like; working alongside White teachers who do this work well may help other White teachers to see how they can also do it, even if they don't share the same cultural practices as their students. In short, collaborating with a diverse group of

practitioners would help ensure that we, as a field, can make concrete, practice-informed recommendations for other practitioners seeking to learn about and leverage their students' repertoires of practice in service of literacy engagement.

### APPENDIX A: PHASE MATRIX

Phase	I. Traditional motivational constructs	II. Updated motivational constructs	III. Locating engagement within the individual learner	IV. Considering the wider classroom context	V. Drawing on social repertoires	VI. Considering the social, cultural, and historical repertoires of communities
How does work in this field...						
... understand and discuss the social (if at all)?	Considers social interaction as one source of information about the self	Considers social interaction as one source of information about the self	Considers social interaction as one source or dimension of individuals' motivations for reading	Considers the social in the context of the classroom community Touches on teacher-student relationship, but not deeply	Considers relationships as central	Considers relationships as central Also considers social in terms of society
... understand and discuss the cultural (if at all)?	Culture as an object for critique (SDT) Other theories do not consider culture much at all	Culture as a variable or factor of the individual Culture as an object for critique (SDT)	Uses race, ethnicity, and language proficiency as proxies for culture	Uses race, ethnicity, and language proficiency as proxies for culture	Culture is considered on a deeper level (not proxy), but it is not central	Culture is central to all work done in this field
... understand and discuss the	Does not consider the historical, aside from perhaps	Does not consider the historical, aside from	Does not consider the historical	Does not consider the historical	Looks at the history of the classroom	Long term, historical traditions of

historical (if at all)?	thinking about an individual's personal history as a source of information about the self	perhaps thinking about an individual's personal history as a source of information about the self			community across period of a few years	communities are considered important
... think about and use texts?	Texts are not used	Texts are not used	Texts are imagined within the context of survey questions	Texts are often a mix of trade books on content-area topics, student-selected texts, and sometimes leveled readers, teacher read-alouds also used	Texts are often contemporary, student-selected, and multicultural, teacher read-alouds also used	Text sets blend contemporary, student-selected texts and texts within historical traditions, cultural relevance of text is key
... construct and make use of tasks?	Tasks are often conducted in labs	Tasks are often conducted in labs, also real-world settings?	Tasks are imagined within the context of survey questions	Tasks are designed to be authentic and be stimulating for learners, as well as connect disciplines Frequent formalized strategy instruction	Tasks are largely student-driven, lots of discussion Some formalized strategy instruction	Tasks ask students to engage in complex analysis, drawing on their cultural repertoires, lots of discussion

... consider evidence of reading motivation and/or engagement?	Reading is not the subject of this research	Reading is not the subject of this research	Results of Likert-scale surveys	Reading more often and more widely, gaining new knowledge from text	Finding personal relevance in text, talking about texts with others	Finding personal relevance in text, engaging in deep analysis
... consider what it means to read?	Reading is not the subject of this research	Reading is not the subject of this research	Reading is often thought about independent of context, or context is reduced to in-school vs out-of-school	Reading is done for the purpose of learning something about the world	Reading is done for the purpose of learning something about life, exploring human experience	Reading is done for the purpose of learning something about life, exploring human experience in a critical way, connecting past, present, and future
... define engagement?	Engagement is “multidimensional and involving aspects of students’ emotion, behavior (participation, academic learning time), and cognition” (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 3). Typologies that classify	Deakin Crick (2012) conceptualizes engagement as “a complex system including a range of interrelated factors internal and external to the learner, in place and in time, which shape his or her engagement with	Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) define reading engagement by describing the behavior of engaged readers: “engaged readers in the classroom or elsewhere coordinate their strategies and knowledge (cognition) within a community of literacy (social) in order to fulfill their personal goals, desires, and intentions (motivation)” (p. 404).	Ivey & Johnston (2015): engaged reading of narratives influences readers’ social imaginations and social behavior (Kaufman & Libby, 2012; Lysaker et al., 2011). From this	Do not use the term “engagement” with frequency	

	engagement as: (1) academic, (2) behavioral, (3) cognitive, (4) affective, and (5) emotional.	learning opportunities” (p. 657); engagement is embodied social participation.		perspective, engaged reading involves not only skills and strategies and knowledge construction, it implicates the socio-emotional (and thus moral) life of both community and individual. (p. 301)	
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## **APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**

*Note: Questions that were excluded from the analysis in their entirety have also been excluded from this presentation of the protocol.*

### **Part I: Introduction to the Rationale for Developing a First-Grade PBL Program**

The interviewer will deliver a presentation on the rationale for developing a comprehensive first-grade curriculum heavily focused on PBL and share central tenets of the approach to PBL and integrated instruction. Interviewees are encouraged to ask questions throughout the presentation.

### **Part II: Invitation to Respond to the Presentation**

1. We'd like to start by hearing your initial responses to this presentation, both positive and negative.
  - a. What, if anything, immediately struck you as valuable about our initiative to develop a first-grade curriculum framework?
  - b. What, if anything, immediately struck you as problematic about this initiative to develop a curriculum framework?
  - c. What do you see as opportunities or advantages of this initiative to develop this curriculum framework?
  - d. What do you see as challenges or drawbacks of this initiative to develop this curriculum framework?
  - e. Were there other things that intrigued you or that you were wondering as you were listening to the presentation? If so, what?

If participants do not respond specifically to the project-based nature of our approach, please ask the following question:

- 1 plus: One thing we'd like to talk about is how the initiative to develop a curriculum framework addresses, or fails to address, your school or districts' goals for first-grade students.
- a. How would you characterize your goals for first graders?
  - b. In what ways might the proposed PBL curriculum framework help students meet those goals?
  - c. Are there goals that you are concerned the curriculum framework would not address, or might conflict with?

2. We are expecting that some first-grade goals would be addressed inside projects and some would be addressed outside of projects, but reinforced inside projects. For example, certain phonics instruction might occur outside of projects and just be reinforced during projects.
  - a. What do you think of this approach in general?
  - b. Which goals for first-grade learning do you think should be addressed primarily inside projects?
  - c. Which outside of projects?
3. Consider the current programs that you're using for reading. How would you see the project-based learning work as replacing, supplementing, or possibly conflicting with, those programs?
  - a. What do you most like about the reading program?
  - b. What most frustrates or concerns you?
  - c. Do you think this program would be a good one for addressing standards outside of projects, or are there other resources or curricula you think we should look at for doing that?
  - d. What supports would you need to make connections between project-based units and stand-alone reading programs?
4. Consider the current programs that you're using for writing. How would you see the project-based learning work as replacing, supplementing, or possibly conflicting with, those programs?
  - a. What do you most like about the writing program?
  - b. What most frustrates or concerns you?
  - c. Do you think this program would be a good one for addressing standards outside of projects, or are there other resources or curricula you think we should look at for doing that?
  - d. What supports would you need to make connections between project-based units and stand-alone writing programs?
5. How do you address classroom management/behavior support in your first-grade classrooms?
6. We're also interested in getting your feedback on our plans to integrate social-emotional learning into the projects and units.
  - a. How do you currently address social-emotional learning in your curriculum?

- b. What do you think of the idea to integrate it in the units? What would it take to make this idea work?
  - c. Finally, we have considered social-emotional learning curricula that would be completely outside of projects, such as interventions that have been developed to help children with friendship skills or to deal with strong emotions. Is that something you would support? Why or why not?
7. We'd like to hear about how you think that our initiative to develop a first-grade curriculum framework with a heavy emphasis on project-based learning would meet the needs of your students.
- a. Are there students it would benefit?
  - b. Are there students it would neglect or leave behind?
  - c. In particular, how do you think it would meet the needs of, or fail to meet the needs of, lower-achieving students?
8. As you know, an important feature is the plan to integrate different content areas in instruction.
- a. Have you ever pursued content integration? Can you talk a bit about what was successful and challenging about this work?
  - b. Do you think content integration is feasible in your school/district? What would it take to make it work?
9. What changes would you suggest improve the feasibility of implementation and sustainability of this program?
10. What kinds of professional development and support would teachers need to implement this program?
11. Any other reactions to this initiative to develop a curriculum framework that you would like to share?

### APPENDIX C: CODE BOOK

Code	Definition	No. Groups (out of 6), No. References	Representative Example(s)
Phases I and II: Theories of motivation from educational psychology			
Motivation (general)	Instances in which participant makes a general reference to learners' motivation, defined as, "the mechanisms that determine the focus, intensity, and persistence of an individual's behavior" (Miller & Faircloth, 2008, p. 311).	4 groups, 7 references	And I think this would motivate them a lot more and they would be a lot more excited about learning and about doing their work. -Adams
Intrinsic motivation for academic task	Instances in which participant describes learner(s) engaging in academic task (e.g., reading a text) for the purposes of enjoyment or gaining new information.	3 groups, 4 references	Sort of related to that, just with the UBD that I'm using right now, it's on animals and habitats. Umm, and I think it's an incredibly motivating one. You know, one of my kids read a book about sharks. That was like the best day ever for him. -Maple/Rockport  Having a goal and divvying up jobs according to who's good-good at what and them feeling good at it or you know and wanting to do it because they're good at it. -Washington/Jefferson
Extrinsic motivation for academic task	Instances in which participant describes learner(s) engaging in an academic task (e.g., reading a text) for the purposes of recognition, grades, or social approval.	5 groups, 5 references	I think it might um motivate some students to come to school. Um if they're doing something exceptionally exciting for the project that day you know. Like they might put the the pressure on a parent to say you know I have to be there because either a group is depending on me or we're doing X,

			<p>Y, and Z today and I've been waiting to do that. So there's a possibility to help them reach their attendance goals. -Washington/Jefferson</p> <p>I think the biggest thing for me is incentive. Like we have in my class I give them tickets if they're doing the right thing. And then we raffle off. And it's like a huge motivator. We have a compliment cup. And once they get a hundred compliments they get to choose what reward they want. -Adams</p>
Behavioral engagement	Instances in which participant describes learner(s) engagement, either actual or imagined, in an academic task; indicators include attendance, putting forth effort, time on task, homework completion, preparedness, and class participation.	5 groups, 19 references	<p>I just look to see if they're engaged in whatever is going on at that particular time. Karen's up doing a lesson, and they're all looking that way, and they're not under the table, and they're not there sharpening their pencil, you know they're engaged. I can't really know if they are, but if it looks like they are, then I give them a plus. -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p> <p>I think it might um motivate some students to come to school. Um if they're doing something exceptionally exciting for the project that day you know. Like they might put the the pressure on a parent to say you know I have to be there because either a group is depending on me or we're doing X, Y, and Z today and I've been waiting to do that. So there's a possibility to help them reach their attendance goals. -Washington/Jefferson</p>
Cognitive engagement	Instances in which participant describes learner(s) engagement, either actual or imagined, in an academic task; indicators include valuation of	6 groups, 11 references	<p>Respondent: Maybe it gives them a reason to care about reading. Gives them a reason to care about math. It connects it and motivates them that way, versus just this is the sound that these make. Some kids enjoy it but a lot of them—</p>

	the task, self-regulation, ownership, and goal setting.		<p>Respondent: Naming words off of a list. Respondent: Right. Respondent: Gives them a purpose. -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p> <p>And, I think definitely some of the taking ownership for their learning can definitely be addressed with this; umm where you're setting, they're setting the goal and have ownership of that goal and are working toward that for some end result. -Maple/Rockport</p>
Emotional engagement	Instances in which participant describes learner(s) engagement, either actual or imagined, in an academic task; indicators include interest, enjoyment, enthusiasm, satisfaction, pride.	6 groups, 17 references	<p>Yeah, the songs are motivating for kids. They use a lot of the grammar songs and sing in first grade, so I'll pull up the verb one, and they're all singing it already. I was like, "Awesome!" They're like, "Can we do it again and dance?" I was like, "Sure you can! Go ahead and sing that verbs are action words." Respondent: Right! Respondent: He's going to keep doing it at lunch, dance. -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p> <p>When they feel so independent when they got that word that they've been stuck on all week and they finally got it and they run up and want to read it to you. -Lincoln/Silverleaf</p> <p>I just think they are so much more excited about it. You know, to see them excited about learning especially these kids that have all this other baggage that they bring with them. You know? To see them really like forget about all of that or a few minutes and engage in like and really be thrilled about it, it's worth it. -Maple/Rockport</p>

Agentic engagement	Instances in which participant describes learners' active roles in influencing their learning contexts	1 group, 1 reference	I have one who's super smart but he'll just sit there and talk and then he'll move to my chair and he'll talk, and if you move him somewhere else and—he can do all the things, but because he's bored he's distracting everyone else. -Ridgeview/Eastwood
Passive engagement (Deakin Crick, 2012)	Instances in which participant describes learners' engagement, either actual or imagined, for the purposes of conforming to a school culture.	3 groups, 5 references	I think first grade you're really learning how to be students and how to participate in a school environment. And, if we, like you were saying, can motivate them and help them make those connections at the start, then they don't have that school anxiety and they want to be there and they, you know, could be leaders rather than intimidated to come to school. -Maple/Rockport
Deep engagement (Deakin Crick, 2012)	Instances in which participant describes learners' engagement, either actual or imagined, as requiring a deep and personal commitment to learning.	1 group, 1 reference	I don't want to kill their love of reading. -Maple/Rockport
Goal setting	Instances in which participant describes setting goals with students (this code does NOT include goals teachers may have for their students that are implicit or not articulated to the student, such as having the goal that they can work with someone without crying).	4 groups, 5 references	And, I think definitely some of the taking ownership for their learning can definitely be addressed with this; umm where you're setting, they're setting the goal and have ownership of that goal and are working toward that for some end result. -Maple/Rockport  14:09 T: I was thinking just that the full engagement of the kids' ownership of what it is they're trying to accomplish. Having a goal and divvying up jobs according to who's good—good at what and them feeling good at it or you know and wanting to do it because they're good at it. -Washington/Jefferson

			<p>Respondent: Because the group I have this year, there's some in it who still can't read for 30 minutes. Part of that is their reading level, too, though. Some groups are better. Last year's group was great at it. They could do it for a long period of time and do wonderful. It really varies. Respondent: I think that when we do develop that, a very deliberate set of directions or... Respondent: Modeling. Respondent: Modeling and really letting the teacher know that, in order to get to the end goal. Multiple Speakers: Yeah. Respondent: - you will have to do this. Respondent: Multiple times throughout the day. Respondent: Starting really small and now you're gonna work on this project for 30 seconds. -Riverway/Mountainview</p>
Situational interest	Instances in which participant describes learners' interest in a particular topic at a particular time.	2 groups, 3 references	<p>I had used the um Written Expression in the summer school. And just taught that. So I could pick the topic that fit the writing skill. And made it interesting for the kids because it's summer school so let's write about fireworks and Fourth of July you know. And to use um description--the expanders or descriptors. And that worked out very well. -Adams</p>
Individual interest	Instances in which participant describes learners' personal interest in a topic that is sustained over the long term.	4 groups, 6 references	<p>It would be great to survey the students at the beginning of the year, see what they're interested in, then take that. Like having some type of--how do I say it--something being able to make some choices as to what—  T: Which projects we would choose—  T: --which projects we are going to do. Based on like surveying the students. So maybe one year you have a class of students who love ocean animals. And like maybe that's something. Where versus the next year they're not interested in that. But they're more interested in something that involves</p>

			<p>engineering. You know what I mean. It would be great to have the students guide the learning. Perfect world. -Adams</p> <p>The research--when I was in school you were told You are writing about this--so they have more flexibility to choose what they want and when you're writing about something that is close to you that you love you're going to write better. -Lincoln/Silverleaf</p>
Need for competence	From self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000): instances in which participant describes learners as needing to feel efficacious in their desired activities or interactions; in other words, instances in which participant describes learner(s) belief that they can accomplish (or learn to accomplish) a given academic task.	4 groups, 13 references	<p>Even something as simple as that gives that common framework, a common language, it just gives kids some security, especially those kids that struggle because they still know okay, I can follow along this format. -Riverway/Mountainview</p> <p>Respondent: It's a nice way to showcase success. [Inaudible 1:43:30] is really good at drawing pictures. I'm really good at writing sentences. Together, we create something wonderful. ...</p> <p>Respondent: I think that's part of it. Kids don't wanna lead because they're afraid of not knowing— Multiple Speakers: Mm-hmm. Respondent: - the answer and looking stupid because they don't know it. -Riverway/Mountainview</p> <p>So I think it really--if you're doing project based and you're getting kids into something that they're good at I think it can really help them to flourish and then show other people that [98:43 T: Their self-esteem] you don't--and it also lets me know hey you might not read as well as I do but you have your strengths. -Lincoln/Silverleaf</p>

Need for relatedness	From self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000): instances in which participant describes learners as needing to feel that their relationships are caring and supportive.	1 group. 1 reference	T: Some of them just need that conferring time with you just to have that time. Because they don't get that time any other place you know to tell you about that favorite book. 58:21 T: Yeah a little connection. 58:23 T: That is the only time that they read. 58:24 T: Yeah or even have someone even care about them reading. -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Need for autonomy	From self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000): instances in which participant describes learners as needing to feel that their behavior is self-endorsed.	3 groups, 5 references	T: Well with the projects there's a lot more like responsibility that they have to take on. [42:58 T: Independence] Independence which they truly like. And I don't think we allow them enough. -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Participant critiques student culture	Instances in which participant critiques student culture. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) holds that cultures which do not support needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy can and should be subject to outside critique.	3 groups, 4 references	<p>The parents I think, think a lot of times think that the child is just writing all of that. Then, if they start—it doesn't work well, when they start to write their own sentences cuz the parents comes and circles everything or X's things out and tells them that they've done it wrong. Then, when I ask them if they wanna draw a picture or write more sentences, they always wanna draw a picture because mom is just gonna X out everything I've written. -Riverway/Mountainview</p> <p>But--and the reality of it is the lower kids are really going to benefit from it too and they're going to be able to take it I think farther than the higher kids because they're going to take it home to where it's expected at most of the higher kids' homes to where as the lower kids--I had a mom Wow they're saying please and thank you a lot. And I was like--just looked at her and I was like That's not expected at your house? And she said Well--and and it wasn't. It wasn't expected at their</p>

			house to where as at our house You're please and thank you for everything. So it really I automatically thought and that was a lower academic kid. So working with--I think would really help the lower ones as well. -Lincoln/Silverleaf
Disengagement	Instances in which participant describes learners as disengaged from the work and life of the classroom.	4 groups, 7 references	Even my first grade, they're really good at getting information and not that that's a bad thing so much as they're just using someone else's information, but they learn skills on how not to do the work very early on whether they don't want to, or whether they're not capable of it. There are two different issues within that issue. -Riverway/Mountainview
<b>Phase III: Locating engagement within the individual learner</b>			
Motivation as related to achievement	Instances in which participant draws a direct connection between learners' motivation/engagement and their academic success, whether in general or on a particular task. This code is used for connections going from motivation/engagement to achievement (i.e., if you're motivated, you will learn more).  Note- general statements about students "benefiting" or "flourishing" from a PBL approach are EXCLUDED from this code, because of the	5 groups, 13 references	And I know there are are some studies research out there that says the more connected the curriculum is for those students the more likely they are to learn from it, really engage in it, and truly understand it. -Washington/Jefferson  Comprehension. Reading comprehension might improve. If they are reading something they're interested in versus a silly phonics reader that doesn't make any sense. -Adams

	<p>design of the original interview questions which specifically probed for which students might benefit. To qualify for this, participants must state that the student will learn more, read better, improve language skills, etc.</p>		
<p>Motivation or engagement as varying by child characteristics</p>	<p>Instances in which participant indicates that motivation or engagement might vary by learner gender, age, ability, race, linguistic proficiency, or other categories mentioned by participants (even if they are not reflected in the literature). This will be coded if the participant talks about sociocultural background in the “factor” or “variable” sense instead of as a resource. This code is also used for connections between current achievement and motivation (i.e., if you’re good at something, you’re more likely to engage in that kind of task).</p>	<p>6 groups, 65 references</p>	<p>I think about those kids that in your classroom. There’s a one or two in the back, like the traditional just write the words out and do it to learn it, and they don’t get it, but if they were actually out there in their community, they saw the things, they knew they were gonna talk to the everything’s the real world. The kids that can comprehend in first grade but can’t read, you know what I mean? Those kids, I think this would be—I know a special little guy like that. This would be exactly what they need. The traditional way we do school is hard for them. School gets hard for that kid. I don’t know. That’s what I have in my mind. -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p> <p>We do projects with boys and I’ll tell you a little story about it. I did an invention convention, where they developed their own hat and then they made the invention in a convention, but they boys—wow, they were building stuff and it was cool. That’s not the way ] in the real world. We know they go through things like that, so I don’t know. I just think there’s this—could be the way of engaging them and keeping them to school and hopefully. -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p>

Phase IV: Considering the wider classroom context

<p>Autonomy support</p>	<p>Instances in which participant indicates that choice or other forms of autonomy support might benefit learners. This code also includes talk about first graders learning to work and read independently.</p>	<p>6 groups, 17 references</p>	<p>I mean even they have to learn how to work on their own for a small chunk of time by the end of the year.                      -Riverway/Mountainview</p> <p>Respondent: The other part of it is putting the limits on what they write about. Especially the boy writers. We talked about this at the staff meetings. You get these boy writers that—they want to write about violence and blowing things up and bugs. For some reason people don't let them do that. Some people allow it and let 'em do the things than others, but—there's this idea, and I don't know where it comes from and we talked about this in staff meeting—I've never told them they can't do it. I've never sent the kid home because of something they wrote in their journal. There's this, I think fear, that kids can't write about that. Why not? You turn them off right away.                      Respondent: Exactly. You're censoring them at age 6 or 7.                      -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p> <p>To go off there I think it's with choice--the program that we use too. It's--they get to choose what small moment they want to write about. They get to choose what they're good at for their how to. Um I know we do--they get--they can choose write a letter to their kindergarten teacher for a friend and then we'll send it over to them or they can choose to write it to somebody else. The research--when I was in school you were told You are writing about this--so they have more flexibility to choose what they want and when you're writing about something that is close to you that you love you're going to write better.                      -Lincoln/Silverleaf</p>
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<p>Content or knowledge goals (Note- closely related to “stimulating or authentic tasks”)</p>	<p>Instances in which participant indicates that provision of goals for learning related to gaining new information about a particular content or topic might benefit learners (e.g., reading to gain information about sharks). Talk about making interdisciplinary connections (without specifically mentioning a hands-on or direct project application) also falls within this code.</p>	<p>6 groups, 20 references</p>	<p>I think first grade is a great year to do that because you don’t have the same really rigid structure that comes with the older grades, that you have that flexibility that you can—for your story time that day, you can pull out a science book. You can do something with that and incorporate that into your writing time that day. You can bridge across those boundary lines. -Riverway/Mountainview</p> <p>T: They love informational texts. They are more engaged. And--and when they are reading something that is fiction they are not so engaged. T: Depending on who it is. T: They like to learn new things. -Adams</p>
<p>Feedback and rewards</p>	<p>Instances in which participant indicates that specific feedback or reward systems might benefit learners.</p>	<p>2 groups, 2 references</p>	<p>I think the biggest thing for me is incentive. Like we have in my class I give them tickets if they're doing the right thing. And then we raffle off. And it's like a huge motivator. We have a compliment cup. And once they get a hundred compliments they get to choose what reward they want. -Adams</p>
<p>Interesting text</p>	<p>Instances in which participant indicates that provision of interesting text might benefit learners.</p>	<p>5 groups, 8 references</p>	<p>Or that independent reading time. Like you were saying. With the Daily Five there is a big time of you picking your choice books that you know suit the purpose for you. They would definitely still need to have interest in books and things that they need to read. -Lincoln/Silverleaf</p> <p>Sort of related to that, just with the UBD that I'm using right now, it's on animals and habitats. Umm, and I think it's an incredibly motivating one. You know, one of my kids read a book about sharks. That was like the best day ever for him. -Maple/Rockport</p>

<p>Social collaboration</p>	<p>Instances in which participant discusses the potential benefits and challenges of social collaboration for learners.</p>	<p>6 groups, 25 references</p>	<p>It may also benefit if they're working in groups. If you have—and it all depends on the groups of kids you have, but if you have those kids that are really willing to teach the kids that are really struggling, there may be some good crossover that you have those kids that once they learn how to write, they don't wanna draw anymore. I don't care about pictures anymore. Then, you have these kids that maybe can't write, that make these beautiful illustrations. They put tons of detail into it, that there could be some crossover and carryover of teaching each other. -Riverway/Mountainview</p> <p>I've been taking it really slow because they came in and they did have the rigorous kindergarten, but then it's like a new set of challenges where they don't get dramatic play, and they don't get all this social-emotional stuff and 40% of the kids didn't go to preschool. So, they can't work with a partner without crying and fighting. Or, they can't... So, umm just having the goal of them being able to even work with someone, you know, by the end of the year. So, I think that project based stuff has helped them in that. Like, we started with umm for engineering like literally they all had like these different Legos, and they had to find the person in the room with the same Lego, and then they had to build an animal together. Or, you know, just real small little objectives. And then, hopefully by the end of the year they can solve a problem from a literature based assignment or, you know, different things. But, just being cool with being able to work together. Teamwork is so important and you're going to have to do that all through life. -Maple/Rockport</p>
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<p>Stimulating or authentic tasks (Note- closely related to “content or knowledge goals”)</p>	<p>Instances in which participant indicates that provision of stimulating or authentic, “real world” or “hands on” tasks might benefit learners. Talk about applying knowledge within the context of a project would also fall into this code.</p>	<p>6 groups, 20 references</p>	<p>I think about those kids that in your classroom. There’s a one or two in the back, like the traditional just write the words out and do it to learn it, and they don’t get it, but if they were actually out there in their community, they saw the things, they knew they were gonna talk to the everything’s the real world. The kids that can comprehend in first grade but can’t read, you know what I mean? Those kids, I think this would be—I know a special little guy like that. This would be exactly what they need. The traditional way we do school is hard for them. School gets hard for that kid. I don’t know. That’s what I have in my mind. -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p> <p>I think it’s just so much more motivating when it’s just authentic and has a real purpose. And we’re doing this math work and they have no, no real connection to the real world. Just, we’re doing math work just to do math work. -Maple/Rockport</p>
<p>Teacher support and expectations</p>	<p>Instances in which participant indicates that high expectations and teacher support in achieving those expectations might benefit learners. This code also includes talk about what types of teacher support first graders would need to successfully engage in the types of tasks included in a PBL approach (e.g., social collaboration).</p>	<p>4 groups, 15 references</p>	<p>I think one issue that you need to address with it and as you’re looking at this, is how do you teach the kids these things? Because it’s one thing to say here’s your project, you got 28 kids in the classroom, go for it. There’s got to be smaller steps how you can teach the kids how to do it for it to be successful. Respondent: Procedures, routine. Respondent: Even how to work in groups. Respondent: I think that’s a very good point too, cuz kids don’t come into school naturally knowing how to collaborate. -Ridgeview/Eastwood</p>

			I'm a creature of habit. Expectations, I think is huge and then, the follow through. These are my expectations... This is how I'm going to help you to meet them and you will meet them. -Riverway/Mountainview
Phase V: Drawing on social repertoires			
Opportunities for self- and other-construction	Instances in which participant indicates that literacy engagement is an opportunity for learners to construct their own identities, as well as the identities of others.	3 groups, 4 references	A lot of the times to with with, you know, a project like this is the kids that, we talk about this our enrichment block, is the kids that sometimes don't always have a chance to shine academically all of a sudden, you know, they get a role. They're the leader. Do you know what I mean? Cause they they're the kids that sometimes, okay they're not reading at grade-level and they're certainly not...they're certainly struggling with their like addition and subtraction facts, but they have the, either they have the leadership skills or they have the ability to think outside of the box and solve the problem that maybe the smartest kid in the class is like, "Well, I'm the best leader. But, I have no idea how to solve this." So, taking on those different roles, which again changes the classroom dynamic, and it creates such a community of like... Here's that little friend who sometimes is always shying away, but all of a sudden he's the leader in this project because he's just, you know, has a certain skill that might not be, you know, academic base. But, he has he has something that's... And, I think that that's such a motivator for students. -Maple/Rockport
Influences on social imagination and social behavior	Instances in which participant indicates that literacy engagement might affect learners' ability to understand other people and/or their social behavior (e.g., by	3 groups, 4 references	T: And also if you're doing it in a group, then what you do affects somebody else. You're affecting change and the people in your group or in your community with the project that you're doing, which is again a lot of responsibility and taking ownership of what you're doing in that project. -Lincoln/Silverleaf

	developing empathy or kindness).		: I'm thinking of empathy. I mean that's something that I feel we're not really-- [51:50 T: You could put empathy into habitats too] --teaching kids. You know. I don't think we're teaching children about you know you know just empathy. About even just being a good citizen. When we talk about community helpers or things we could do in our community that's a way. Like one of the characteristics of um the community worker--like characters--like character traits and you know and how just taking responsibility--like teaching them that we have to take care of um our world. -Adams
Engagement as affecting the social community of the classroom and beyond	Instances in which participant indicates that literacy engagement might affect the social community of the classroom, including student-teacher and student-peer relationships. This code also includes instances in which the participant indicates that engagement might develop citizenship skills that go beyond the classroom community (e.g., to society).	5 groups, 7 references	Behaviorally when children aren't being successful, I know it's my issue. It's not theirs. It's either I need to change how I'm handling them, or I need to change my expectations, or I need to notice something or find something to help them. I always try to keep my brain wrapped around that, finding the ways they can be successful. In general, it truly is the teacher's—I mean it's something that's not happening either with their relationship, I believe that. -Riverway/Mountainview  T: Some of them just need that conferring time with you just to have that time. Because they don't get that time any other place you know to tell you about that favorite book. 58:21 T: Yeah a little connection. 58:23 T: That is the only time that they read. 58:24 T: Yeah or even have someone even care about them reading. -Lincoln/Silverleaf  T: So that has been my passion and so for me the goals are not academic... For me it's turning out citizens who are

			<p>inquisitive and kind and and just-- [19:23 T: Empathetic] -- yeah. And and participants in society. -Washington/Jefferson</p> <p>Participant 67: A lot of the times to with with, you know, a project like this is the kids that, we talk about this our enrichment block, is the kids that sometimes don't always have a chance to shine academically all of a sudden, you know, they get a role. They're the leader. Do you know what I mean? Cause they they're the kids that sometimes, okay they're not reading at grade-level and they're certainly not...they're certainly struggling with their like addition and subtraction facts, but they have the, either they have the leadership skills or they have the ability to think outside of the box and solve the problem that maybe the smartest kid in the class is like, 'Well, I'm the best leader. But, I have no idea how to solve this.'" So, taking on those different roles, which again changes the classroom dynamic, and it creates such a community. -Maple/Rockport</p>
Phase VI: Considering the cultural, social, and historical repertoires of communities			
Cultural practices as resources	Instances in which participant refers to learners' cultural practices or repertoires from an asset-based perspective (i.e., as potential resources for supporting their engagement).	5 groups, 6 references	<p>With project based learning, we might be able to maybe not necessarily fit an academic need or click in with an academic need, bur more something they already had. They had prerequisite knowledge. You're making a life connection. Then, that leads to the explanation. My dad is a builder. I already feel like I know something about that, but now I'm actually going to learn how to measure halves and quarters. The only reason I made that connection was because my dad's a builder. -Riverway/Mountainview</p>

			<p>78:03 T: A lot of kids go to that park. XXX Park. 78:07T: --I found a picture of it online. I'm like This is what it used to look like. And this is what it looks now. And that's because the community came together and they said We need to do something to beautify you know our community. 78:18 T: So many things to tap into around here. 78:20 T: Yeah. 78:20 T: There's a very--there's a lot of active organizations that they could really cultural things everything--</p> <p>-Adams</p>
Differences in cultural practices	Instances in which participant describes differences in learners' cultural practices or repertoires as compared to the practices supported by school-based Discourses	6 groups, 16 references	<p>It may benefit those low kids because a lot of times low achieving students have backgrounds with very limited vocabulary, very limited knowledge.</p> <p>-Riverway/Mountainview</p> <p>I think, we've talked about engagement now for two years, and that's been our goal for two years. We know our population of kids. We have a huge free/reduced population, and we just know the kids need to be going all the time. There's no down time, and so we do have a core group of kids that I [an administrator] see every day, for some reason or another.</p> <p>-Ridgeview/Eastwood</p> <p>But--and the reality of it is the lower kids are really going to benefit from it too and they're going to be able to take it I think farther than the higher kids because they're going to take it home to where it's expected at most of the higher kids' homes to where as the lower kids--I had a mom Wow they're saying please and thank you a lot. And I was like--just looked at her and I was like That's not expected at your house? And she said Well--and and it wasn't. It wasn't expected at their</p>

			<p>house to where as at our house You're please and thank you for everything. -Lincoln/Silverleaf</p> <p>Um and so for us like to take them to the zoo project--to prepare them for habitats. Like they don't--these kids haven't even been to a forest. They don't understand the forest. They understand an ocean. They don't understand a forest. Um. So that basic background skill. It's kind of difficult because we're trying to provide them background and at the same time trying to teach them math configurations and computations. -Adams</p>
Historical traditions of communities	Instances in which participant refers to the historical traditions of the communities of which learners are a part.	1 group, 1 reference	<p>So I think having them write about something that they're actually doing and is their own personal experience would be a good thing. [31:41 EM: Mm hmm. Okay.] To get them to write better sentences and to explain more clearly what you're trying to tell people. 31:47 T: But I think you see that in more affluent communities. Because when I think about where my children go and other schools that I've been in, um subbing you know early on--I think there was more of that going on. 31:59 T: And my kids are going through it. And there is more of that. 32:01 T: You mean like-- 32:02 T: Yes. I have three children. And all three of them had just narrative journals. Narrative journals. And they were really learning about their voice and all that. And I don't think that fits in with what--and like I said I don't know if it's the city but it's definitely this building. 32:19 T: It's definitely--because I mean--I taught fourth grade before and it was like--talk about--you want to talk about voice. Like it was all--everything is text dependent. Go back into the text. Where is your answer. 32:29 T: That's because of PARCC. 32:30 T: Yeah it's because of PARCC.</p>

			32:30 T: Right but I mean-- 32:32 T: And I think it's because of our population with PARCC. That's why we're doing it. -Adams
Academic experiences as shaping life trajectories	Instances in which participant indicates that academic experiences might have long term influences on the life trajectories of learners.	1 group, 1 reference	I think in... I mean any district, but I think that ours in particular and Rockport as well. I think when kids can make real life connections. You know, I think sometimes when... not that schooling is isolating. But, it's like I go to school and then I go home. I go to school and then I go home. And, sometimes it's so hard to connect that things we're doing here are going to affect your entire life. If we can find a project that really you know resonates with them and they can own and they can see like in ten years, in twenty years I want to go to college and I want to do this or I want to do this and I learned about it in first grade. That...that is so powerful. And, I think that sometimes... not that we miss opportunities to make those connections. But, if there is ever a way to strengthen that and to make sure that those kids are seeing that what we are doing in this classroom right now is something that someone else is getting paid for and they are making a million dollars for it. But, we can do it on a small scale here. And, we can... This is where it starts. So, I think that's a powerful idea. -Maple/Rockport

**APPENDIX D: EXTENDED SENSEMAKING EPISODE, ADAMS****ELEMENTARY**

56:44 EM: And so how would um--let's--so how do you think that an English language learner--an emerging bilingual student would um benefit?

56:51 T: It'll give them--during the process of the whole process they're learning all the vocabulary that has to do with the topic. They are gaining the background that they may not know. First instance I have students who for the first time this year saw snow. Because they're from countries that--where they never saw snow. So if we were doing some unit on snow they would get all the background. Hopefully they will see all the visuals and the vocabulary maybe. They will watch a YouTube little clip of a blizzard. You know what I mean? And things like that. Like that they you know--that they'll gain and then they'll have that knowledge and in the future if they're reading a book and there's some reference to a snowy day they'll know what it'll look like in the back of their heads. You know what I mean? They'll gain all those things.

57:41 T: The other thing is for the--for well--for all of the students--but for ones who are weak in language whether it's a SpEd need or an ELL need--um they have a chance to dialogue with each other or discuss as they're working together more than just sitting down at a reading group--and having me say Read Read Read Read you know?

58:00 T: Because you--there would be opportunities to work with partners.

58:04 EM: Yeah.

58:06 T: Partners are--

58:05 T: So they would be able to practice the language--

58:08 EM: And group work--

58:09 T: And there's not enough time in the day to do that.

58:10 T: The other thing is--and I think with our ELLs they get so frozen on where to start because they're aware of the language. But the focus would be on learning about the topic not learning about the language. That's--like that would just be happening because of it. So I think that would kind of ease some anxiety to be honest.

58:26 T: I think they'd be more successful with this than with what we do now.

58:30 T: Oh yeah. And the end project would give--would be another way to show what they know do you know what I mean? It's not a test. It's just another formative--another form of assessment.

58:42 T: They do well with rubrics. They follow--I find all the levels-- [58:44 T: Yeah] [58:44 T: Mm hmm]

58:46-60:42 BREAK (unrelated conversation)

60:43 EM: Yeah. That's really helpful. Um. Our uh--and you mentioned high achieving students too. So talk about how this would meet the needs of your higher achieving students.

60:53 T: We feel--we have the special needs kids and like high level kids in the same room. Um. I'm talking for XXX.

61:01 T: Yeah I know I feel so guilty I feel like they're totally just like ignored. Like they meet the benchmarks. Their scores are great. So it's like the lower kids that--

61:10 T: They're not being as challenged as much as they can because they are meeting the skills.

61:14 T: Right. They could kind of take this and run with it. Like. You know. And it could be as challenging for them as we wanted it to be. Um they could get a lot more out of it than they could what we do now because--now they're helping the lower kids.

61:30 T: And maybe you could make like those heterogeneous groups too. [61:32 T: Yeah] Like maybe have the high kids like--that's another thing that we are guilty of--of always grouping the low kids together and the high kids together and maybe this would be a great way of mixing it up. And maybe that's how they could produce something. They could all help each other. And actually that's what we did for--we did a project--we did something before where we mixed it all up. And they were all able to help each other.

61:54 T: Even like for like behaviorally and classroom management--a lot of our special ed kids also have behavior stuff and they're always grouped together. Whereas and the higher kids as typically-- [62:08 T: Right] --this year very well behaved. And more of the model students. So to have time for them to work together--

62:12 T: Well it's--even not having a SpEd room-- [62:16 T: Yeah they're in every classroom] --like the low level group has the behavior issues. So--

62:21 T: And the--for the books that are interesting for the kids, the higher level kids could read them to--like partner read or--not partner read--but read them so that they

could get the information out of the text for--from a book that looks interesting on the topic.

62:40 EM: That's really helpful.

62:41 T: Because a lot of the--well we have more and more second language learners--I mean second--they might not be identified as ELL but a lot of our families don't speak read English at home. So you wouldn't believe how many kids say My mom and my dad can't help me with my homework. And they don't read at home. And they don't do their homework.

63:01 EM: Yep.

### APPENDIX E: CODE LIST

Code	Definition	Subcodes (if applicable)
Beliefs about engagement		
Engagement and achievement	Participant expresses a belief that engagement is somehow related to literacy achievement or improvement.	N/A
Engagement as changeable	Participant expresses a belief that engagement may be modified or change over time.	N/A
Engagement as social and/or cultural	Participant expresses a belief that engagement is social and/or cultural in nature.	N/A
Intrinsic or extrinsic motivation	Participant describes aspects of motivation as intrinsic or extrinsic.	N/A
Indicators of engagement		
Behavioral indicators	Participant describes indicators of engagement that focus on students' external, observable actions or behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing just right books</li> <li>• Collaborating with others</li> <li>• Involvement and focus</li> <li>• Paying attention</li> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• Producing language (oral or written)</li> </ul> Reading with expression Repeated and/or wide reading
Cognitive indicators	Participant describes indicators of engagement that focus on students' thinking or cognitive processing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Making connections</li> <li>• "Really thinking about" a text</li> <li>• Understanding purpose</li> </ul> Wanting to do something
Emotional indicators	Participant describes indicators of engagement that focus on students' emotional response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enthusiasm</li> <li>• Enjoyment/Having fun</li> </ul>

Disengagement	Participant describes indicators of disengagement, such as lack of attention or work refusal.	N/A
Types of knowledge		
Knowledge of context	Participant describes her knowledge of the classroom, school, or wider context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time constraints,</li> <li>• Curricular practices (school-level)</li> <li>• Division of labor</li> </ul>
Knowledge of students	Participant describes her knowledge of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas of strength and need</li> <li>• Exceptionalities</li> <li>• IEP goals</li> <li>• Interests and passions</li> <li>• Past instructional experiences</li> <li>• Personalities</li> <li>• Preferences</li> <li>• Reading behaviors</li> <li>• Reading levels</li> <li>• Self-efficacy beliefs</li> </ul>
Knowledge of self	Participant describes her knowledge of herself and her experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal experiences (from childhood, teaching, or parenting)</li> <li>• Own engagement in teaching</li> <li>• Teaching style</li> <li>• Areas of strength or growth as an educator</li> </ul>
Knowledge of pedagogy and enacted pedagogical practices	Participant describes her knowledge of pedagogy and the practices she enacts in her instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility of instruction</li> <li>• Choice</li> <li>• Coherence</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Cultural connections</li> <li>• Degree of structure</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of decoding skills</li> <li>• Domains of literacy</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Goal setting</li> <li>• Hooks</li> <li>• Interest</li> <li>• “Nerdy T-shirts”</li> <li>• Relationship between decoding and comprehension</li> <li>• Repeated reading</li> <li>• Scaffolds, modifications, and differentiation</li> <li>• Strategy instruction</li> <li>• Teacher talk</li> <li>• Texts</li> </ul>
Relational knowledge	Participant describes understandings of how people relate to one another, or knowledge she has gained through interaction with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positioning</li> <li>• Recommendations from other educators</li> <li>• Relationships with students</li> </ul>
Sensemaking		
Uncertainty	Participant expresses a lack of information or a desire to learn more about something.	N/A
Ambiguity	Participant describes multiple or competing goals, or multiple ways of interpreting an event.	N/A

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**CURRICULUM VITAE**

