Take Me Out to the Ballgame: Adolescents' Insights About Engagement with Sports Texts in a Voluntary Sports Reading Club

Kevin J. Powell

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This dissertation, TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME: ADOLESCENTS’ INSIGHTS ABOUT ENGAGEMENT WITH SPORTS TEXTS IN A VOLUNTARY SPORTS READING CLUB, by KEVIN POWELL, was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student’s Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME: ADOLESCENTS’ INSIGHTS ABOUT ENGAGEMENT WITH SPORTS TEXTS IN A VOLUNTARY SPORTS READING CLUB

by

KEVIN POWELL

Under the Direction of Ewa McGrail, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Adolescent disengagement in school and school-related activities continues to be a national problem (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, 2009). Recent research has shown that allowing choice in what adolescents read in school and school-related activities strengthens student engagement (Kittle, 2013; Lee, 2011; Miller, 2009). Much of this literature, however, does not adequately explore the potential of sports texts to foster engaged reading by exploring the cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic components of engagement (Finn, 2012; Yin & Moore, 2004). In addition, researchers have yet to emphasize adolescent voices via qualitative inquiry to add to the knowledge base of student engagement with sports texts (Fredricks, 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Therefore, educators, teacher educators, administrators, and policymakers need an understanding of the potential to generate interest in adolescents’ engagement with sports texts.

Framed by Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading, this qualitative case study (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005) examined how adolescents engaged with sports texts as they
participated in a voluntary sports reading club. The following questions guided the study:

1. What were the indicators of engagement when selected adolescents interacted with sports texts? 
2. What contextual factors brought about the features of student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts?

Participants in this study included three adolescent sports enthusiasts, and data collection occurred November-December 2014 during the 2014-2015 school year. Data sources included semi-structured interviews, participant observation during club meetings, session observation using audio and video recording, and participant journals. Using an evaluative approach to text analysis that involved assessing, categorizing, and evaluating content (Kuckartz, 2014), I found the participants’ engagement with sports texts was varied based on their thinking, emotions, behavior, and sense of agency communicated in the program. Findings suggest that adolescent sports enthusiasts may benefit from opportunities to use sports texts to show their engagement in semi-structured reading and discussion programs through the connections and responses to the texts they read. Findings also suggest that maintaining engagement over a six-week program is a difficult endeavor. Providing almost all-out choice, a casual space to talk and discuss texts, and acknowledging the social dynamics of the group may strengthen engagement in school, afterschool, and community small group reading programs. Finally, the study emphasized the important role that teachers and other adults can play in providing an environment for rich discussion and response by focusing on the features of student engagement.

INDEX WORDS: Student engagement, reading clubs, sports texts
TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME: ADOLESCENTS’ INSIGHTS ABOUT ENGAGEMENT WITH SPORTS TEXTS IN A VOLUNTARY SPORTS READING CLUB

by

KEVIN POWELL

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Adolescent disengagement in school and school-related activities continues to be a national problem (Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, 2009; Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). In a study conducted by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University, 66% of students reported being bored at school a minimum of one or more times every day, and 17% reported being bored in every class (2009). Adolescents often find the curriculum taught in school uninteresting, and they often have negative views of school and their teachers (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). In the most serious cases of student disengagement, students simply give up and drop out of school (Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, 2009). Over 3 million students in the United States drop out of school each year, and those who drop out earn up to 41 percent less than people who have graduated from high school or earned a GED (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009).

Therefore, researchers have pointed to the concept of student engagement as a possible focus for strategies to reduce student disengagement and reduce the dropout rate in the United States (Christensen, 2008; Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). Researchers have found significant correlations between students’ reported levels of engagement and their risk of dropping out of school (Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, 2009; Skinner & Furrer, 2008). In a report by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University (2009), researchers asked 81,499 students in 110 schools a variety of questions about engagement in school. Of the students surveyed, 22% considered dropping out of high school. Among those students, a large majority of students considered dropping out because they did not like school (73%), they did not like the teachers (61%), or did not see the value in the work they
did at school (60%); more considered dropping out for those reasons than because of family concerns (42%) or needing money (35%). Researchers have found that student disengagement often has cascading effects over years of schooling as students’ grades, attendance, and reading scores suffer (Ripski & Gregory, 2009; Roby, 2004). When students’ grades and attendance suffer, disengagement increases, and a recent national study found that student disengagement increases by 10% from 8th grade to 10th grade alone (Kelly & Price, 2014).

Understanding the construct of student engagement is not only important to dropout prevention, but it is also essential to understanding what students learn (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). Measuring student engagement is a multifaceted construct that has been referred to as an alternative to top down test-driven reform measures such as No Child Left Behind (2001) and Race to the Top (2008). Researchers have argued that measuring student engagement instead of relying on standardized test scores may better show the full scope of what and how students learn (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). When educators, administrators, and policymakers focus on test scores, researchers have found that they do not give enough attention to the multifaceted qualities of engagement (Shernoff, 2010).

Within the literature on student engagement, researchers have also found that allowing adolescents to choose what they read has a dramatic effect on deepening engagement (Beers, 2001; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Kittle, 2013; Miller, 2009). The current body of research on student engagement with texts provides a rich basis for the many ways engaged reading occurs when adolescents have opportunities to explore texts of their choosing (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). When students choose their own texts, they are more likely to show interest in the text at hand, to show changes in their identities, and to gain a greater sense of agency when they read (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Smith & Wilhelm, 2009; Tatum,
2008). For example, Lee (2011) evaluated the impact of an independent reading program on students’ attitudes and practices. She found that five factors influenced student engagement as adolescents participated in a sustained silent reading (SSR) program: distributed time, conducive environment, appeal, access, encouragement, and non-accountability. Lee concluded that SSR is often criticized, but also found that if teachers focus more on implementation, SSR can be beneficial. Developing an effective independent reading program takes preparation, time, and patience. For independent reading time to be successful, she found that teachers should encourage independent practice, read aloud to students, and provide meaningful feedback. Lee, however, took an instructional approach to her research; the research was designed as a case study to examine instructional practices surrounding SSR, not as an analysis of adolescent voices in a sports reading club. Additionally, Lee did not conduct an in-depth analysis of what happens within the multifaceted components of engagement when adolescents have the opportunity to read texts of their choosing. Intrator and Kunzman (2009) offered that researchers often fail to address that adolescents are “self-conscious, observant, critical consumers of educational experience” (p. 29). They have unique, often untapped perspectives on what is happening in today’s schools.

Ivey and Johnston (2013) found that changes in student engagement occurred when teachers gave students opportunities to read young adult titles of their own choosing at their own pace, especially with regard to students’ sense of agency and identity formation. In addition, Ivey and Johnston (2013) voiced concern about the traditional approaches to reading instruction, especially when students and teachers all read the same book at the same time. They found mixed results with this whole class approach: a number of students in the study showed engagement, while others did not. Ivey and Johnston (2013) examined a number of questions
about the construct of adolescents’ engagement with texts including the effect adolescents’ independent reading has on agency and identity, and found that when adolescents read the same book at the same time it may inhibit engaged reading. Importantly, Ivey and Johnston’s (2013) research was limited to students choosing texts with subject matter they were not excited about. However, providing opportunities for sports enthusiasts to choose sports texts creates a built-in sense of interest. Additionally, Ivey and Johnston (2013) did not explore what researchers still need to know about student engagement as it applies to sports enthusiasts’ engagement with sports texts. In addition to Lee (2011) and Ivey and Johnston (2013), other researchers have come to similar conclusions about the effectiveness of choice on strengthening engaged reading (Beach, Campano, & Edmiston, 2010; Groenke & Scherff, 2010; Kittle, 2013). The consensus from the research findings is that choice is an essential component to fostering engaged reading, while providing time to read, meaningful feedback, modeling, clear goals, a sense of autonomy, and other variables were also important components for eliciting engagement with reading. Yet, these studies often did not adequately seek adolescent voices in the analysis of student engagement, especially as it applied to adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts.

**Problem**

When I was an adolescent, sports played a pivotal role in my life. I played sports every day after school. I also played hours of sports video games, collected and traded baseball cards, watched sports-themed movies, and read innumerable books about sports. Unfortunately, as an adolescent I did not have opportunities to read and talk about sports and sports texts in school and school-related activities. As such, I believe there is an avenue of research unexplored on adolescents’ engagement in reading and responding to sports texts. A growing number of researchers have pointed to another way to address the problem of disengagement in school and
school-related activities by acknowledging adolescents’ interest in sports texts (Alvermann, 2004; Baker, 2007; Crowe, 2001; Dannen, 2012). Engagement with sports texts can promote “buy in” for adolescent sports enthusiasts, it can offer exposure to a number of themes of the human condition, and it can offer opportunities to explore difficult issues (Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004; Crowe, 2004; Dannen, 2012; Schneider, 2011). For example, Dannen (2012) took a critical thinking approach by using her students’ conversations about popular sports media texts to teach argumentation skills. Baker (2007) took a holistic approach to using sports texts by exploring the three pedagogical discourses he worked within at school: the poetry club he sponsored, the basketball team he coached, and the English language arts class he taught. He found the melding of these discourses made him a better teacher and athletics coach.

The existing research on adolescents and sports texts, however, is primarily focused on instructional practices (Beach, Campano, & Edmiston, 2010; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Kittle, 2013; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011) as they applied to using sports texts in the classroom; it is not focused on listening to adolescents to understand the extent to which they are engaged by reading of sports texts. By emphasizing adolescent voices through observation, interviews, and discussions in small groups, and analyzing adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts with existing research on engaged reading of texts, the present study added to our understanding of adolescent sports enthusiasts’ engagement with sports texts. For example, a number of recent studies on engagement with texts focused primarily on one of the cornerstones (cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic) of engagement (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Guthrie, Wigfield, & You 2012; Voekl, 2012). Instead, this study focused on the interaction that happens in the following four areas within the field of student engagement: (a) the four facets of the construct of student engagement, (b) instructional factors that influenced
engaged reading of sports texts, (c) engaged reading of sports texts, and (c) the contextual factors that influenced student engagement. As I analyzed the interactions of three adolescent sports enthusiasts, I examined in depth what happened with all of these aspects of student engagement.

In sum, a number of possibilities emerge when educators and researchers think about and connect sports texts with student engagement. Researchers need to learn more about adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts. In fact, recent researchers have argued that examining students’ responses to sports and sports-related texts is a form of engagement research in need of further exploration, especially for students who are at risk of dropping out of school (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Yin & Moore, 2004). In addition, Finn and Zimmer (2012) offered that studies of student engagement with sports and sports-related activities could be important to testing hypotheses of the significance of student engagement with sports, especially using qualitative inquiry.

As discussed above, there were several compelling reasons to study the problem of student disengagement in school and school-related activities as it related to student interactions with sports texts. First, in the literature review, I analyzed existing research on the multifaceted components of student engagement. Researchers often describe three dimensions of student engagement, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, and discuss how these dimensions helped to explain the complexities of student engagement (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; McClelland & Cameron, 2011). In particular, this literature review of the construct of engagement examined how these components applied to adolescents’ engagement with reading. Additionally, I explored recent research on agency as a possible fourth dimension of student engagement (Reeve, 2013). I concluded this section by addressing the current methodological challenges in the research on student engagement by reviewing the effectiveness of existing models of engagement for explaining adolescents’ engaged reading. Often, measures
of student engagement are quantitative, through the use of large-scale surveys and questionnaires (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). These measures may narrow the potential of our learning about indicators of engagement, and how context plays a role in student engagement. A growing number of researchers have called for qualitative studies of student engagement to augment existing surveys and paint a more comprehensive picture of adolescents’ engaged reading experiences (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Including adolescents’ individual perspectives via qualitative, inductive means may potentially add another layer of understanding to the dimensions of engagement.

Second, I addressed the construct of adolescents’ engaged reading of texts to lay the groundwork for the potential of sports texts to support adolescents’ engaged reading. I began with a review of the instructional factors that influence engaged reading and what researchers currently know about adolescents’ engaged reading. Several key themes from the research on engaged reading emerged, including an acknowledgement that reading is a social act in which readers make meaning through transactional means (Rosenblatt 1994; Langer, 2000), the use of strategy instruction, and the impact that exposure to a variety of texts has on engaged reading (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You 2012; Zelazo & Carlson, 2012). Although instructional practices that influence engaged reading have been well documented in the current literature, further exploration of the definition of engaged reading is needed to ensure that the voices and perspectives of adolescents are heard and included (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009; Ivey & Johnston, 2012). I concluded my discussion of engaged reading by reviewing the research on sharpening the definition of engaged reading by seeking out adolescents’ points of view (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009; Wigfield et al., 2013).
Third, in the literature review, I addressed recent research on the potential of sports texts to foster engaged reading. In recent years, researchers have directed their focus on how adolescents read and respond to a variety of texts, including comic books, blogs, and multimedia (Alvermann, 2011; Beach, Campano, Edmiston, & Borgmann, 2010; Groenke & Scherff, 2010; New London Group, 2000). As a result of adolescents’ reading of a variety of texts, recognition of the richness of texts outside the traditional language arts curriculum has developed. Hypertext poetry, podcast, graphic novels, video, blogs, websites, and other new media, have gained popularity inside and outside of the classroom. However, researchers have yet to adequately explore the potential of sports texts to foster engaged reading by exploring the cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic components of engagement (Finn, 2012; Yin & Moore, 2004).

I also reviewed the potential of sports texts to support adolescent sports enthusiasts’ engaged reading, beginning with a definition of sports texts and describing how the use of sports texts in school and school-related activities has evolved in the last two decades. The existing literature on the potential of non-canonical texts to foster engaged reading (Alvermann, 2006; New London Group, 2000; Sabeti, 2012) often does not address the effects that sports texts have on adolescent sports enthusiasts’ engaged reading. Yet, as early as the 1970s, a small number of educators and researchers had examined the value of sports texts (Baker, 2007; Boston, 1975; Guttmann, 1978; Schneider, 2011). They often explored the benefits of adolescents’ reading of a variety of sports texts from game action to social issues to sports reporting. Other researchers have explored how adolescents approach difficult topics addressed in sports texts (Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004; Crowe, 2004). There, however, has been little known research on what happens to student engagement when adolescents explore a variety of sports texts of their
choosing. The research that has been done has examined the value of sport texts and the instructional approaches to using sports texts in the classroom, but the researchers have not discussed specific indicators of engagement as students explored sports texts.

The literature review concludes with a discussion of the contextual factors that influence student engagement and a review of reading club models, since the context and social nature of reading played critical roles in adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts in the present study (Alexander & Fox, 2011). The context in which adolescents interacted with sport texts, in this case in a voluntary sports reading club, played an important role in their engagement with sports texts. A great deal of research has focused on how adolescents participate in reading clubs in school and school-related activities (Casey, 2009; Daniels, 2002; Faust et al., 2005; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Thein, Guise, & Sloane, 2011).

A number of themes emerged from my review of the literature on reading clubs, including reading group frameworks that tend to take a predominantly cognitive approach, a critical approach, or a constructivist approach. In a cognitive approach, adolescents practice reasoning, questioning and communication skills, and sustaining talk (Clarke & Holwadel, 2007; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011; Lin et al., 2011; Maloch, 2002). Adolescents often do not delve as deeply into topics such as the knowledge they bring to the learning situation, nor do they discuss macro issues of culture such as race, class, and gender. In a critical approach, adolescents move the reading from a personal response to a personal and social response that questions the status quo and underlying hegemonic structures of schooling and literacy (Faust et al., 2005; McCall, 2010; Thein, Guise, & Sloane, 2011; Young, 2000). In the constructivist approach, adolescents focus on the construction of meaning-making as crucial to interpreting the individual and culture setting (Casey, 2009; Daniels, 2002; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Raphael & McMahon, 1997). In
chapter three, I describe my own reading club model, which is based on the literature review and which fits the goals of my research study (i.e. acknowledging what participants bring to the reading situation, while also challenging them to think in a critical manner). The participants in this study were invited to consider issues through discussion that gave them the space to critically analyze text without judgment.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study used Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading to inform the research on students’ engaged reading of sports texts. The transactional theory of reading formed the foundation of this study in the sense that it shaped data collection, development of research questions, and data analysis. Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading is a departure from New Critical Theory, which grew from an increased academic focus on literary studies in the second half of the 20th century (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). New Critical Theory continues to be influential today, especially in secondary literature settings, in which educators focus on close reading to discuss the literary elements of a text (Beach & Swiss, 2011). In such settings, students learn to analyze texts using terms like symbolism, metaphor, irony, and other elements of figurative language, and students often demonstrate their understanding of these literary terms in structured essay writing activities.

As New Critical approaches to teaching literature gained popularity, Rosenblatt (1938/1996) disrupted the notion that readers are strictly consumers of information. Rosenblatt’s transactional theory offered that “reader” and “text” combine to form a “poem” that goes beyond what reader or text can be on its own (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 34). Three tenets of Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading were relevant to the study. First, the role of the reader does not follow a traditional transmission model, in which an author imparts knowledge to the reader.
Instead, the individual reader brings personal experience to the text, creating a dynamic exchange, or “transaction” in Rosenblatt’s (1994) terms, between text and reader (p. 34). Second, the same text may be read efferently or aesthetically. In aesthetic reading, according to Rosenblatt, “The reader’s attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 25). The reader considers personal and emotional connections to a text. During strictly efferent reading, Rosenblatt stated, “The reader disengages as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements in his response to the verbal symbols” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 27). The reader primarily seeks to gain information from the text. Engaged readers make choices on an efferent and aesthetic continuum when they read. Third, transactional theory offers reading as process in which the goal is a state of “evocation” (p. 15). Rosenblatt (1994) stated, “Both text and reader are essential aspects or components of that which is manifested in each reading as a poem” (p. 15). These are the moments when readers feel a personal and critical connection to what they read as they have the dual potential of increasing an individual’s self-awareness and aiding one in acknowledging other points of view. These tenets connected to my study by helping me explore the insights of a small group of adolescent readers of sports texts, and the ways adolescent sports enthusiasts created meaning through a complex transaction between text and author to form a “poem” that goes beyond what a text could be on its own, acknowledging the agentic nature of reading texts (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 25).

Recent research has built upon Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading. For example, Wilhelm and Novak (2011) used the transactional theory of reading to investigate what happens when adolescents in English language arts classrooms move beyond the traditional school of thought on literary analysis. They found through their research that adolescents not only engaged
with texts on a cognitive level, but they also brought their individual identities and cultural knowledge to their experiences with texts (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Wilhelm & Novak, 2011).

Noted theorists including Fish (1982), Iser (1980), and Probst (2004) have also influenced our understanding of Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading. Fish (1982) questioned the traditional belief that a text can be approached in a universal manner. He argued, instead, that reading communities drive interpretations of texts. Probst (2004) used the theoretical lens of the transactional theory of reading to uncover that adolescents grow into active readers when they drive response and analysis of literature.

In addition, Langer (2000) built upon Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading with her theory of envisionment building. Langer (2000) conducted a five-year study of secondary literature discussions in which she examined students’ response and developing understandings of texts. She explored, for example, discussions that were controlled by the teacher and were focused on traditional, close reading of the text, as well as other discussions that showed how discussion can be used to propel student thinking, and to explore a host of cognitive and emotional possibilities through what she called “envisionment building” (Langer, 2000, p. 10). Langer (2011) defined envisionment as a “function of one’s personal and cultural experiences, one’s relationship to the current experience, what one knows, how one feels, and what one is after” (p. 10). In Langer’s theory, readers develop new thoughts through a constant transaction with the text. They step in and step out of envisionments as they gain ideas through non-linear stances with the text. Langer describes four relationships readers have to text: (a) being out and stepping into an envisionment (first interactions with text when they ask questions and may be confounded by texts), (b) being in and moving through an envisionment (make connections to personal experience and background knowledge), (c) stepping out and rethinking what one
knows (rethink their perspectives based on their interactions with text), and (d) stepping out and objectifying the experience (they have opportunities to analyze and assess the text).

These four stances readers take toward texts, supplemented by Rosenblatt’s theory of transactional reading, form the basis for my analysis of the participants’ interaction with sports texts in the present study. Nevertheless, these theorists who employed the transactional theory of reading have not addressed what happens when adolescents participate in a sports reading club, especially with regard to their engagement with text. Within the context of the transactional theory of reading, readers’ personal experiences are legitimate topics of interest to researchers. Transaction took place in my study through examination of the personal experiences of sports enthusiasts in small group reading and discussion, exploration of the participants’ aesthetic and efferent responses to sports texts, and examination of the potential of sports texts as a means for personal and critical connections in the texts the participants read.

**Purpose of the Study**

The possibility that sports texts may be able to offer something that other text types cannot or have not been able to accomplish sparked my own passion and desire in the present study to understand what factors influenced adolescents’ engagement with sports texts (Schneider, 2011). While much of the research on students’ use of sports texts in school and school-related activities is directed on instructional practices as they applied to using sports texts in the classroom (Beach, Campano, & Edmiston, 2010; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Kittle, 2013; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011), my focus in this study was on seeking the individual points-of-view and voices of adolescent readers who enjoyed reading and discussing sports texts (Baker, 2007; Guttmann, 1978; Schneider, 2011); this focus on adolescent voices contributed to understanding adolescents’ engagement with sports texts. The purpose of this study was to investigate
cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic factors that contributed to engagement when three adolescents explored sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club. I followed the agentic approach described in previous research (Reeve, 2013) as I looked for factors that contribute to adolescent reading engagement. The study provided material for the reader to learn about the multifaceted components of student engagement, qualitative inquiry of student engagement, and the use of reading clubs as they applied to adolescents’ reading and discussion of sports texts.

**Research Questions**

Two questions guided my research: (1) What were the indicators of engagement when selected adolescents interacted with sports texts? (2) What contextual factors brought about the features of student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts?

**Overview of the Study**

This case study included three sports enthusiasts in a middle school in the southeastern United States. I live in an urban area in the southeast and I have teaching experience there as well. Approximately a month before the sports reading club began, I posted flyers throughout the school and included announcements on the morning student newscast to gather participants. I also worked closely with the school’s afterschool coordinator to spread the word about the club. The sports reading club met twice a week for approximately one hour each session, with each session devoted to reading and discussion of sports texts. There were pre- and post-interviews and questionnaires to determine focal participants for the study. In these study instruments, I learned about students’ interest in sports texts, the participants’ background, their reading practices, and their level of engagement in school and school-related activities.

The study was rooted in qualitative case study research. Research in qualitative case study is often conducted in an inductive manner, where researchers “focus on individual
meaning, and the importance of rendering complexity of a situation” (Creswell, 2008, p. 4).

Stake (1995) outlined four requirements of case study, triangulation (ability to thoroughly triangulate data), experiential knowledge (ability to demonstrate knowledge gained through experience), context (how experiential knowledge influences context in which it resides), and activities (pays close attention to the minute details of the case activities). These are the essential responsibilities of case study research when researchers use Stake’s model. I followed these five requirements to ensure reliability and validity in the study I conducted.

In sum, for this study, I used Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory of reading to investigate what happened to student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts of their choosing in a voluntary sports reading club. I analyzed the multifaceted components of engagement as well as aspects of students’ engaged reading of sports texts. This approach provided an open-ended scope for analysis of the research questions. This chapter focused on statement of problem, rationale for the study, theoretical perspective, and the purpose of the study. The following two chapters will provide a literature review and the design and procedures I used in the study.

**Definitions of Terms**

**Adolescence** – A time of rich cognitive, emotional, and social development in the second decade of life, approximately between the ages of 10 and 20 (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). Adolescence involves “reorganization with the aim of adapting to cultural expectations of becoming an adult” (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009, p. 15).

**Student Engagement** – Engagement has cognitive (invest cognitive effort in learning), behavioral (participation in school and related activities), emotional (attitudes and feelings toward learning), and agentic (how students actively contribute to the instruction they receive)
components (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). Again, I followed the agentic approach described in previous research (Reeve, 2013) as I looked for factors that contributed to adolescent reading engagement in the study. When adolescents are interested, having fun, and concentrating, they are fully engaged.

**Reading Clubs** – Less formal than versions of reading clubs often found in classroom instruction (Atwell, 1998; Daniels, 2002; Raphael & McMahon, 1997), reading clubs in this study involved a small group of adolescents reading and discussing a variety of texts of their choosing in a voluntary setting.

**Texts** – Used in a broad sense, text includes print based materials such as books, short stories, and poetry as well as non-print based materials such as video, documentaries, websites, hypermedia, blogs, and other multimedia.

**Sports Texts** – Bound by a focus on sports, sports texts involve a variety of themes and uses. Print based as well as non-print based sports texts usually fall into four general categories, game action (fantasy sports, learning about, and appreciating the game included here), sports reporting, character-driven, and social issues.

**Sports Enthusiasts** – People who have a passionate interest in sports. Sports affect multiple aspects of their lives as they enjoy watching, playing, reading, and seeking out new information about sports.
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to (a) investigate cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic factors that contributed to student engagement when three adolescents explored sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club, (b) to provide material for the reader to learn about the multifaceted components of student engagement, and (c) to explore the use of reading clubs as they apply to adolescents’ reading and discussion of sports texts. Two questions guided my research: (1) What were the indicators of engagement when selected adolescents interacted with sports texts? (2) What contextual factors brought about the features of student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts?

A literature review may have two purposes, comprehensive or directed (Boote & Beile, 2005; Maxwell, 2006). I took the directed approach. The goal in a directed approach to a review of literature is to create “a model of phenomena that informs and supports the research” (Maxwell, p. 30). By taking a directed approach, the literature review more closely reflected the purpose and research questions of the study. In this manner, since a case study on adolescents’ interactions with sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club involved a number of dimensions, I narrowed my focus to four areas of interest (the construct of student engagement, instructional factors that influence engaged reading, engaged reading of sports texts, and contextual factors that influence student engagement) in the review of literature. These four areas served as the lenses through which I examined the research questions and collected and analyzed data. I begin with a review of the construct of student engagement through the research that explores the multifaceted components of student engagement. In this section, I also address the current methodological concerns in the research on student engagement by reviewing the effectiveness of existing models of engagement for explaining adolescents’ engaged reading. Second, I review the instructional
factors that influence engaged reading and what researchers currently know about the construct of adolescents’ engaged reading. Third, I explore sports texts as a possible means to support adolescent sports enthusiasts’ engaged reading, including a definition of sports texts and describe how the use of sports texts has evolved in the last two decades. I conclude the literature review with a discussion of the environmental factors that affect engagement and an overview of reading clubs, since the context and social nature of reading play critical roles in adolescents’ engaged reading (Shernoff, 2013). Through the review of these four elements, this literature review allowed me to develop a system of indicators to observe what happened to student engagement in a voluntary sports reading club.

What is Student Engagement?

Student engagement is a popular but ambiguous area of research. According to some educators and researchers, engagement has been discussed as a potential way to reduce boredom and reduce the number of students who drop out of school (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). Research in engagement also persists because educators and researchers see it as a malleable construct essential to understanding what students learn (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). In opposition to recent reform measures such as No Child Left Behind (2001) and Race to the Top (2008), researchers have argued that measuring student engagement instead of relying on standardized test scores may better show the full scope of what and how students learn (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Ivey & Johnson, 2013). McClelland and Cameron (2011) define student engagement as thoughts about school and willingness to invest cognitive effort in learning (cognitive engagement), attitudes and feelings toward learning (emotional engagement), and participation in school and related activities, including completion of homework (behavioral engagement). These three dimensions of student engagement
(behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement) make up the cornerstones of most discussions of the construct of engagement (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). These three facets have been researched separately and collectively. In addition, researchers have pointed to an additional component of engagement, which they refer to as agentic engagement (Ivey & Johnston, 2012; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). In Figure 1, I provide an overview of each component of engagement. In the following sections, I review the research that explores student engagement through each element of the construct (Appleton, Christenson, Furlong, 2008; Ivey & Johnson, 2013).

Table 1.

Components of Engagement (Based on McClelland & Cameron, 2011, Reeve, 2013 and developed during the coding process of this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Component</th>
<th>Indicators of Engagement</th>
<th>Ind. of Disengagement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive:</strong> willingness to invest cognitive effort in learning</td>
<td>Describes cognitive strategies during reading and discussion; Goes beyond the minimum required; Provides detailed recall of learning events</td>
<td>Minimally uses cognitive strategies during reading and discussion; Does only the minimum required; Minimum recall of learning events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional:</strong> attitudes and feelings toward learning</td>
<td>Shows feelings of acceptance and belonging; Shows curiosity; Having fun</td>
<td>Does not feel accepted or sense of belonging; Does not show involvement; Shows boredom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral:</strong> willingness to follow the rules of a given activity</td>
<td>Follows protocol of reading and discussion; Attentive; Follows directions</td>
<td>Does not follow protocol of reading and discussion; Inattentive; Does not follow directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agentic:</strong> how participants contribute to their learning by showing agency or personalizing, and enhancing the learning event</td>
<td>Asks questions; Expresses opinions; Lets others know what he or she is interested in</td>
<td>Not proactive in asking questions; Rarely expresses opinion; Does not express interests</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Cognitive engagement. Researchers have explored a number of ways that cognitive engagement plays an essential role in adolescent reading practices (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You 2012; Kuhn, 2008; Zelazo & Carlson, 2012). Cognition in reading refers to how readers bring along knowledge structures in their interactions with texts. These knowledge structures have cognitive (how adolescents think) and metacognitive (how adolescents think about thinking) aspects. According to Zelazo and Carlson (2012), adolescents’ executive function, or a complex combination of working memory, flexible attention, and reasoning and problem solving affect their cognitive engagement.

According to Reyna, Chapman, Dougherty, and Confrey (2011), as children progress into adolescence, their metacognitive skills become more and more important—they must begin to make sense of complex information and exhibit sound reasoning. When reading, discussing, and writing about what they read, they practice making causal judgments and predictions, increase meta-strategic skills, and sharpen executive control (Diamond, 2013). Adolescents prepare for the rigors of reading difficult texts in varying disciplines. Many researchers have examined this transition from concrete operations to formal operations and the ability to use abstract thinking (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Keating, 2004; Kuhn & Pease, 2006).

Kuhn (2008) offered alternative ways on how the formal operations stage develops differently from earlier stages. She found that a hallmark of cognitive engagement in adolescence is the ability to move beyond transfer, a quality that is discernable in childhood development, to transition and transformation in adolescence. She acknowledged that not all adolescents and adults are adept at metacognition, or formal operations (Kuhn, 2008). As in earlier stages of development, according to Kuhn (2008), people do not learn to think metacognitively simply as a product of biological maturation. Therefore, Kuhn (2008) addressed a pivotal concern of
understanding cognitive engagement as it applies to adolescents. Exploring cognitive engagement may help researchers better understand adolescents’ movement beyond transfer to transition and transformation. Kuhn (2008) introduced the importance of this sensitive period for adolescents to foster metacognition, but she did not seek adolescent voices to get a better understanding of the multifaceted components of cognitive engagement.

Researchers have pointed to adolescent intellectual development as a double-edged sword (Kuhn, 2008; Lerner, 2002). On the one hand, adolescents have the freedom to explore on their own and further their intellectual enrichment independently. Shernoff (2013) examined adolescents’ burgeoning independent learning abilities through the theoretical lens of flow theory in private Montessori schools and other alternative public and private schools. He found that the extent to which an individual believed he or she could control the events that affect them had a dramatic effect on cognitive engagement. On the other hand, adolescents have the choice to continue on a comfortable, un-intellectually stimulating path. Unfortunately, recent statistics show that adolescents are often bored in school. In a study conducted by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University (2009), 66% of students reported being bored at school a minimum of one time or more every day, and 17% reported being bored in every class. As Lerner (2002) stated, individuals during adolescence become “producers of their own development” (p. 11). Therefore, this burgeoning independence that adolescents have aligns with adolescence as a critical period for fostering the multifaceted components of engagement. By studying adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts, this study sought to uncover the complexities of adolescents as “producers of their own development” (Lerner, 2002, p. 11). I was interested in understanding whether adolescents’ interpretation of sports texts had similarities to the traditional notions of cognitive engagement, or whether adolescents’ engagement with sports texts differed from how
they normally engaged with texts in the English language arts classroom. These wonderings drove my thinking in the present study.

Miller (2009) provided convincing evidence that giving adolescents the time to read in school and choice in texts may also lead to improved cognitive engagement. Miller used instructional activities including self-reflections (personal reflections regarding the strengths and weaknesses a student has with reading), I-read reflections (reading journals where students record connections, thoughts, predictions, and vocabulary), and strategic goal setting (setting goals for students’ reading for the year) to emphasize the importance of reading a variety of texts. She found that changing students’ attitudes toward reading by allowing choice and regarding reading as a fun, worthwhile endeavor dramatically improved student engagement. As a result of her case study, she showed how student voice and opinion are crucial to deepening students’ cognitive engagement with reading. In the present study, I was interested in examining whether tapping into adolescents’ interest in sports texts had a similar positive effect on cognitive engagement. When the participants in my study read and discussed texts of their choosing at their own pace, I had opportunities to witness cognitive engagement.

Other researchers have explained additional underlying cognitive mechanisms that enhance or diminish adolescents’ cognitive engagement with reading (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Dweck, 2007; Tough, 2013). Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) divided implicit theories of intelligence into growth-oriented and fixed-oriented; adolescents who take a fixed perspective of intelligence focus on performance and innate ability, whereas adolescents who take a growth mindset acknowledge that intelligence is malleable and that increased intelligence comes in incremental steps. In a growth mindset, people focus on effort.
According to Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007), adolescents do well when they consider that intelligence can be developed.

Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) conducted two studies on growth-oriented and fixed-oriented implicit theories of intelligence. In study 1, they examined students’ theory of intelligence (fixed or growth mindset) and whether or not it connected to lasting achievement trajectory. The study consisted of 373 middle school students who varied in ethnicity, achievement, and socioeconomic status. For those students who saw cognitive ability as malleable, grades improved. For those students who saw cognitive ability as fixed, grades predicted a flat trajectory. The researchers replicated this study of the meditational model on a lower-achieving sample, as well. In study 2, (2007) the researchers took an intervention approach to determine whether or not teaching children to think their cognitive ability is malleable will display more positive engagement and motivation in the classroom. The study consisted of 99 low-achieving seventh-graders (with “low-achieving” defined as the 35th percentile or lower on an achievement test). The middle school students participated in eight, 25-minute periods led by undergraduate students who were trained to teach sessions on growth mindset. The results of the experimental study showed that teaching growth mindset produced no decline in achievement. Before the intervention, there was decline and continued decline was found in the control group. The most promising finding was that the single intervention in one semester halted the decline in achievement. Study 2 (2007) showed the relationship between theory of intelligence (growth mindset and fixed mindset) and engagement and motivation in a longitudinal, real-world setting. The researchers found that diverging achievement scores emerge only during challenging transitions in school. Motivation is crucial during adolescence when challenge is present. The
studies showed that diverging achievement scores were less likely in a supportive, less failure-prone environment such as elementary school (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007).

Yet Graham and Werner (2012) uncovered in their research that students’ implicit of theories may not be domain general; for instance, adolescents may take a growth mindset in music lessons, whereas they take a fixed mindset in geometry lessons. This finding led me to consider what effect the use of sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club had on adolescents’ mindsets. Would the participants carry the same mindset in the traditional English language arts class as they did in a voluntary sports reading club? Would the mindset in a voluntary sports reading club transfer to traditional contexts for learning in schools? I addressed these questions in my study. I was interested in the possibility that a student’s mindset may affect how they approached reading of traditional canonical texts versus reading of sports texts. Graham and Werner (2012) also noted that performance can be a positive motivator; in other words, if a person is approaching the performance in a positive manner, performance may have the capacity to act as a catalyst for growth mindset. Will participants who regularly perform on the athletic field reflect a similar mindset in a voluntary sports reading club as they do on the field? How does this mindset in the club compare to the participants’ mindset in a traditional English language arts classroom? The questions surrounding growth and fixed mindset served as an intriguing open-ended lens to explore the students’ cognitive engagement in the sports reading club.

To summarize, researchers who have studied cognitive engagement have detected that opportunities for adolescents to independently read books of their choosing, opportunities for adolescents to focus on meta-strategic skills, and recognition of implicit theories of intelligence, all affected student cognitive engagement (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Kuhn, 2008; Miller, 2009). Researchers, however, have yet
to explore how these factors in cognitive engagement affected students’ engaged reading of sports texts. The knowledge structures adolescents brought to the voluntary sports reading club played intriguing roles in their cognitive engagement with the texts.

**Emotional engagement.** Researchers have found that emotional factors also play important roles when adolescents measure student engagement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Ostermann, 2000; Voekl, 2012). Adolescence is a rich time of emotional development (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; Prencipe et al., 2011). Adolescents are making sense of the world, fostering close friendships, and experiencing biological and social changes (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). Adolescents are honing their sense of self and their influence on their families, friends, and society (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). As a result, adolescents “yearn for opportunities to explore and express their distinctive voices” (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009, p. 29). This exploration of distinctive voices may be a primary place for exploration in fostering emotional engagement. To highlight adolescents’ distinctive voices, learner expectations are driven by mental baggage a learner brings to an instructional event (Prencipe et al., 2011). Motivation, biases, expertise, varying degrees of self-regulation, and executive function all affect learner expectations (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). A learner may have a range of desires and intentions going into an instructional event that fall on a continuum of extrinsic to intrinsic motivation (Cameron, Pierce, Banko, & Gear, 2005; Wigfield & Guthrie, 2000).

Motivation helps to fuel emotional engagement (Eccles & Wang, 2012; Wigfield, Guthrie, & You, 2012; Wigfield & Guthrie, 2000). In recent years, researchers have increasingly directed their focus on the relationship between motivation and engagement (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Martin, 2012). Motivation can manifest itself as short-term motivation, self-motivation, and it can be used as extrinsic reward. Motivation, as it applies to this study, refers to
the reasons why a child reads. A person reads a text not only because of his or her capacity to read, but because he or she is motivated to read. Traditionally, theorists have divided motivation into two categories, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Extrinsic motivation takes into account factors outside of the reader, such as gold stars, grades, and pizza parties. The primary focus in this study is on intrinsic motivation, or reading as an internal source of enjoyment and enrichment. The following section addresses students’ motivation to read as an example of the variety of ways motivation and engagement comingle.

Fostering readers’ intrinsic motivation has been a concern of reading researchers for decades. In a seminal study, Oldfather and Dahl (1994) examined intrinsic motivation from a social constructivist standpoint, highlighting the significance of following children’s interests as they constructed their schemas on reading. Guthrie and Alao (1997) extended the ideas of intrinsic motivation to divide the characteristics of intrinsic motivation into three categories: curiosity, involvement, and preference for challenge (p. 407). Readers can ebb and flow by being high in one aspect and low in another, while still maintaining intrinsic motivation to read. These aspects do not have to work in tandem to increase intrinsic motivation, but with higher levels of each aspect comes increased intrinsic motivation. Unfortunately, Guthrie and Alao (1997) found that intrinsic motivation for reading in children decreased as the students moved from elementary school into middle and high school. Kelly and Rice (2014) also detected a substantial increase in student disengagement with reading in the middle school years. These researchers, however, did not explore what happens to engagement when sports enthusiasts are able to read texts of their choosing at their own pace in a sports reading club. Studies of what happens to intrinsic motivation when students read and discuss books on subjects they are interested in, such as sports,
may shed light on possible ways to curb the cascading effects of disengagement with reading in school and school-related activities in the middle school years.

Guthrie, Klauda, and Ho (2013) studied the connections between reading instruction, motivation, engagement, and achievement for 1,159 seventh graders. The researchers examined two contexts, one in which all the students in the study were taught in a traditional English language arts context and one an experimental group in which 854 of the students participated in Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), a reading engagement and motivation intervention. In the traditional English language arts model, motivation was positively correlated to achievement through engagement. In the intervention model, positive changes in motivation, engagement, and achievement occurred stronger than in the traditional English language arts instruction. Guthrie, Klauda, and Ho (2013) found that engagement increased through an intervention approach, whereas the present study was designed to seek adolescent voices through qualitatively means to highlight the indicators of student engagement. Guthrie, Klauda, and Ho’s (2013) study, however, does point to the differences in levels of engagement in traditional English language arts classes versus alternative means of literacy learning such as in a book club.

Behavioral engagement. Behavioral engagement refers to adolescents’ willingness to follow the rules of school or a given activity. For example, when students consistently show effort at school, but they still struggle with schoolwork, they may be behaviorally engaged, but they may not be cognitively engaged. Researchers in this field of student engagement focus on the degree to which a student shows effort in his or her work and in their willingness to comply with school or activity structure (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Guthrie, Wigfield, and You, 2012). Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) examined the relationship between behavioral engagement and reading achievement. They found that students with high levels of intrinsic
motivation also showed high levels of behavioral engagement. They also found, when they controlled for past achievement, self-efficacy, and socio-economic status, that behavioral engagement was correlated with reading comprehension scores. They, however, did not examine these indicators of behavioral engagement in a qualitative study through interview and observation. Rather, they conducted a large-scale study using self-report surveys. Guthrie, Klauda, et al. (2012) found that middle school students’ disregard for information texts was a leading factor in behavioral disengagement. In their study, Guthrie, Klauda, et al. (2012), however, focused primarily on traditional informational texts such as textbooks in middle school and secondary school. The researchers did not explore how allowing students choice to read information texts that aligned with their interests in sports may affect their levels of behavioral engagement.

Behavioral engagement was particularly compelling in this study for a number of other reasons, as well. There was a melding of out of school and in school structure in the sports reading club that affected the participants’ level of behavioral engagement; as further discussed in the chapter three, there was a defined structure to the activities in the sports reading club, while students had freedom to read and discuss what they wanted as it pertained to sports. I provided text suggestions and direction in group discussions, which was interpreted and accepted in various ways by the participants of the study. The goals and structure I set up for the voluntary sports reading group affected the participants’ behavioral engagement. I was interested in understanding what the students brought to the reading club from their in school and out of school literacies, and how the knowledge structures the participants brought to the study affected whether or not they were behaviorally engaged.
**Agentic dimension of engagement.** In recent research, researchers pointed to a fourth cornerstone of engagement: agentic engagement (Ivey & Johnston, 2012; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Reeve and Tseng (2011) introduced the agentic dimension of student engagement through a study of 369 high school students in Taiwan. Agentic engagement refers to the ways students contribute to their learning by showing agency, personalizing, and enhancing the learning event. Researchers used self-report questionnaires to assess four aspects of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic); to assess academic achievement, the researchers examined students’ grades at the end of the semester on a 100-point scale. Using structural equation modeling, the researchers showed the importance of agentic engagement to motivation, positive correlation to the three other components of engagement, and how agentic engagement explained variance in academic achievement ($\beta = .13$, $p < .01$). Reeve and Tseng’s (2012) instrument of the four facets of engagement was adapted for this study. The self-report questionnaires (Reeve, 2013) were used with permission to gain knowledge of the participants’ degree of engagement going into the study. Taking a theoretical approach, Smith and Wilhelm (2009) also emphasized agency as an essential component of student engagement. They outlined four characteristics of deep engagement: a sense of competence and control, a challenge that requires an appropriate level of skill, a focus on the immediate experience, and the possibility of social relationships. Smith and Wilhelm (2009) and Reeve and Tseng’s (2012) research related to agentic engagement opened the possibility that exploring adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts may address the problem of student disengagement in reading.

**Qualitative research that includes adolescent voices.** Recently, researchers have called into question the predominant methods of measuring student engagement (Eccles & Wang, 2012; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). They argued that surveys and
observation may not fully capture the construct of engagement. These surveys and observation techniques may reduce the potential of learning about indicators of engagement and the importance of context in fostering student engagement. Additionally, surveys often included general questions about engagement in school and school-related activities, and did not examine the content specific nature of engagement. With qualitative approaches, researchers can better consider the four dimensions of engagement together and get a more comprehensive picture of adolescents’ engaged reading experiences (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013).

In this study, I incorporated adolescent voices into all phases of the research. The participants provided first-hand accounts through interviews and observation, their thoughts as they read and discuss sports texts, and they had opportunities to member check throughout the process; when seeking adolescent voices, it was important to allow opportunities for the participants to be actively involved throughout the research. Zoss, Smagorinsky, and O’Donnell-Allen (2007) provided a compelling example of seeking adolescent voices and perspectives when they studied three students during part of a yearlong study of self in a 12th grade English class. The characteristics of the Zoss, Smagorinsky, and O’Donnell-Allen (2007) study aligned with the goals of my study. The researchers included rich, meaningful description of participants with information about the participants for the reader to learn. With these vivid descriptions, interpretation was left to the reader --an important characteristic for qualitative researchers as they used descriptive analysis to present findings to the reader. In sum, the research connections in the Zoss, Smagorinsky, and O’Donnell-Allen (2007) complemented the multifaceted components necessary for deep engagement in the present study.
**Engaged Reading**

A review of the current research on engaged reading was essential to understanding the potential of sports texts to support adolescents’ engaged reading in the present study. Researchers have found that a number of instructional practices lead to engaged reading, including an acknowledgement of reading as a social act in which readers make meaning through interaction, strategy instruction, and choice as a catalyst for engaged reading (Beach, Campano, & Edmiston, 2010; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Kittle, 2013; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011; Lin et al., 2012; Rosenblatt, 1994; Vygotsky, 1986).

**Engaged reading as a social act.** Researchers have increasingly found over the last two decades that acknowledging reading as a social act is important to understanding student engagement (Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstedt, 2005; Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013; Heinecken, 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2012). From a transactional perspective, engaged reading occurs during an exchange between an individual’s construction of meaning in texts and their social interactions (Rosenblatt, 1994). Rosenblatt disrupted the idea of readers as strictly consumers of information. She was one of the first theorists to look seriously at the act of reading as a complex transaction between readers and texts. She argued that the meaning of a text does not lie exclusively in the text or in the reader, but meaning occurs during the complex transaction between the two domains. In her book, *Literature as Exploration*, she stated:

Terms such as the reader are misleading, though convenient fictions. There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are in reality only the potential millions of individual readers of individual literary works. (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 9)

She argued that reading is a highly personal and social act. The individual reader brings past experiences that affect how he or she reads, and he or she considers a number of possibilities for
engaging with texts. Rosenblatt argued that readers make choices on an efferent and aesthetic continuum when they read. In a general sense, readers can take an efferent stance when they choose to read for information, whereas readers can take an aesthetic stance when they choose to read for pleasure. The two terms are not in opposition with one another. For example, an individual reader can read a daily news article from a predominantly efferent or a predominantly aesthetic stance. The aesthetic stance evokes individual perception. The reader is not seeking information, but reading the text may elicit understandings through reflections of the narrative. Feelings of interest, curiosity, and involvement emerge as the individual reads. Rosenblatt coined the term “evocation” to describe the heightened moments of metacognitive engagement when reading (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 22). These are the moments when readers feel a personal and critical connection to what they read. When a reader transacts with the word and the world (e.g. the text and the context of the text), the experience has the dual potential of increasing an individual’s self-awareness and aiding one in acknowledging other points of view (Faust, Cockrill, & Hancock, 2005).

Researchers have built upon the connections between engaged reading and a transactional perspective of reading in recent years (Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstedt, 2005; Heinecken, 2013; Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2012). The transactional view of reading offers the possibility of engaged reading through social transaction between reader, author, and community. Heinecken (2013) used a transactional view of reading when she examined how students’ responses to Naylor’s controversial Alice series affected students’ construction of their identities. She found that the often-contradictory views readers had of the plot and characters in the series aided the readers in constructing their social and cultural identities. Guthrie, Klauda, and Ho (2013) examined an intervention model of motivation and engagement, uncovering that
deep transaction with texts may be necessary for deep engagement. The researchers, however, did not discuss the transactional theory of reading as it applied to sports enthusiasts’ engaged reading of sports texts.

**Strategy instruction.** Other researchers have investigated strategy instruction to foster engaged reading (Beers, 2001; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Maloch, 2002; Ruddell, 1997). Maloch (2002) conducted an oral discourse analysis on the challenges of moving from teacher-led to student-led literature discussion groups. She observed that introductory guidelines to peer-led discussion are not enough to produce meaningful student learning of the new discourse of peer-led discussion. With consistent, moment-to-moment strategy instruction, students progressed to more problem-solving, higher-order thinking in literature discussion groups. Maloch went beyond addressing that students needed more support within student-led discussion groups to investigating the strategies that a teacher used to help students reach the goals associated with student-led discussion groups.

In a landmark study, Ruddell (1997) examined strategy instruction through teacher and student interaction. He proposed that findings on the characteristics of high quality instruction led to improvement in student learning experiences. He covered teaching episodes, negotiating meaning between teacher and student, and reader motivation strategies. Successful strategy based teaching episodes moved beyond literal recall of text information into interpretive, applicative, and transactive thinking levels. Teachers who negotiated meaning well activated students’ prior knowledge, encouraged construction of meaning, and wove student responses through text and classroom discussion.

In a similar vein as Ruddell (1997), Lawrence and Snow’s (2011) recent research examined effective strategy instruction to foster engaged reading. Teachers used modeling to
teach students how to handle challenging reading passages, used direct explanation with specific strategies, used marking—where students bring the students back to the text, and used rewording of students’ comments to clarify meaning. They also emphasized encouragement of students to take a larger role in interpreting the text, be deliberate about turn taking and time management, and keep the topic of the classroom discussion focused and coherent. The group of studies, described above on strategy instruction, explored the possibilities of strategy instruction as a component of engaged reading. However, the focus of these researchers was not on investigating the use of sports texts in strategy instruction to promote engaged reading. 

Yet Gee (2004) pointed to the intersection between strategy-based instruction and the contextual issues outside of the teacher and learner. Gee argued that reading is more than an accumulation of micro processing skills. In earlier reading research, scholars spent much of their time studying individual cognitive processes rather than the social context in which reading and communicating takes place (Alexander & Fox, 2013). Gee (2004) argued that scholars put too much credence in the autonomous model of reading, thereby ignoring the importance of social interaction and culture to reading. He explained the social languages that students learned as they grew up, the communities of practice they participated in with their peers, family, and friends. As researchers continue to debate the importance of strategy instruction versus a model that emphasizes social interaction to foster engaged reading, there continues to be very little research on what happens to engagement when using sports texts to promote engaged reading.

**Emphasizing adolescent voices.** Although instructional practices that influence engaged reading have been well documented in the current literature, there is a need for further exploration of the definition of engaged reading to emphasize the voices and perspectives of adolescents (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009; Ivey & Johnston, 2012). To conduct a literature review on the
experience of life and schooling for adolescents, Intrator and Kunzman (2009) went right to the source—listening to individual adolescent voices. They argued that, too often, research studies did not include youth voices. Then, they provided an overview of adolescents’ views through current research. Along with arguing that adolescents needed more challenging curriculum and better relationships with teachers, they offered that listening to teen voices could also help in literacy efforts. Intrator and Kunzman (2009) noted that researchers have begun to acknowledge youth voices as important to reform, but these ideas have yet to be incorporated into school curriculum. This, therefore, points to further research on the possibility of making adolescents’ experiences with reading and discussion better by seeking out adolescent sports enthusiasts’ perspectives and investigating their engagement with sports texts.

Wigfield and Guthrie (2012) have been the leading researchers on exploring the definition and construct of engaged reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2010; Wigfield & Guthrie, 2006; Wigfield & Guthrie, 2002). They found that engaged readers are “strategic” (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2000). First, engaged readers make choices within a context and select from a variety of strategies for comprehending a text. They know when to slow down when they do not understand something in a text or use heuristics as they dig deeper into texts they are comfortable with (Baker, Dreher, & Guthrie, 2000; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004). Second, engaged reading leads to advanced knowledge acquisition. When students are engaged when they read, they learn. For example, researchers have examined what students learn when they show engaged reading through achievement and classroom contexts (Guthrie, Klauda, & Morrison, 2012). Third, engaged reading can lead to higher achievement. In a pivotal study, Voelkl, and Donahue (1997) found that engaged readers performed at reading comprehension levels four years higher than disengaged readers. Shernoff and Schmidt (2008) surveyed 586 sophomores and seniors in a
culturally diverse high school on their levels of engagement and success in school. They found correlation between GPAs and students’ level of engagement ($\beta=0.11$). In this body of research, however, there has been little explanation of students’ level of engagement when they explored sports texts, or what kind of strategic methods adolescents’ use when they read sports texts of their choosing.

**Choice as a catalyst for engaged reading.** In this section, I review research on adolescents’ engaged reading of texts of their choosing, including young adult literature, informational books, comic books, and hypermedia. Many of the recent findings on these non-canonical texts support an investigation of sports texts to understand engaged reading, which I will describe in an upcoming section on sports texts and engaged reading. Alvermann’s (2000) foundational study introduced this shift to recognizing choice as a catalyst for engaged reading in research she did on fandom. She found that movies, TV shows, graphic novels, and other media not only may serve as important entry points to compelling conversations with students, but they also may help teachers tap into students’ out of school learning and engagement. Alvermann, however, did not examine what happened to engagement when students read sports texts of their choosing. Her study did not raise questions about whether allowing students the choice to read sports texts in a reading club format may also allow students to explore multiple perspectives and serve as an entry point to deep conversations with adolescents, as other modes of fandom did.

In a similar vein to Alvermann (2000), through a case study that followed his model of reading, Tatum (2008) created a “textual lineage,” or diagram of books largely outside of the literary canon with one adolescent. Tatum discussed the reading materials with the adolescent and guided the adolescent as he identified texts and textual characteristics he found effective for becoming a better reader and shaping his own identity. Tatum found, through the lens of the case
study research he conducted, that incorporating a model of reading that emphasized interest, initiative, and concentration, acknowledging the voice of an adolescent that is often not heard, allowing choice in texts, and providing active guidance from a knowledgeable adult, strengthened an African-American adolescent male’s engagement with texts. Tatum (2008) took a more guided approach to reading with adolescents than Alvermann (2000) did, but also acknowledged the effects that allowing choice had on adolescent reading practices. Even with a growing amount of research that points to the benefits of using a variety of texts in school and school-related activities, there is little research on sports texts as a type of text to aid students in responding in a variety of ways.

Sabeti (2012) used an afterschool graphic novel reading group to uncover the kind of thinking adolescents undertake when reading popular texts. Sabeti offered that understanding the reading practices of students’ outside of school may help to provide insight into their engagement with texts in school. Sabeti (2012) made two important distinctions in her research. First, an afterschool graphic reading club can potentially be a place where students who are disengaged in the English language arts classroom can read and discuss texts in an engaging social context. Second, the critical reading that students did in the afterschool reading group may not be transferable to the traditional English language arts classroom, where interpretation is driven primarily by literary criticism. Participants drew on “a multitude of interpretive strategies” outside of the parameters of traditional literary criticism. In fact, Sabeti (2012) concluded, “the reading group revealed to me the embedded-ness of my own practice and the restrictions teachers, schools, examinations, the discipline of English, place upon students and their ‘reading’” (p. 209). Sabeti affirmed that examining what happens to engagement when students have a space to read and enjoy texts of their choosing may open up an entirely different avenue of research than what
can often be found in traditional English language arts classrooms. To extend her findings, the present study examined what happened when students exchanged ideas, interpretation, and reactions in a sports reading club as fertile ground for understanding engaged reading.

In addition to texts such as graphic novels and other non-canonical texts, adolescents have begun using film in compelling ways, giving greater attention to the screen as a viable space for allowing choice for fostering engaged reading (Bragg, 2002; Bruce, 2009; Fisherkeller, 2000). The National Literacy Trust (2013) reported on the daily reading habits of 34,910 children between the ages of 8 and 16. They found children prefer to read text on screen, with 39% of youth using electronic tablets such as eReaders and tablets, but only 28% of the respondents read printed material on a daily basis. These statistics show the evolution from print to screen in young people’s lives. Rozema and Webb (2008) used students’ interest in the web as an entry point to critical reading of literary texts. In the present study, I allowed participants choice in reading texts on screen or in print. I was interested in what happened to their engaged reading when they had opportunities to read in either medium.

Kist (2008) broadened the scope of our understanding of engagement with texts when he offered that technology should coexist with traditional texts. He found that secondary educators are increasingly moving away from using film as an activity after the “real work” has been done to considering it a valued genre of analysis, and that new technology should coexist with traditional texts (Kist, 2008). In his research, adolescents used video in innovative ways, breaking down specific scenes with students and doing scene comparisons (Kist, 2008). The students used graphic organizers and they began to map out the directorial choices and writing choices made in the scenes. These innovative ways that students used video proved fruitful in better understanding the indicators of engagement when students read sports texts in my study. Kist (2008) raised
important questions about whether traditional and new formats for texts can coexist. For example, I was interested in this study in how adolescents’ level of engagement when watching a YouTube video on types of zone defenses in basketball compared with engagement with print-based, fiction basketball texts.

In Kist’s study, adolescents dug into video, stopping throughout, watching small snippets, and talking about video conventions. They began, as Kist (2008) stated, “seeing film as one text available in a new literacies era” (p. 524). Other researchers have also analyzed the potential of an expanded notion of text. For example, O’Brien (2011) studied at-risk students and their use of multiple literacies to uncover that at-risk students are likely to be considered disengaged learners because they are only exposed to texts in the literary canon and are not exposed to texts that tap into their cultural and personal interests. Alvermann (2006) examined the digital correspondence between two adolescents who discussed a local, socially conscious rap group, as she questioned the distinctions between adult and youth culture. In short, all of these researchers I discussed pointed to the importance of choice in adolescent literacy practices, but while they explore in depth other non-canonical texts, they did not explore sports texts in the context of a voluntary sports reading club.

Other researchers have questioned the value of choice in learning events. Drawing from self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), Katz and Assor (2007) found that allowing choice was counterproductive when students were not given clear goals and ways to meet their needs of autonomy (student interest), competence (task is not too easy or too difficult), and relatedness (aligns with students’ culture). Katz and Assor found when students participated in a learning event that they were highly interested in, deep engagement occurred, whether or not they were given choice in that event. Meeting the needs of the students trumped offering choice. More
specifically, when choice was offered in a way that met the needs of students, student engagement improved. Katz and Assor recommended choice as an important factor in deepening engagement, while also maintaining a sound instructional plan and awareness of the needs of students.

To summarize, as researchers’ understanding of engaged reading has evolved, there is a clear trajectory that active adolescent engagement involves exposure to a variety of compelling texts in a number of different mediums and an acknowledgement of strategy instruction that takes into account the social nature of engaged reading. In much of the literature on adolescents’ engaged reading of popular texts, there is little discussion of sports texts as an additional type of text that may foster engaged reading. In the following section, I will review what is currently known about the intersection between literacy and sports texts.

**Sports Texts and Engaged Reading**

People are passionate about sports. According to a comprehensive report by The Women’s Sports Foundation, 69% of girls and 75% of boys under the age of 18 in the United States currently play organized sports (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). The Super Bowl routinely breaks the record as the most watched television show in U.S. history (Bauder, 2012). Sports revenue is enormous as well. The 24-hour sports conglomerate, ESPN, took in $7 billion in television affiliate and advertising fees in 2010 (Szalai, 2011). The average NFL team is worth approximately $1.04 billion (Badenhausen, 2011). Adolescents routinely attend sporting events with friends and family, watch 24 hour sports channels, watch sports movie blockbusters, read children’s and young adult sports novels, and browse the thousands of blogs and websites devoted to sports (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

Sports also gives educators the opportunity to get students to discuss, write, and think about a variety of aspects of the human condition. As early as the 1970s, researchers set the stage
for the potential of sports texts to support adolescents’ engaged reading by outlining the value of sports texts (Baker, 2007; Boston, 1975; Guttmann, 1978; Schneider, 2011). As Guttmann (1978) stated nearly four decades ago, “Sports has grown immeasurably in scope and in social importance, but the meaning of sport has received little in the way of serious attention” (p. 5). This statement still resonates today. As sports continue to gain popularity, it is often maligned and misunderstood (Crowe, 2004). For example, sports fans are ridiculed for spending years following their favorite teams, obsessing over statistics, and spending hours at a time glued to television and computer screens following, discussing, and writing about sports. To give sports serious attention, some educators and researchers (Baker, 2007; Schneider, 2011) have offered that students explore themes such as the characteristics of competition, the excitement of playing a game, and the emotions that come with winning and losing. Students also explore ways that people interact in competition, whether admirably or not so admirably (Schneider, 2011). In the following section, I review studies on the intersection between literacy and sport, narrowing down to gaps in understanding adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts.

**What sports texts may offer that other texts do not.** Researchers have not only examined the value of sports texts, but they have also examined the instructional potential of using sports texts in the classroom (Alvermann, 2004; Baker, 2007; Crowe, 2004; Dannen, 2012). Researchers have emphasized that reading sports texts may serve as a source of enjoyment and buy in for students and as an entry point to complex thinking (Brown & Crowe, 2014). Dannen (2012) took a critical thinking approach by using her students’ conversations about popular sports media texts as a means to teaching argumentation skills. Dannen found that issues discussed by popular sports media could be used in an academic environment to introduce her students to effective argument. Dannen’s primary focus, however, was primarily on the writing produced
when students discussed sports texts, not on students’ engagement as they read and discussed sports texts. Baker (2007) took a holistic approach to using sports texts by exploring the three pedagogical discourses he worked in at school—the poetry club he sponsored, the basketball team he coached, and the English language arts class he taught. Baker found that his students in the poetry club were engaged in ways that they were not in the traditional classroom. Discovering what worked to engage students in each discourse provided benefits for the other discourses. For instance, when a student showed leadership on the basketball court, Baker found that including the student in a leadership capacity in another discourse such as the English language arts class increased engagement. In sum, coupling student engagement and sports texts is an often-overlooked avenue of research. Although there has been a small number of research articles and scholarship on sports texts and literacy, there is still a great deal to be learned about what happens within the multifaceted components of engagement when adolescents are engaged with sports texts.

Some teachers and researchers have begun to use sports texts as a means to discuss difficult issues that occur in sports texts, including whether or not college players should be paid, on-the-field cheating scandals, off-the-field scandals, domestic violence, money and power in sports, and loss of a loved one (Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004; Brown & Crowe, 2014; Crowe, 2004). For example, because of the emotions involved in playing and watching sports as well as the issues surrounding sports, Alvermann, Huddleston, and Hagood (2004) have begun to show that important, timely, and difficult topics can be discussed in worthwhile ways through sports texts. They conducted a content analysis of one student’s participation in an in school curricular thematic unit on professional wrestling and a cross case analysis of 30 students interactions in an afterschool media club when they explored a professional wrestling video game.
They found mixed, yet intriguing, results in their study. First, the content analysis revealed one student’s deepened engagement in texts for a number of reasons, including as a result of having a pre-service teacher who was also a wrestling enthusiast act as a confidant as the two read, discussed, and dug deeper into wrestling texts. In the media club, the participants quickly became disengaged because of their varying levels of interest in wrestling and the lack of mediation in the group because the primary researchers were not wrestling enthusiasts. Additionally, they warned that these connections can be made between in school and out of school literacies, but teachers and educators should be wary of using traditional instruments such as five paragraph essays or traditional written response to assess what students learned in these contexts. I was interested in my study in the opportunities for engagement that occurred with texts in a club in which sports enthusiasts, including me as the primary mediator, had the freedom to discuss sports topics of their choosing. I analyzed the data through the components of engagement, rather than traditional assessment instruments.

Other past researchers have taken a broader look at the connection between literacy and sports. Andrews (1966) made connections between teaching language arts and coaching a sport. Frazier (1986) uncovered that using the strategies of a coach may improve student learning in English language arts classrooms. Hogan (1980) examined the challenges of students who willingly participated in sports, while they were required to participate in the English language arts classroom. These connections between sports and literacy are decades old and point to a need for renewed interest in what sports enthusiasts can bring to educators and researchers’ understanding of engaged reading of texts. As researchers, there is a need to learn more about adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts. In fact, recent researchers have argued that sports and sports-related texts is a form of engagement in need of further exploration, especially for
students who are at risk of dropping out of school (Finn, 2012; Yin & Moore, 2004). In addition, Finn (2012) offered that studies of student engagement with sports and sports-related activities could be important to testing hypotheses of the significance of student engagement with sports, especially using qualitative inquiry.

**Role of Context in Student Engagement Research**

A number of researchers have explored contextual factors that affected student engagement (Shernoff, 2013; Wylie, 2009). Adolescents spend in the United States and other Western nations an average of 40%-50% of their waking hours in semi-structured, structured, or unstructured activities outside of school (Larson & Verma, 1999). This study of engagement in a sports reading club took place in a semi-structured afterschool setting. Therefore, an understanding of the research on student engagement in afterschool settings was necessary. Over the last two decades, researchers have become increasingly interested in the time adolescents spend outside of school. Alvermann, Young, Green, and Wisenbaker (2004) examined adolescents’ interactions in a voluntary reading club; they noticed that when adolescents were given space to talk about issues of power and equity in an out of school setting, they began to think critically about the underlying power structures of school. Gore, Farrell, and Gordon (2001) found that involvement in out of school sports activities affected adolescents’ moods. Moje and Tysvaer (2010) conducted extensive research on adolescents’ out of school engagement with literacy, describing four types of out of school programs (literacy and academic development, literacy enhancement, academic enhancement, and social development). These programs included a variety of activities including remediation, homework help, community service with a reading or writing component, standardized test preparation, and literacy tutoring. These studies have broadened our collective knowledge base on activities and programs outside of the regular school
day, but none of these researchers look specifically at adolescents’ interactions with sports texts outside of school curriculum.

Larson (2011) examined both in school and out of school contexts. He found that adolescents reported low levels of intrinsic motivation and higher levels of concentration in their classroom experiences. In their experiences with their friends out of school, adolescents reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation but low levels of concentration. He found in structured voluntary activities, such as sports, arts, hobbies, and organizations, adolescents showed high levels of both intrinsic motivation and concentration. He concluded that structured voluntary activities involved a unique mix of the positive outcomes of in school and out of school engagement. Additionally, he offered the importance of real world settings to developing cognitive and emotional engagement. Larson (2011), however, did not address the multifaceted components of student engagement through the lens of a voluntary sports reading club.

Often in semi-structured settings, adolescents over the last two decades have increasingly participated in small reading groups in school and school-related activities. The small reading groups provided a casual setting for adolescents to enjoy and discuss books in the classroom in the ways that advanced readers do, although there is little known research on the use of sports texts in reading groups (Daniels, 2002; Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstedt, 2005). These reading groups are often designed with a predominantly cognitive emphasis, a critical emphasis, or a constructivist emphasis. In a cognitive approach, adolescents use reasoning, questioning and communication skills to sustain talk (Clarke & Holwadel, 2007; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011; Lin & Anderson, 2011; Maloch, 2002). Adolescents often do not delve as into as much depth to topics such as the knowledge they bring to the learning situation, nor do they discuss macro issues of culture such as race, class, and gender. In a critical approach, adolescents move the reading from a
personal response to a personal and social response that questions the status quo and underlying hegemonic structures of schooling and literacy (Faust et al., 2005; McCall, 2010; Thein, Guise, & Sloane, 2011; Young, 2000). In the constructivist approach, adolescents construct meaning to interpret the individual and culture setting (Casey, 2009; Daniels, 2002; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Raphael & McMahon, 1997). In chapter three, I detail the reading circles composite used in my research study. The participants had opportunities to critically analyze the sports texts they read.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed four areas of focus relevant to my study: the construct of student engagement, instructional factors that influence engaged reading, engaged reading of sports texts, and contextual factors that influence student engagement. Analyzing these four areas of the study indicated the importance of the study to contribute to the existing body of research. First, I examined the four facets of engagement and I examined the current methodological challenges in engagement research including the lack of research on student engagement using qualitative inquiry. Second, I reviewed the instructional factors that bring about engaged reading, including a focus on the social, strategy instruction, and choice as a catalyst for engaged reading. I also revealed a gap in the literature that called for further exploration of the definition of engaged reading to ensure that the voices and perspectives of adolescents were heard and included. Third, I reviewed the current literature on the potential of sports texts to promote engaged reading. Although there has been some research on the potential of sports texts to promote engaged reading (notably on the value of sports texts and using sports texts as an entry point to discussion of controversial issues), researchers have not explored what happens to student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts in a semi-structured voluntary reading club. I concluded this chapter with a review of the current research of the importance of context, especially as it relates
to reading clubs and other semi-structured activities, in research on student engagement. The context in which learning activities take place, whether they are structured, unstructured, or semi-structured, play significant roles in the quality of engagement.

By focusing on these four components of the literature review, I had the necessary frames of reference to observe what happened to student engagement in the voluntary sports reading club. How engagement ebbed and flowed served as the lens through which I examined the experiences that took place during my study. Additionally, these four elements addressed the problem of student disengagement by informing literacy teachers, teacher librarians, and other educators and researchers on a program that explored the use of sports texts to uncover the indicators of adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts. In the following chapter, I discuss the design and procedures of the study.
3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the design and procedures I used to conduct the study. First, I restate the purpose and research questions for my study. Next, I describe the design of the study. I provide a description of data collection procedures and how I conducted data analysis. I conclude with a discussion of ethical considerations and a timeline for the study (See Table 4. Timeline for Study). The transactional theory of reading provided the basis for which the data was collected and analyzed (Rosenblatt, 1994). I chose case study methodology because it provided the opportunity for in-depth description and analysis of what happened to student engagement in a voluntary sports reading club.

Purpose of the study and research questions. The purpose of this study was to (a) investigate cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic factors that contributed to student engagement when three adolescents explored sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club, (b) to provide material for the reader to learn about the multifaceted components of student engagement, and (c) to explore the use of reading clubs as they apply to adolescents’ reading and discussion of sports texts. Two questions guided my research: (1) What were the indicators of engagement when selected adolescents interacted with sports texts? (2) What contextual factors brought about the features of student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts?

Qualitative case study design. Influenced by the nature of my research questions as well as the need for rich description to describe the phenomenon studied (Stake, 2005), I chose qualitative case study as an appropriate methodology to examine student engagement with sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club. I kept a number of requirements in mind as I considered the use of case study methodology. First, my study focused on a single or small group of cases, in this case three adolescent sports enthusiasts (more information about participant selection...
follows). Stake (2005) contended that case study is “a noun, a thing, an entity; it is seldom a verb, a participle, a functioning” (p. 1). In this case, I conducted an intrinsic study in which I offered an examination of adolescent readers as they participated in a voluntary sports reading club. Stake (2005) defines an intrinsic study as a study in which the researcher seeks a comprehensive understanding of a particular program, individual, or organization. I was interested in conducting an intrinsic study, per Stake (2005), of a voluntary sports reading club to provide insight into my interest in what happens to engagement when adolescents interacted with sports texts.

My theoretical framework, guided by the tenets of Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of literature, played essential roles in the case. Stake emphasized that theoretical framework is critical as well as allowing flexibility and openness to new avenues of exploration. Guided by Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading (1994), I was interested in how sports enthusiasts brought experiences that affected how they approached a text, creating a transaction between text and reader in which the meaning of a text does not lie exclusively in the text or the reader, but meaning occurs during the complex transaction between the two domains. Building upon my focus on the transactional theory of literature, I developed research questions for the study, which guided my research as I completed the data collection and data analysis stages.

The data collection process I used was based on Stake’s (2005) general guidelines for the methodology. The major tenets to Stake’s model follow:

1. “Fence-in” or bound the case
2. Select the research questions to emphasize
3. Seek patterns of data to develop the issues
4. Triangulate the description and judgments the researcher makes
5. Select alternative interpretations to pursue
6. Develop assertions or generalizations about the case

First, I bounded the case by carefully choosing a research site and participants. In the following section, I provide a detailed description and reasoning for my selection of the site and participants. After completing the literature review, I narrowed my research to three research questions, focusing exclusively on the bounded case of a voluntary sports reading club. While conducting data analysis and during the writing of the findings for the study, I reduced the number of research questions from three questions to two questions. In the research question that I decided to collapse with the current research question 1, I sought to examine change over time in level of engagement throughout the program. After examining my data set, I determined that focusing on observed change over time did not align with the data I collected for the study, nor would it have been beneficial to the data presentation.

Research Setting

Roosevelt Middle School (pseudonym) is a public Title I school located in a large, metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States. The school was founded approximately thirty years ago and, according to the school’s website, has more than 700 students in sixth through eighth grade. The school has a diverse population consisting of 45% African-American, 30% Hispanic, 20% White, 3% Asian, and 2% Multiracial. 80% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged, and 25% are English language learners according to the school’s website. The school has a number of extracurricular activities with successful sports and academic programs, including football, basketball, and soccer teams, a Robotics team, Beta Club, Chess Club, and 4H Club. I gained entry to the field through permission from the county, principal, participants, and permission from the university institutional review board. The school is located approximately two miles off a major interstate, with thousands of cars and tractor-
trailers buzzing by the seemingly non-descript area every day. The houses in the neighborhood surrounding the school were built in the 1960s and 1970s and are primarily well-kempt. The area surrounding the school is working class with gas stations right off the interstate and a strip mall with a Pizza Hut and a Chinese takeout restaurant a block from the school. There were several houses and storefronts for sale along the streets near the school.

Roosevelt Middle School had much in common with schools I worked at previously as a middle school teacher and an elementary school librarian. The brightly lit hallways, the bustle of students, and posters on the walls of events and student accolades harkened back memories of my experiences as a middle school teacher. I was greeted in the school’s main office by one of the school’s administrative assistants and directed to the classroom in which the club took place. The classroom looked much like mine when I was a middle school teacher, with colorful posters on the wall, daily objectives on the dry erase board, an overhead projector board, and desks organized in groups of four.

For the reading club, the group primarily used the classroom of the afterschool program director and sixth grade social studies teacher. I worked with him on planning and implementing the club. We met three weeks before the reading club began to discuss the goals and plans of the study. A former teacher of the year at the school, he was a fellow sports fan. Before club sessions, we often chatted about our favorite local sports team and their fledgling offensive line and running game. His friendly demeanor made it easy to transition to reading and talking about sports with the study participants.

The sports reading club took place on Mondays and Thursdays for approximately 45 minutes each session for a total of six weeks, beginning November 3, 2014 and ending December 18, 2014. The group members and I were excited because the club took place during
one of the busiest times of year for sports fans. The Major League Baseball (MLB) season was coming to a close with the League Championship Series and the World Series, the National Basketball Association (NBA) season was kicking off, college football was in full swing, and the push to the playoffs was taking place in the National Football League (NFL). We had a number of routes we could go in our exploration of sports texts. I let the participants dictate what we covered in the sports reading club, as they indicated an interest in football and basketball in the initial interviews and discussions during the sessions of the study. All three of the focal participants had interest in basketball and football, especially the teams and athletes in the NBA and NFL.

**Participant Selection**

Merriam (2009) noted the importance of context when she defined case study as an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p.40). She emphasized that case study researchers must determine the limits or boundaries of the study. Researchers “fence in” what they are going to study. (p. 40). Merriam cautioned, “If there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who can be interviewed or to observations that can be conducted, the phenomenon is not bounded enough to be a case” (p. 41). Therefore, it is important in case study research to explain in depth the reasoning behind participant selection.

I considered a number of factors as I decided who qualified for my study. In general, case study criteria for participant selection could include a number of considerations including a particular SES background, level of achievement in school, age group, or interest in a particular school subject (Merriam, 2009). In my study, the rationale for selecting the participants for my study was primarily two-fold; my two most important criteria were to choose adolescents who were sports enthusiasts and who had expressed disengagement from school and school-related
activities. The participant recruitment process went as follows. First, I posted flyers (Appendix D) throughout the school approximately two weeks before the first session of the sports reading club. The flyer consisted of the tagline, “Are you a die-hard sports fan?” and included the times the club would meet and the goals of the club. Second, I provided an announcement on the morning student newscast calling for students interested in the club. The pool of participants was approximately 100 children who already participated in the afterschool program, though the announcements and flyers were announced to all of the children in the school. Third, I met with five interested students before the program began. During this meeting, I introduced the study, and the students asked questions about the program. I discussed the benefits of the program, including opportunities to talk about sports texts the participants were interested in, snacks, books, and texts about sports. I discussed requirements of the program, including attendance at each session, approximately 45 minutes each time. Other requirements I shared with the students included reading a variety of sports texts and writing in reaction journals if they chose to do so. During this meeting, I also asked those five students who volunteered for the program to fill out two participant selection instruments (see Appendix A and Appendix B), one to determine the degree to which the participant was a sports enthusiast and another to get a preliminary understanding of the participant’s level of student engagement. The five students participated in semi-structured interviews at the beginning of the reading club program and at the conclusion of the reading club program (see Appendix C for the interview guide). I will discuss the interview guide in greater depth in the data collection section of this chapter.

Halfway through the program, I designated three participants as focal participants in the study. These three focal participants, Cameron, Joshua, and Khalil (pseudonyms), were chosen because they contributed distinct points of view to the group, and they attended all reading club
meetings. In the profiles in chapter four, I provide a detailed presentation of each of the three focal participants as they interacted in the club. Two other participants of the club, Javeon and Anthony (pseudonyms), were not discussed in the individual participant profiles. Their voices and perspectives, however, were woven into the reading club discussions throughout the study.

**Program and Curriculum**

In this section, I describe the program and curriculum of the study. I begin by providing background on the reading club. Next, I describe the structure of a typical session of the voluntary sports reading club; I tell how often the reading club met, what the participants read, and the activities I planned. Additionally, I explain in more depth where within the program I had opportunities to inquire about and observe engagement.

I designed this club, first and foremost, as a casual place for students to explore sports texts of all kinds. I wanted to leave the club as open ended as possible, so the students would have independent and group time to explore sports texts. The reading club met afterschool twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays from 4:00pm-4:45pm) as a part of the afterschool program that took place everyday afterschool from 3:45pm-6:00pm. During the days when the participants were not participating in the sports reading club, they were given time to work on homework, they were given specialized tutoring on academic subjects they were struggling with or had questions about, and they had time to participate in other extracurricular programs including band and art. The program took place over a six week period. I chose six weeks because I felt this time frame would be sufficient for the collection of data. In my past experience implementing reading clubs, this time frame often provided enough time to read and discuss a text or a group of texts before moving on to other texts.
During each typical session, approximately five minutes was devoted to a kickoff or hook about a current events sports topic chosen by me or the participants, approximately twenty-five minutes of reading sports texts, and approximately fifteen minutes of discussion of sports texts. Below is an excerpt of the club notes for the session on November 13.

Guide notes – Nov. 13

1. Hook: What was the most exciting event that happened in sports this weekend?

2. Read and discuss sports texts of their choosing (category: sports reporting)

3. Roundtable Discussion
   a. Questions to use in discussion:
      i. What did you notice when you read?
      ii. What did it remind you of?
      iii. What emotions did you feel as you responded to what you read?
      iv. What questions does it raise for you?

4. Back up - Read Sports Section of AJC together (Which stories are you interested in? Why are some stories put in particular placement on the pages?).

*Figure 1. Guide Notes*

These notes are a typical example of the ideas I had for each session. We often began with a hook to prime the pump for reading time and to get the sports discussion going. These hooks were open-ended and often related to current events in the NFL or NBA. The participants would often come up with ideas and texts to read during this discussion time. I had suggested texts available for the students, but the students also searched the online catalog at the school’s library, and they searched the internet for articles and videos related to sports. To maintain a shared set of ideas to discuss during the roundtable discussion time, I often asked the participants to find
texts related to a topic. The categories I used, which are discussed in more depth later in chapter 3, were game action, sports reporting, character development, and social issues. For the session above, participants read texts on sports reporting. We, then, discussed the texts the students read individually. If we had time at the end, I had back up plans that I sometimes used in future sessions.

During each session, I brought in examples of sports texts for students to browse and read. In Appendix F, I include a taxonomy of sports texts that I shared with the participants. They had the opportunity to read texts from the taxonomy or read texts of their choosing from home, online, or from the school’s library. Each session, the participants read sports texts of their choosing for approximately 25-30 minutes. This was a casual time when students read in the classroom and the school library media center and created artifacts in their journals if they chose to do so. During this time, I observed and took notes on their engagement and assisted the participants who needed help in choosing texts to read. I also used this time to talk independently with students about their engagement through the reading time. For example, I sought first-hand accounts about their interest in the texts they were reading.

After the 25-30 minutes of independent reading time were up, we convened as a small group for approximately 15 minutes each session. During this time, participants introduced the texts they read to the small group and shared their reactions to the texts. I did, when necessary, use the Critical Response Protocol (CRP), discussed in the reading club model later in this chapter, to elicit ideas and discussion points for the discussion period (Beach, Campano, Edmiston, & Borgmann, 2010). CRP provided a backup for eliciting response when the natural discussion lost steam or fell flat. During the final three weeks of the program, participants were
given the opportunity to record podcasts in addition to roundtable discussions after independent reading of sports texts.

To summarize, I outlined the program and curriculum so I had the opportunity to collect manageable and rich data. For the first 30 minutes of each session in which reading and journaling took place, I collected participant observation data and audio and video recording when necessary. Students independently read during this time or they read and reflected in their reaction journals. These reaction journals were collected after each session for analysis and returned to the participants at the end of the program. During the discussion time, students shared what they read and/or the artifacts they created in their reaction journals.

**Reading club model.** Three key ingredients made up my model for the voluntary sports reading club (Appendix F). First, the participants engaged in “exploratory talk.” (Mercer, 1995, p. 78) This term, coined by Mercer (1995), contains the primary goals of rich discussion. First, Mercer (1995) emphasized that exploratory talk involves group members being involved in critical and constructive criticism of each other’s ideas. Second, the group members offer and ask for statements and suggestions, and consider those statements as a group. Third, the ideas of group members can be challenged in respectful ways and justified through alternative hypotheses and sound reasoning. All members of the sports reading club sought out the ideas of others and were actively involved and accountable to their peers. I introduced this model of exploratory talk to the participants in session one and we practiced the model with an initial activity using Mercer’s (1995) ideas. During this initial activity, I introduced the guidelines of exploratory talk with a sports current events article on LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers (Windhorst, 2014). To set the guidelines for each discussion session, we also revisited the ideas of exploratory talk when necessary during the reading circle discussion sessions. For example,
when the sports reading club discussed what happened in the world of sports at the beginning of our sessions on Mondays, I reiterated the goal of constructive discussion in which each participant’s perspective is respected.

The second component of the reading club involved discussion of difficult or critical issues via exploratory talk. As discussed in the literature review, sports texts can serve as an entry point to discussion of difficult topics (Alvermann, 2004; Avila, 2012; Baker, 2007; Crowe, 2004; Dannen, 2012). In the findings chapter, I discuss the connections to difficult or controversial issues in sports that the participants make during the program. These topics included sports-related head injuries, The New Orleans Saints bounty scandal, the amateur status of college football players, and the Ferguson, Missouri protests, among other topics. Third, adolescents engaged in reading and discussing texts independently and of their choosing. Unlike the majority of reading club models, including Daniel’s (2002) literature circles and Raphael and McMahon’s (1997) book clubs, students in the sports reading club had the opportunity to choose their own texts and to read independently at their own pace.

These characteristics of a sports reading club program happened with my guidance and a variety of rich learning events. The participants needed to learn how to interact within this new mode of learning, as it did not follow a familiar social cognitive model of instruction (Bandura, 1976; Bandura, 1985). As in all learning activities, student engagement was an important factor in meaningful interaction in a sports reading club—and a driving force of this study. Therefore, I included student engagement as playing a part in all three of the primary goals of the sports reading club. In addition, support from me through my role as instructional guide permeated through the goals of the reading club framework (Beers, 2001; Vygotsky, 1986). Critical Response Protocol (CRP) was used to aid participants in moving the reading and response to
texts from a personal response to a personal and social response that moved beyond face value 
response to texts (Beach, Campano, Edmiston, & Borgmann, 2010). The protocol included five 
questions to give students space to begin critically analyzing text without judgment. I used these 
questions judiciously to elicit discussion during discussion time:

1. What do you notice?
2. What does it remind you of?
3. What emotions do you feel as you respond to this work?
4. What questions does it raise for you?
5. What meaning or understanding is intended or conveyed in this work?

(Beach, Campano, Edmiston, & Borgmann, 2010, p. 27)

CRP helped me understand their engaged reading of texts as the participants developed questions 
and constructed meaning about the text (Rosenblatt, 1994). CRP was especially appealing 
because the questions were open-ended and could be used with a variety of types of text.

**Sports texts taxonomy.** I created a working taxonomy of sports texts (Appendix G) for 
the program; the texts in the taxonomy fall into four categories: game action, sports reporting, 
character development, and social issues. Texts where the theme of game action predominates 
focus on fair play and the immediate experience of watching, playing, and learning about sports. 
Game-action also includes the reading and strategy that occurs when adolescents participate in 
fantasy sports leagues. The sports reporting category includes articles, blogs, and informational 
pieces; a sub-theme within this category includes texts that examine sports as big business. Texts 
where character development predominates focus on how sports are used to reveal characters, 
even though the texts are not exclusively about sports; a sub-theme within this category includes 
coming-of-age texts. The final category includes sports texts where social issues predominate.

This, along with the suggestions in pre-program interviews and discoveries of new texts during the program, provided a starting point for texts the participants read and discussed in the sports reading club. During the club, the participants and I discovered a number of sports texts including *Fourth down and inches: concussions and football’s make-or-break moment* by Carla McClafferty (2013), Belman’s (2009) *More than a Game* (2009) LeBron James Documentary, *Play basketball like a pro: Key skills and tips* by Nate LeBoutillier (2010), *The League* by Thatcher Heldring (2013), among many other texts. I provide a detailed list of the texts the participants read in Chapter 4 (Table 9, p. 174). These texts show the variety of texts available to sports enthusiasts. Schneider (2011) states, “Excellent sports writing can demonstrate the power
of story, the power of good writing on subjects kids care about” (p. 72). Researchers have increasingly emphasized that reading sports texts may serve as a source of enjoyment and buy in for students and as an entry point to complex thinking (Baker, 2007; Crowe, 2004; Dannen, 2012).

Data Collection

Data sources included semi-structured interviews, participant observation during sports reading club meetings, session observation using audio and video recording, participant reaction journals, and lesson plans and activities as field notes. In this section, I review each research question and discuss the data sources used to explore each question. Additionally, I make connections between research questions, data sources, and my theoretical framework.

Table 2.

Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Connection to Research Question</th>
<th>Connection to Theoretical Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the indicators of engagement when adolescents explore/interact with sports texts?</td>
<td>Interviews, Participant Observations (audio and video), Participant Journals, Lesson Plans and Activities</td>
<td>Explore the influence that reading sports texts has on student engagement.</td>
<td>Examine the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic components of engaged reading of sports texts. (Christenson, Reschly, &amp; Wylie 2012; Langer, 2000; Rosenblatt, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What contextual factors bring about the features of student engagement when adolescents explore sports texts?</td>
<td>Interviews, Participants Observations (video and audio), Participant Journals</td>
<td>Explore the influence that context has on student engagement</td>
<td>Examine the contextual factors (e.g. participants’ background knowledge and group interaction) that bring about engaged reading of sports texts. (Langer, 2000;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I describe what data sets I used to answer each research question in the table above. This chart provided a reference point for how I used each instrument. In the following section, I present a detailed discussion of each data source, how often I used it, and how it related to my research questions and theoretical framework.

**Semi-structured interviews.** Stake (1994) stated that interview is an essential and popular instrument used in case study, and researchers need a well-organized plan for the interview to be successful in addressing the research questions. According to Stake (1994), interview in qualitative research is an open-ended process where emphasis is placed on participants’ experiences and individual voices. Stake (1994) elaborated, “Each interviewee is expected to have had unique experiences, special stories to tell.” (p. 65). I arranged the interviews I conducted by topic (See Appendix C- Interview Protocol). For this study, I had two interviews, one pre-program and one post-program. The pre-program and post-program interviews were approximately twenty minutes long. Each interview was approximately five pages of transcription, for a total of twenty five pages of transcription for the five participants. The individual pre-program interviews took place from 4:30 pm-5pm on the first two days of the program (November 3 and November 6) in the classroom of the after-school program coordinator. The other sports reading group members read sports texts while I conducted pre-program interviews of each of the focal participants. The individual post-program interviews took place during the last two sessions of the sports reading program (December 15 and December 18) from 4:00 pm-4:30pm. I conducted the individual post-program interviews while the other group members watched a sports documentary and ate snacks to celebrate the end of the reading program.
In the pre-program interview, I got a sense of the participants’ interest in reading sports texts and their level of engagement with reading in and out of school (see Appendix C – Interview Protocol for outline of the questions I asked). I began by getting background information including their name, age, school, and teacher. Then, I inquired about sports books and websites each participant was interested in, favorite athletes and teams, what it means to be a sports fan, and experiences in afterschool reading programs. I then shifted focus in the interview to student engagement in which I asked one open-ended question related to each of the four facets of student engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). Related to cognitive engagement, I asked each participant to tell me about a time when he came across something that was difficult to read. This question related to the study’s theoretical connection to Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading by seeking to uncover the personal and critical connections adolescents make when they read texts. Related to emotional engagement, I asked each participant to tell me about a time when he was so excited about something he was doing that he lost track of time. Related to behavioral engagement, I asked each participant to tell me about an activity he enjoyed and completed from start to finish. Related to agentic engagement, I asked each participant to tell me about a time he expressed his opinion at school. I based these questions on the components of engagement described by Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie (2012) and Reeve (2013). I describe in greater depth the choices I made about the classification of engagement components later in the data collection section of this chapter.

In the post-interview, I left opportunities to get a sense of how the program went for the participant, what happened to their levels of engagement during the program, and inquired about
their thoughts and actions I observed throughout the program. In the post-program interview I asked Cameron, for example, about what he did not like about the sports reading club:

   Kevin: What were some things in this club that weren't that fun?
   Cameron: OK, well, I didn't like when we wrote about something. I don't really like writing about stuff. But if I have to talk about it, it's a different story. I'd rather not write. I do better talking about what I think. (Cameron, interview transcript, 12/18/15)

With these comments from Cameron and the other focal participants, they had a chance to tell me what they thought of the program. I observed and asked the same questions, for the most part, for both pre- and post-interviews to maintain structural integrity of the case (Merriam, 2009). I, however, did change the wording of the questions. For instance, when I asked about sports texts the participants read, I asked them to tell me about texts they read during the program in the post-program interview. In addition, I asked them to tell me about an instance when the participant lost track of time during the program. Below is an example of the questioning in the post-program interview related to emotional engagement during the club:

   Kevin: Was there a time during the club when you were excited about something and you lost track of time?
   Joshua: Yes, like when we were doing the NBA talk things, I totally forgot what the time was. I was having fun with that. (Joshua, interview transcript, 12/18/14)

To be clear, my goal in this study was not to change the participants’ levels of engagement through intervention. Rather, I was interested in exploring the multifaceted components of engagement when sports enthusiasts explored sports texts.

   Guided by Roulston (2011), I kept several points in mind when I developed the interview questions for the study. First, I made the questions I asked as open ended as possible. I used the
prompts, “Tell me about…” and “Describe…” as often as possible. This ensured that when I asked a question, I did not get a yes or no answer, an important pitfall to avoid during interview protocol according to Stake (1994). With each question, I attempted to get a block of data in the transcript from the interviewee. Below is an example of interview data from the study when I asked Khalil to tell me about a time that he enjoyed something from start to finish.

Kevin: Tell me about something you did that you enjoyed from when you started it to all the way when you finished it.

Khalil: When I memorized my basic scales on the trumpet. I accomplished it. I did something by myself and now I have something to remember. One time, I won a trophy for soccer. I had something to remember it by. I did something cool. (Khalil, interview transcript, 11/3/14)

With this open-ended interview question, I was able to get to know Khalil as a sports enthusiast as well as learn about his interest in other activities including band. The interviews of all three participants were enlightening, and the participants’ responses proved important in analyzing the case.

Even though I was not always able to get detailed responses when conducting interviews for this study, I attempted to set up the questions in an open-ended fashion. The participants had opportunities to run with the questions and give articulate and thought-provoking responses. In the case of less articulate responses, I solicited clarification and developed follow-up questions to get more data out of the participant. For example, I asked Joshua to tell me about his favorite sports during the pre-program interview (Joshua, interview transcript, 11/6/14). He simply answered by telling me what his two favorite sports were, not about his two favorite sports. I,
then, proceeded with a follow-up question in which I asked him what he thought he needed to do to prepare for high school sports. He offered:

I gotta keep working harder. I gotta practice like everyday and stuff. I play running back and full back and sometimes kick return. My coach says I need to work on my fundamentals, especially how to hold onto the ball if someone tries to strip it and finding seams in the defensive line. (Joshua, interview transcript, 11/6/14)

In the follow-up question, I got a detailed response about his intentions, since I asked him a more specific question. I also got a glimpse of his character and his willingness to work hard to improve in sports. On average, I asked five background information questions and four student engagement questions. In the post-program interview, I asked an average of two additional questions for each participant about their opinions about the sports reading program. On average, I asked follow-up questions three times during each interview. These follow-up questions were re-wordings of the questions to get more detail from the participant, and they were questions to elaborate on a prior comment from the participant. For instance, when Khalil mentioned in his interview an interest in playing soccer, I asked probe questions to get more information about Khalil’s interest in the sport (Khalil, interview transcript, 11/3/14).

Second, Roulston (2011) recommended that researchers use the interviewees’ own words in their follow-up questions. During the interviews, I quickly wrote down a word or two the participant said while the participant was talking, so I had notes to ask a follow-up. For example, Khalil mentioned his interest in soccer during his initial interview, so I wrote down “interest in soccer” to remind myself to ask additional questions about soccer including whether or not he played soccer and who his favorite soccer players were (Field notes, 11/3/14). This was especially important because I had limited background knowledge of soccer going into the study.
On a few occasions, my probe questions were clarification and slightly closed, yes or no responses, but they helped to maintain the flow of the conversation. I, for instance, asked Khalil closed questions to clarify what he did during the afterschool program (Khalil, interview transcript, 11/6/14).

Additionally, I heeded Roulston’s (2011) advice to avoid asking more than one question at a time. It was challenging, at times, to get my point across to the participant without stumbling around by over-clarifying. For example, I asked Cameron to talk about his interest in basketball and football in his initial interview (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14); however, Cameron primarily talked about his interest in football. After reviewing the interview transcript after the session, I noticed a lack of data about Cameron’s interest in basketball. Therefore, I asked him later in the club about this interest and got a detailed response. Additionally, I broke down questions to get more data for each question. For example, when I ran into problems with asking more than one question at a time to Joshua, I asked one question and let it sit as he processed, pondered, and elaborated on it. By allowing wait time, I tried not to overwhelm Joshua (Field notes, 11/6/14).

By choosing interview as a data source, I was able to observe the participants’ intellect and insights about sports texts and student engagement. I was often impressed by the background knowledge and expertise the participants exhibited about sports and sports texts. In this era of standardization (NCLB, 2000; Race to the Top, 2008), the pre- and post-interviews proved important in emphasizing adolescent voices in research on student engagement. I used the interviews to gather information about the ways adolescent sports enthusiasts created meaning through a complex transaction between text and author (Rosenblatt, 1994). For instance, I asked Joshua about his experiences reading with sports texts online. The questioning follows:
Kevin: What sports websites do you like to go to?

Joshua: I usually go on ESPN dot com and Nike ID to customize shoes and stuff. And news that happened. When I miss games, they tell us the scores and stuff.

Kevin: What makes the ESPN website fun for you?

Joshua: I just love all the stuff I can find about teams and players I like. It's amazing how much time you can spend on ESPN dot com. You start clicking on things and more things. You can spend a long time. You want to get off but you keep seeing more stuff to read. (Joshua, interview transcript, 11/6/14)

By asking Joshua about his experiences with sports texts online, I was able to witness what happened when Joshua interacted with these texts. I gained information about Joshua and the other participants’ degree of engagement with texts in the context of a voluntary sports reading club (Langer, 2000). I was able to witness Joshua being in and moving through an envisionment when he reported that he made personal connections and got carried away when he read content on the ESPN website. These stances Joshua took with sports texts also occurred during the reading and discussion sessions as well as in the player podcasts the participants created.

As I reflected on the experience of interviewing the participants, I asked relatable questions, thereby letting the participants’ voices be heard, and allowing them to tell me about their experiences with reading and sports. The participants had opportunities to provide first-person insight into their experiences and background as sports enthusiasts and readers of sports texts. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I collected informal debriefings before and after each session. The kinds of questions I asked included: (a) How did today’s session go? (b) What did you like best about last week session? (c) Is there anything you would like to change about how the sessions are going? These informal debriefings were important because they
helped me get a sense of the day-to-day interactions in the group, and the debriefings provided opportunities for adjusting plans and activities for future sessions (Creswell, 2008).

**Participant observation during program sessions.** In the participant observations during the program sessions, I gained valuable insight into the participants’ engaged reading and discussion of sports texts. Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) stated, “In active participation, the researcher takes on some or all of the roles of the core members” (p. 25). As a participant observer, I played an active role in most of the activities in the club, including reading sports texts and participating in reading club discussions. Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) suggested that active participation can open up “new levels of understanding” for the researcher (p. 25). First, I participated in the sports reading program with the students. I often read and discussed sports texts with the participants. Second, I gained trust of the participants. For example, on the first day of the club, I shared with the group my favorite teams and sports. I communicated through my interactions with the group members during the study that I had extensive knowledge of sports by participating in their discussions about sports and learning from them about the sports they loved. I talked in depth about my own interest in sports with them, as well as modeled effective talk about sports and engagement in the club.

Active participant observation presented some challenges as well. Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) warned, “An active participation role may affect the ability of the researcher to approach her/his analysis reflexively” (p. 26). To address these challenges, I used the collection method of participant observation as a first step in observation. I also relied heavily on the audio and video recordings of the program sessions to complete more in depth observation, in which I had time to think reflexively about the data. My process for participant observation follows.
Participant observation in this study had unique characteristics because of my active participation in the program sessions (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). First, I jotted down condensed notes as I actively participated in the program sessions (Creswell, 2008). I recorded, for instance, behavioral components of engagement including facial expressions, eye contact, and how long it took for students to transition from one activity to another in these condensed notes. To illustrate, I recorded Cameron’s arms crossed and his shoulders hunched over the text during reading time on November 6 (Field notes, 11/6/14). I included stream-of-conscious thoughts such as “speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 121). I paid particular attention to moments that could not be captured by my other primary method of observation, audio and video recording. I jotted down notes such as “Joshua losing focus” (Field notes, 11/6/14) and “Khalil’s eyes light up when I ask more about soccer” (Field notes, 11/6/14) as moments to refer back to when developing themes about what happened to engagement during the program.

Second, I expanded my notes within two hours after each session to fill in the holes of what I observed during the session. Below is an excerpt from my expanded notes two hours after the participants created player podcasts on their favorite NBA players. I wrote:

Today we spent the whole time working on the NBA MVPs. They worked out really great. They were engaged and the audio shows it. They were spirited and articulate. You can tell they enjoy thinking and writing about their favorite players. We only had about 40 minutes today and Joshua even put together a PowerPoint of his favorite player. I think it was Kevin Durant. He did a nice audio recording too. (Field notes, 12/4/14)

This excerpt showed my initial thoughts that the participants enjoyed creating the player podcasts for NFL players by going beyond the minimum required, writing about their favorite
players, and creating a podcast to convince the other group members of their player’s strengths.

The condensed notes for this session consisted of keywords I quickly jotted down during the session. For instance, I wrote down “engaged,” “Joshua does extra”, and “kids having fun” to remind myself to come back to these instances to expand upon these ideas when I completed expanded notes.

I used the observation time during the reading club sessions to get as much pertinent information down on paper as possible. As Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) stated, “The written record should contain as much verbatim conversation as possible” (p. 87). I jotted down particularly compelling comments verbatim during the sessions and the first listen to the audio recordings. For example, I wrote down the many catch phrases, such as “He got trucked” and “I wanna see him splash” as the participants watched sports highlights on YouTube (Field notes, 12/18/14).

Other times, I wrote down a few words or a word or two about the theme or category a comment may fit under. Below is an example of the field notes for Cameron on November 6:

![Field Notes for Cameron](image)

**Figure 2. Example of Field Notes for Cameron**

In this excerpt, I wrote down phrases such as “head tilted forward” and “shoulders hunched over text” to explain what was happening with behavioral engagement during reading time (Field notes, 11/6/14). Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) recommended taking as objective stance as possible as the researcher conducts participant observation. I tried to take an objective stance in my field
notes while also picking and choosing what I wrote down, focusing on moments in the observations that were helpful to my research questions.

With an advanced plan in place for activities, I witnessed the participants’ thinking and discussed the challenges they had as they read about sports and shared their ideas with the group. I then expanded my observational notes on engagement beyond the participant observation notes. Below is an example of my expanded observation notes of Cameron’s cognitive engagement:

In these observation notes, I began to map out examples of cognitive engagement for Cameron. First, I noted that the number of cognitive strategies Cameron used were evenly distributed across the indicators. Then, I noted that Cameron showed cognitive engagement when he sharpened his knowledge of favorite teams, including Florida State University and the New Orleans Saints. Next, I noted that the player podcast of Paul Pierce also served as a catalyst for cognitive engagement for Cameron.

![Figure 3. Example of Expanded Observation Notes of Cameron](image)

In these observation notes, I began to map out examples of cognitive engagement for Cameron. First, I noted that the number of cognitive strategies Cameron used were evenly distributed across the indicators. Then, I noted that Cameron showed cognitive engagement when he sharpened his knowledge of favorite teams, including Florida State University and the New Orleans Saints. Next, I noted that the player podcast of Paul Pierce also served as a catalyst for cognitive engagement for Cameron.
Observation using audio and video recordings. For observation using audio and video recordings, I created a protocol checklist (see Appendix E). At the beginning of the study, I planned to use the checklist during real-time participant observation, but that proved difficult as I was an active participant and facilitator in the sports reading club. I used the protocol checklist three times during reading time in the program (November 6, November 13, and November 17). On the other times, I used the checklist while I examined the audio and video. In Appendix E, I provide a protocol for observation of audio and video. I used a checklist for the specific components of engagement for each session to examine the components of engagement. I located moments in the audio and video sessions when engagement was evident and when engagement was not evident. I took two hours of video throughout the program and audio recorded each of the twelve sessions of the program. I compiled and transcribed eleven hours of audio and video throughout the program and 75 pages of transcribed audio and video.

I developed a classification system to be used to analyze each of the components of engagement (cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic) in the study. I based this classification on Christenson, Reschly, and Wylie’s (2012), McClelland and Cameron (2011), and Reeve’s (2013) research on the facets of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic engagement. Christenson, Reschly, and Wylie (2012) offered that engagement has cognitive (invest cognitive effort in learning), behavioral (participation in school and related activities), emotional (attitudes and feelings toward learning), and agentic (how students actively contribute to the instruction they receive) components. I obtained permission from John Marshall Reeve, a professor in the Department of Education at Korea University in Seoul, South Korea, to adapt a version of the engagement scale he used in research presented in the Journal of Educational Psychology in 2013. Below is an excerpt of Reeve’s (2013) scale for cognitive engagement:
*When I study for this class, I try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences.

*I try to make all the different ideas fit together and make sense when I study for this class.

*When doing work for this class, I try to relate what I’m learning to what I already know.

*I make up my own examples to help me understand the important concept I study for this class.

Reeve’s scale was used to analyze engagement in a general classroom environment, and the instruments were used as a self-report questionnaire. Alternatively, I adapted the scale to be used in observation of the participants. For instance, when I examined evidence pertaining to attentiveness, I examined body language including how the participant’s head was tilted, the direction of his gaze, and the expression on his face. I also emphasized the small group framework of the study and the focus on the participants’ engaged reading and discussion of texts. Below is an example of the scale I adapted for cognitive engagement:

*Described cognitive strategies (e.g. made predictions)

*Went beyond minimum required (e.g. read additional articles)

*Detailed recall of learning events (e.g. recalled information about favorite team)

I kept the indicators succinct, so I could locate the indicators of engagement in the audio transcript and video. Going into the study, I had four indicators of engagement for each facet. As the study progressed, I collapsed one of the indicators for each facet. For cognitive engagement, I collapsed the indicator of using think aloud strategies. I collapsed this indicator because think aloud strategies proved too difficult to capture through observation in this study. In addition, it may have disrupted the short amount of time the participants had to read. For emotional
engagement, I collapsed the indicator of showing value in the activity at hand. Once again, this indicator proved difficult to measure during reading and discussion time. I, instead, asked the participants about the value of activities throughout the program during the group discussions, informal debriefings, and at the final interview. For behavioral engagement, I collapsed the indicator of showing disruptive behavior. I collapsed this indicator because the participants did not show overt disruptive behavior during the program. For agentic engagement, I collapsed the indicator of offering suggestions to make the activity better. I collapsed this indicator because I was able to capture these suggestions during the interviews of the participants. In addition to adapting Reeve’s (2013) engagement scale, I also used my own data to modify the scale during the study. I explain the classification system I used below.

When cognitive engagement was evident, I noted moments when the participant described cognitive strategies (e.g. showed technical knowledge of basketball, made predictions of game winners, made predictions while reading and/or discussing texts), went beyond the minimum required, and provided detailed recall of learning events. When cognitive engagement was not evident, I noted moments when the participant minimally used cognitive strategies, did only the minimum required, and minimum recall of learning events. I noted when the participant showed feelings of acceptance and belonging, showed curiosity, or was having fun when emotional engagement was evident. When I did not perceive emotional engagement, I recorded moments when the participant did not feel accepted or a sense of belonging, did not show involvement, or showed boredom. When I perceived behavioral engagement, I noted when the participant followed protocol of reading and discussion, was attentive, and followed directions. When I did not perceive behavioral engagement, I noted when the participant did not follow protocol of reading and discussion, was inattentive, or did not follow directions. I recorded when
the participant asked questions, expressed opinions, offered suggestions to make the activity better, and let me and the other group members know what he was interested in when agentic engagement was evident. I recorded when the participant was not proactive in asking questions, did not express his opinion, did not offer suggestions for making the activity better, and did not express what he or she was interested in when agentic engagement was not evident.

I created these indicators of engagement during the coding process of this study, and based these indicators on recent literature by McClelland and Cameron (2011), Christenson, Reschly, and Wylie (2012), and Reeve (2013). McClelland and Cameron (2011) and Christenson, Reschly, and Wylie (2012) provided a research basis for the indicators of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, whereas Reeve (2013) provided a research basis for the indicators of agentic engagement. Below is a sample of notes I took when I examined interview data for indicators of behavioral engagement for Joshua:

*Figure 4. Observational Notes for Joshua’s Indicators of Behavioral Engagement*

I completed these notes as I read through the transcripts and watched the video of the program sessions. When I saw a notable moment of behavioral engagement, for instance, I would flag the
moment as evident, not evident, or unable to classify. I then referred back to that block of data and took additional notes after examining the entire data set. In these notes, I began with a tally of the three indicators of behavioral engagement (in the top right corner). Then, I recorded notes where evidence was present for the three indicators of engagement. I also wrote down dates (bottom right corner of Figure 5) to refer to during write up of the results.

Because I was an active participant in the study, audio and video emerged as important data sources for observation. I considered solely using audio instead of audio and video as possible data sources, since students were reading texts in various places throughout the classroom and the school’s library media center, and video recording could be a more intrusive option than audio. However, video enabled me to capture facial expressions and other behavioral and emotional factors in student engagement that could not be captured with audio. I also considered that video recording might be less intrusive than it was in the past, as a result of the rise of small smart phones with video capabilities. Video was intrusive on two occasions for one of the participants in the study (Video field notes, 11/6/14 and 11/13/14). Joshua lost focus by looking at the camera, making faces, and pretending to comb his hair while the camera was recording. He appeared, however, to get comfortable with the camera recording as the program progressed, because these incidents did not occur beyond the first two weeks of the program.

Since I read and discussed texts alongside the participants, it was important to uncover what I missed as an active participant in each session by examining the audio and video recordings. I used a similar step-by-step process for participant observation that I used for observation using audio and video recordings. During the first listen, I took condensed notes as a real-time participant observer. I wrote down words and phrases to remember during analysis. For instance, when I examined the audio and video recordings for indicators of emotional
engagement for Joshua, I noted moments when Joshua expressed his distinctive voice. I wrote down phrase including “enjoyment of learning” and “sense of belonging in the group.” (Video field notes, 12/1/14). After the first listen, I moved to expanded notes. I stopped the audio and video throughout when I came across data rich moments. Below, for example, are my expanded notes from a session on December 1 in which indicators of emotional engagement were evident for Joshua. I wrote:

Joshua appeared particularly emotionally engaged with Spinelli’s *Maniac Magee*. Joshua showed that he liked these types of stories by sitting up in his chair while watching the video and sharing his perspective during the discussion. He said, “The black hated white, the white hated black. He was trying to make them together. Like nobody hated nobody. He was trying to make them all friends.” He talked about the racial tensions in the story and how those affected him emotionally. (Video field notes, 12/1/14)

Additionally, I transcribed each of the program sessions. The protocol for observation (Appendix E) ensured an organized plan for collecting data from the audio recordings that applied to my interest in engaged reading of sports texts. This audio and video observation protocol allowed me to witness the experiences the individual reader brought along that affected how he approached the text (Rosenblatt, 1994; Langer, 2000). The use of video and audio recording were essential to exploring Research Question 1, examining the indicators of engagement for the participants. As I had the freedom to stop and start the recordings, I added depth to the checklist of engagement indicators included in the observational protocol (Appendix E).

**Participant journals.** The participants used journals to provide reactions to what they read and discussed. Journaling was not used in the traditional school sense in which participants were required to create written responses to questions from the instructor. Instead, the journals
were open in prompts and delivery. Below is an example of Joshua’s journal entry from the session when he watched a movie version of Jerry Spinelli’s (2003) *Maniac Magee*:

"I like the story it was very emotional and sad. The reason I say that is because the boy ran away from home and found more homes and kept running and running, and at the end he found a permanent home. The reason he kept running is because people talked about him in the east-side so he showed them how it feel if they went to the other-side."

*Figure 5. Joshua’s Reaction Journal Entry*

Joshua wrote about his emotional reaction to Jerry Spinelli’s *Maniac Magee*, shedding light on the hurtful things the other characters in the movie said and did to the protagonist. I invited all kinds of responses, not necessarily written, to the texts they read. For example, participants were given the opportunity to draw pictures, write key words, show an object that connected to what they read, tweet or blog a response, Instagram a picture, or pass around a video camera to voice reactions. Khalil, for instance, drew a football goal in his reaction journal when he wrote about Seattle Seahawks cornerback, Richard Sherman, provided below:
Khalil indicated that this drawing helped him take a moment to reflect on Richard Sherman’s play, and it gave him an alternative way beyond a linguistic approach to express his interest in the football player. I envisioned this open-ended mode of journaling as play, not work. This form of journaling proved beneficial to two of the three participants. Joshua, for example, used journaling to jot down keywords to refer to while discussing the texts he read with the other group members and as a way to express his emotions. Khalil used journaling as an outlet for showing cognitive and emotional engagement that was often not evident during the discussions of texts with the group. I kept the written pieces of the participant journals between sessions, for analysis and so the participants did not lose them. I made copies of each of the participants’ journal entries, and I returned the original journals to the participants at the end of the program.

Program documents. The final data collection tool I used was program documents. Initially, I used reading club plans and activities as semi-field notes. As Prior (2011) states, “a focus on content to the exclusion of the manner in which a document is used could easily lead the social scientific researcher astray” (p. 67). For example, I used the observation protocol checklist (Appendix E) as an opportunity to evaluate the group members’ level of engagement.

Figure 6. Khalil’s Illustration in Reaction Journal
during the session. In addition, I used the participant journals as a way to aid the students with questions they had about the program sessions and to help them get comfortable with the activities. The journal entry documents aided me in observing the participants’ levels of engagement. They helped me examine the effect of exposing students to a variety of high-interest texts. In addition, reading club plans and activities were collected. The program activities included reading activities and discussion of texts and creating podcasts of favorite players.

Data Analysis

As the principal investigator in this study, I transcribed video and audio data, selected focal participants, and analyzed the data. LeCompte and Preissle (2000) compared the process of qualitative research analysis to similar thought processes people use in everyday life. People process information, notice patterns and discrepancies around them, compare and contrast new experiences to past experiences, and make judgments as a result of their experiences; I took this comparison to heart. Three approaches to analysis guided my thinking as I worked my way through the data for this study. First, I used constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Data were analyzed through a method in which new data were continually compared and contrasted with existing data as themes emerged (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Second, I used Saldaña’s (2010) recommendations for first and second cycle coding. He defined a code as “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). I kept in mind Saldaña’s metaphor comparing the act of coding to creating a title for a book. He stated, “Just as a title captures the primary content or essence of a book, the code captures the primary content and essence of a particular piece of data” (p. 3). I maintained awareness of this advice as I completed the coding process. My coding process follows.
I began my initial analysis with first cycle line-by-line coding. Saldaña defined first cycle coding as identifying “a single word to a full sentence to an entire page of text” for later analysis (p. 3). Through this process, I got a general idea of the data source and I began seeking patterns in the data. I used coded terms for the participants’ background (e.g. background), the ways the participants engaged with sports texts (e.g. having fun, arguing), the sports texts available to the participant and available at the school (e.g. nonfiction, fiction), the challenges the participants faced as readers (e.g. not interested), and the changes in engagement as the participants transacted with a variety of texts (e.g. increased engagement). I also coded for the participants’ perceptions of reading groups, their beliefs about reading in the classroom versus reading sports texts in a reading club, and the focus on choice in reading material in the program. Below is an example of first cycle coding developed through the initial stage of analysis. In this passage, I identified words and phrases that related to the four facets of engagement:

Figure 7. First Cycle Coding Example

Next, I did second cycle coding. Saldaña stated the second cycle of coding may include developing new codes, coding for longer passages, and for possible reconfiguration of codes (p. 3). In this cycle, I was able to reconsider previous codes and code for longer passages. In second-cycle coding, I sought larger sections of the transcript as codes. For example, I examined longer...
passages for examples of discussion. Below is an example on November 14 in which I wrote, “Example of not having common ground. Enjoying listening to others because of the subject matter” (Reading club transcript, 11/14/14).

Three things you learned from what you read:

Cameron: I read about the Saints' record. How their offense is. Their ups and downs. Mainly the downs that they had in the first four games. Drew Brees threw a real bad interception against the Detroit Lions. And when Michael Colston fumbled the ball against the Falcons.

KP: The Falcons beat the Saints this year? I didn't know that. What's their record?

Cameron: They're 4-4. They gonna have to get it together.

KP: Who's next?

Javeon: I read about Russell Wilson. He's really a good player for the Seahawks. He threw the ball for 200 yards and stuff like that. And another player on that team. He's a linebacker. Bobby Wagner. I think the left guard or right guard or something. He was playing with a real bad toe on offense. And he really helped them so far this season.

KP: Who's next?

Joshua: I read about the Cavaliers sucking. They suck bad right now. But LeBron is trying to put them straight back together. He's giving powerful speeches and strong stuff. That's all he do words.

Figure 8. Second Cycle Coding and Evaluative Analysis of Data

The code for this longer passage led to the development of the theme of examining the discussion in the group. I began thinking about the factors that led to rich discussion including the content discussed and the levels of engagement of each participant during discussion. Other differences in coding procedures for first and second cycle coding included development of new codes in second cycle coding and deletion of codes not pertinent to the study. As I developed new codes during second cycle coding, I referred back to my research questions to pay particular attention to indicators of engagement in the participants. I began to organize my codes into the
specific components of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) set out by the research questions in the study. In addition, I deleted codes not aligned with the study. These included codes that were action research or autoethnographic oriented such as personal connections to teaching and coding of program activities for other teachers to adapt to their own needs.

After first and second cycle coding, I applied Kuckartz’s (2014) evaluative approach to data analysis. Kuckartz defined the evaluative analysis approach in six phases:

1. Define evaluative categories.
2. Identify and code text passages that are relevant for the evaluative category in question.
3. Compile the text segments coded with the same code.
4. Define levels (values) for the evaluative categories and assign them to the text segments. If necessary, modify the category definition and the number of category values.
5. Evaluate and code the entire data set.
6. Analyze and present results using either category based results or in-depth interpretations of cases. (p. 89)

My approach to this analysis strategy began with the steps of constant comparison and first and second cycle coding described in the previous section. I used the components of student engagement (behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and agentic) for the evaluative categories. As I analyzed each component of engagement, I repeated steps 2-5 for each category using constant comparative method and Saldaña’s first and second cycle coding techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Saldaña, 2010). For example, when I coded for behavioral engagement for each
participant, in step 2, I went through the entire data set (e.g. interview data) and coded items relevant to behavioral engagement. In step 3, I compiled all of the texts passages that related to behavioral engagement into a list. In step 4, I assigned levels for cognitive engagement. Kuckartz (2014) suggested at least three levels in his evaluative approach to data analysis. When I coded for behavioral engagement for Cameron, for example, I coded for behavioral engagement evident, behavioral engagement not evident, and unable to classify. I recorded only moments of engagement for each facet of engagement that were particularly noteworthy and aligned with the research questions in this study. Recording every small moment for each facet of engagement would have been time prohibitive. Instead, I analyzed the data for each component of engagement and recorded the significant points of engagement. For instance, under evident behavioral engagement, I did not record every small instance a participant was paying attention, but I did record significant moments when the participant was or was not following directions and following the protocol for reading and discussion. Then, I presented evidence of the student’s level of engagement in the program. I chose this method of data presentation because I wanted to highlight each of the facets of engagement and explore the complexities of each student’s level of engagement in the program. In step 5, I evaluated the whole data set, under the respective evaluative category (e.g. behavioral), for each participant. Kuckartz (2014) stated, “This phase of analysis does not merely involve mechanical coding; rather, coders should stay alert and look for potentially relevant passages or examples to include in the research report (p. 96). Memos and analyzing larger blocks of texts were important during this stage. Below are samples of memos when I analyzed Khalil’s engagement in the program:
Figure 9. Examples of Memos from Data Analysis

Memo from my examination of indicators of emotional engagement for Khalil

Memo from my examination of indicators of cognitive engagement for Khalil

Memo from my examination of indicators of agentic engagement for Khalil
In the first memo, I wrote down notable instances when Khalil was having fun. In the second memo, I made a note of instances when Khalil made predictions as he read a fictional story. In the third memo, I noted how Khalil showed confidence when he talked about his favorite sport, soccer. These memos were attached to the audio and video transcript as I worked my way through coding. The use of memos and analyzing larger blocks of texts were important because I began an in-depth examination of each participant. I accumulated my thoughts on each facet of engagement, while also beginning to make connections between the four facets of engagement. When I examined cognitive engagement for each of the participants, for example, I examined three subcategories (describe cognitive strategies, went beyond the minimum required, and detailed recall of events). After completing this process with cognitive engagement for each of my data sets, I repeated the process for each of the other three components of engagement (emotional, behavioral, and agentic) for each of the participants. After analyzing all components of engagement, I presented results as a participant profile in chapter 4 of this study, highlighting the participants’ levels of cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic engagement during the reading program. My overarching goal was to emphasize adolescent voices and to provide material for the reader to learn about the multifaceted components of student engagement.

By analyzing a variety of data collection methods, I gained access to the participants’ voice and thinking. I further examined what happened to the participants’ level of engagement during each session and throughout the reading program. The participant journals and discussions during the program primarily served as data mechanisms for exploring the participants’ transactions with the texts they read. I was particularly interested in using the journals and discussions of sports texts to shed light on Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading as it applied to the personal experiences sports enthusiasts bring to reading. I used
these data sources to explore the participants’ responses to sports texts, and the potential of sports texts as a means for personal and critical connections in the texts the participants read (Rosenblatt, 1994). The reaction journals as well as the discussions during the club allowed me to explore the envisionment building stances the participants took and the degree to which the participants navigated the text world (Langer, 2011).

Prior (2011) stated, “our tasks [as researchers] will be to unravel what it is people are doing with words rather than with what they are intending –or meaning” (p. 122). By regarding Prior’s recommendation, analysis of the data in the study helped me look at what is outside of the text, not just at the text. For example, when behavioral engagement was not evident for Cameron in his reaction journal, I began to examine other ways that Cameron may have shown engagement. These included an examination of what happened to Cameron’s level of engagement during discussion. I maintained awareness of the participants’ intentions and what they were referring to in texts when completing analyses of data.

**Summary of data collection and analysis stages.** To summarize the data collection and analysis stages, data were analyzed through a constant comparative method in which new data was continually compared and contrasted with existing data as themes emerged using Saldaña’s coding recommendations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Saldaña, 2010). I continually analyzed data throughout the research process. I made transcripts of the tape recorded sessions, made notes of any important points, contradictions and inconsistencies, and I used Kuckartz’s (2014) evaluative analysis strategy as my primary means of data analysis. Along with the audio and video-recorded transcripts, I examined, coded, and wrote research memos about the interviews, participant observation, and documents used during the study.
Role of the Researcher

As a participant researcher, I engaged in almost everything the participants did. I read and searched for sports texts along with the participants during reading time. I discussed sports texts with the participants during discussion time. With this choice to be involved in many of the same activities as the participants, I addressed issues of positionality (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Positionality refers to the different roles the researcher assumes. As a member of the reading club, students sometimes deferred to my way of thinking on the texts we discussed. When I added my perspective to a debate, at times, it would stifle debate. The participants would agree with me and not add their own perspective. To curb this problem, I kept the conversations relaxed and allowed the students’ to express their opinions in an open manner. Because of this open-ended approach, the group was able to discuss controversial topics including the Ferguson, Missouri protests, the New Orleans Saints bounty scandal, and the debate over concussions in sports. I used the Critical Response Protocol (CRP) to keep the discussions active and grounded (Beach, Campano, Edmiston, & Borgmann, 2010).

From a positive standpoint, as a participant in the group, I had the opportunity to play an active role in meaning making and discussion as a leader and participant in the group. I assumed the role of observer with guidelines I discussed earlier in this chapter, including addressing the challenges of active participant while collecting data (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). For instance, audio and video data elicited an understanding of the roles of a more knowledgeable other to foster growth (Vygotsky, 1986). Throughout the club, the group members and I acted as a guide when the group discussed sports events. To illustrate this, I wrote in my video field notes:

They show more interest in just NBA current events, stories about sports, and articles about their favorite teams and players. There may be an age and cultural difference. I’m
not as familiar with NBA players and teams (even though I’ve learned a lot from them) and they aren’t as familiar with the top current events in sports (Video field notes, 12/8/14).

Throughout the club, the group members and I shared our expertise with each other. In the excerpt above, I show the transaction of knowledge between the group members about the NBA and other sports.

Case study also emphasizes acknowledgement of researcher bias (Stake, 2005). I acknowledge that my credibility during this study may have been compromised by my own biases. To minimize this possibility, I used multiple sources of data, member checked, and consistently conversed with colleagues and participants through the research process. To member check, I shared data analysis artifacts and notes throughout the collection of data with the participants to assure that I had accurately represented the participants’ thoughts and actions. I, however, did not share the final participant profiles and analysis to the participants, as I had already left the research setting by that point in time. Due to the tight time frame to complete the dissertation, I was unable to complete member checking at the end of the study. I conducted my research in an urban environment with adolescents that were between 6th and 8th grade. These students were not my own students, so I needed to create an environment of trust in our engagement with and discussions of sports texts. I did this by emphasizing that their perspectives mattered. As a former middle school language arts teacher, I have experience working with adolescents and understand the importance of treating them with respect.

**Ethical Considerations**

In my research questions, I chose the entry point of sports texts to allow me an element of insider status (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011) with the participants. Insider status, according to Dewalt
and Dewalt (2011) refers to the ability to collect and analyze data “from the inside” (p. 6). As an avid sport enthusiast myself, I was uniquely qualified to observe engagement when adolescents explored sports texts. As an adolescent, I played organized and pick-up sports. I also played hours of sports video games, collected and traded baseball cards, and read my favorite texts about sports. Furthermore, as a former teacher librarian and middle school language arts teacher, I enjoyed the casual conversations about sports I had with the students I taught. My insider status was beneficial because I was often knowledgeable about the sports topics the participants were interested in. Also, as an insider in regards to sports, I was already proficient at discussing sports topics with adolescents. I understood, however, that I had a sliding insider/outside status (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). I realized that even with an element of insider status as a sports enthusiast, I still was an outsider in other respects, including that I am a different race, academic, and social status than the participants. I acknowledge that SES differences may present challenges to research (Stake, 2005). These differences in SES between myself and the participants did not, in my observation, manifest itself as a problem in the group. I showed respect for the participants, while the participants showed respect by treating me as an adult in the school. My past experience as a middle school teacher may have helped me maintain a positive environment in the club. I may have had participants who were dealing with issues of poverty or other social concerns. Therefore, when topics of poverty and other social concerns arose, I approached the topics with sensitivity. For instance, when one of the participants watched a movie version of Spinelli’s (1990) Maniac Magee, I made sure to discuss the issue of poverty experienced by the protagonist in the movie. I have never lived in abject poverty or dealt personally with issues of violence or abuse. I understand, however, that many sports texts address these kinds of issues, and when these matters came up, I addressed these issues in a
caring and conscientious manner (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). For instance, when Cameron and the sports reading club discussed the Ferguson, MO protests of 2014, I offered questions in an even-handed manner. I sought to give the participants a space to discuss the topic without projecting my views about the topics on the participants.

**Credibility.** Addressing issues of credibility are essential to qualitative case study research in order for readers and participants to consider the research valid. There are a number of strategies for assessing validity. Yin (2003) recommended valuable information on criteria for judging case studies, including evaluation of construct validity, internal and external validity, and reliability. Construct validity concerns the study’s ability to address what it claims to be measuring (Yin, 2003). My study proposed to examine student engagement with sports texts. I used multiple sources of evidence, including interview, participant observation, audio and video observation of program sessions, participant journals, and program documents to make informed conclusions about student engagement with sports texts. Please recall participant profiles and tables describing moments of engagement (See Table 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in chapter 4) in which multiple sources of data were used to analyze and draw conclusions about each participant’s engagement in the program.

Internal validity concerns whether the results from my study are believable from the perspective of the participants. To show internal validity, I included multiple examples of the participants’ discussions and writings throughout the data presentation. Additionally, I member checked with my participants during the pre-program and post-program interviews to see if my analysis was accurate and credible. At the conclusion of the program, I shared my findings up to that point with each of the participants in the study and obtained feedback and analysis from them. External validity concerns the extent to which findings from the study can be generalized.
to other situations (Yin, 2003). The findings in this study cannot be generalized to other situations, but I used multiple data sources, including interview, participant observation, audio and video observation of program sessions, participant journals, and program documents to be able to generalize observations about each participant and across the participants in the study. Please recall Table 2 (p. 61) in this chapter in which I use multiple data sources to be able to generalize observations about each participant and across participants. Reliability refers to the extent to which the research procedures are consistent and repeatable (Yin, 2003). My study was qualitative, so I was not interested in controlling for variables. Instead, I was interested in the everyday interactions, discussions, and writings of the participants. Therefore, reliability in this study was largely based on whether the findings aligned with the data (Yin, 2003). As I discussed earlier in this chapter, I used a researcher journal in which I included detailed procedures for the study. In this journal, I also I kept a detailed record of my thoughts and analysis throughout the research process.

As Stake (2005) stated, “case study concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts.” (p. 444). I have detailed my reasoning behind issue choice (adolescent disengagement) and the context in which the study works within (voluntary sports reading club). I paid careful attention to the details of the case study activities, including data collection and analysis. I synthesized discussions and observations between the participants and myself and reflected on the observations and activities I encountered (Stake, 2005). I included, in the write up of the study, direct quotations and candid, pertinent conversations I had with the participants. Finally, I drew conclusions from the study, through triangulation (Ivey, 1999). I used external auditors, including a peer in the doctoral program, to review sample data sets and review data analysis for trustworthiness and validity.
Qualitative research with interviews and video and audio recordings are sensitive work and I treated the artifacts accordingly. The interviews and audio and video recordings I compiled were kept confidential. To maintain confidentiality of these data, participants’ names and names of institutions were given fictitious names and all data sets were assigned special codes in the order consent forms were returned to me. This information was kept separate from the key or code sheets containing any personally identifying information. The key was secured and locked at all times in my home office. The only way the participants may be identified personally is through video or photography, but I did not use these data collection mechanisms without the participants’ consent for that level of participation in the study. Through these processes, I provided insight into one particular case, while showing connections to my theoretical framework model and to the contextual influences of the case.

Limitations. There are limitations with the present study that should be considered. First, the study included a small sample size of three middle school students. With a small sample size, my intentions were not to make generalizations about all sports enthusiasts or adolescents based on the data. However, as Stake (2005) notes, a great deal can be learned from the particular. I had the opportunity to closely analyze the data from each of the three participants, and my intentions in this study were to provide a space to analyze and observe the participants’ engagement with sports texts.

Second, the time restraint of the sports reading program affected my study. While I was able to collect a great deal of audio, video, and observational data for the three participants, if I met with the participants for a longer period of time, I would have been able to better observe the participants’ change in engagement over time. Studies that follow the participants through a longer period of time would add to the findings in this study. For instance, researchers have
taken group mentoring approaches similar to the small group learning that took place in the present study, in which adolescents are followed for a minimum of six months. Participant benefits were revealed including comfort, academic support, non-academic support, and safety (Altus, 2015).

My role as the researcher warrants discussion as a limitation of the study. I maintained awareness of my different socioeconomic status background than the participants, including that I am a different race, academic, and social status than the participants. Therefore, I used my observation notes as a tool for controlling bias as I conducted the research study (Stake, 2005). Additionally, behavioral and emotional indicators of engagement data were difficult to observe because of the time restraint and challenges of using video and audio while also conducting participant observation during the program. Development of innovative ways to capture behavioral and emotional indicators of engagement would add to the body of literature on student engagement. Finally, I used self-report instruments instead of direct observation to collect data on the participants’ engagement outside of the voluntary reading club. A study that included observation of engagement in the classroom as well as observation in the voluntary sports reading club would add to the findings of the present study. I will discuss, in more depth, implications for further research in the final chapter.

Table 3.

*Timeline for Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Goals for Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2013-April 2014</td>
<td>• Write and Revise Prospectus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-September 2014</td>
<td>• Defense of Prospectus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IRB Submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Finalize site and participants for study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
November 2014
• Data collection
• Begin semi-structured interviews of participants
• Implementation of sports reading club
• Begin observations
• Analysis of observations and participant and research journals
• Continue transcription of interviews, and participant and research journals

December 2014
• Continue data collection and analysis
• Write ups
• Member Checking

January-May 2015
• Complete post-interviews of participants
• Ongoing data analysis
• Write ups of interviews and observations
• Write Up Results

June-October 2015
• Finalize Write Up of Results
• Dissertation Defense

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described my reasoning for choosing case study methodology to observe adolescents’ engaged reading when three sports enthusiasts read and responded to sports texts. I described the research design, context, and timeline for the study. I have detailed my data collection and analysis process for scrutiny. In the following chapter, I show, through the particularities, the experiences of three sports enthusiasts’ response to sports texts in individual and cross-case narratives.
4 FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to (a) investigate cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic factors that contribute to student engagement when three adolescents explore sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club, (b) to provide material for the reader to learn about the multifaceted components of student engagement, and (c) to explore the use of reading clubs as they apply to adolescents’ reading and discussion of sports texts. Data collection included two interviews totaling one hour, ten hours of participant observation of the reading club, ten participant journal entries, and two hours of video. Data was collected over a six-week period. The following questions guided my investigation: (1) What were the indicators of engagement when selected adolescents interacted with sports texts? (2) What contextual factors brought about the features of student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts?

This chapter presents the key findings from the data. These themes help address the research questions and help explain how the participants interacted in the reading club program. Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading helped to explain the interactions in the reading club. The themes abstracted from the data are below:

1. The indicators of student engagement were diverse across the three participants, depending on personalities, learning preferences, and their knowledge and interest in particular sports.

2. The formats, topics, and genres of the texts the participants read affected student engagement.

3. Participant-centered discussion around the sports texts affected student engagement.

4. Participants indicated changes in student engagement when they were given opportunities to create a project about a favorite athlete.
To emphasize the voice of each participant, I begin this chapter with an in-depth exploration of each of the three cases (see Table 4.4 Overview of Participants). Second, I provide an analysis of the three cases together. Third, I discuss each of the themes that I abstracted from the data.

**Cameron, Age 12, 7th Grade**

Cameron was a lanky 7th grader who wore preppy clothes, shiny brand new Nikes, and he often walked with a confident strut. His mother was a teacher at an elementary school nearby, and he had a twin sister who also attended the middle school. He reported that he was a good student with good grades, but he often got bored at school because he found the subject matter uninteresting, especially language arts class. In his initial interview, he stated, “All we do is write, write, write in language arts class. I get tired of hearing about the writing process. A good story is a good story” (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14). His favorite subject was math. He stated, “Math comes the easiest to me. I love multiplication, square units, division, ratios, anything. I just really like numbers.” (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14). He liked math and the routine and predictability of the subject.

Cameron expressed ambivalent feelings toward reading in school. He stated, “I honestly don't really care for reading, but I don't hate it though.” (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14). Cameron reported a lack of agentic engagement (how students actively contribute to the instruction they receive) with reading in school (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012); he considered reading in school a task to be accomplished and not something that he had autonomous control over. Additionally, he reported a lack of emotional engagement with reading; Cameron did not consider reading in school something he could potentially enjoy, unless he had opportunities to read about sports or read comic books. When I talked with Cameron about reading throughout the program, he consistently referred back to the idea that he
did not have trouble reading what was required in school, but he often did not like it. Cameron reported that he rarely came across something that was too difficult for him to read. He attributed his ease in reading to his mother. He stated:

There may be a hard word, but my mom always says ‘just sound it out,’ and I get it right every time from there on. Give me anything to read, I’ll read it for you. (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14)

In contrast to his ambivalent feelings about reading in school, from the first day of the program, he expressed his deep engagement with sports and sports texts. In his first interview, I asked him what it meant to be a sports fan. He said:

When I watch sports, it makes me excited, I just sit down I eat popcorn and chips and enjoy myself. When I watch sports, it makes me want to go outside and play sports.

That's why I like sports. I like my favorite teams. When I be at home, I cheer on all my favorite teams like always. (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14)

Cameron showed enthusiasm for sports. He showed emotional engagement when he expressed the joy he felt when rooting on his favorite teams. Sports put him in a good mood as he relaxed with a snack and watched his favorite players and teams. For Cameron, watching sports led to wanting to play sports. The majority of the reading he did outside of school was related to sports, and he usually went to sports websites when he read for fun. He commented, “Sometimes I go on the ESPN website and I read the little articles they have on there about LeBron James, how Derrick Rose is doing and NFL and other stuff like that.” (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14). He enjoyed reading sports articles and checking the statistics of his favorite players and teams online. Like the other participants in the study, Cameron felt a deep emotional and
cognitive engagement to sports and sports texts and a general distaste for required reading in school.

Cameron was a diehard New Orleans Saints fan. When I asked him at the beginning of the program who his favorite football team was, he stated:

Saints from day one, because you know my father came from New Orleans and that’s one of my favorite cities. Matter of fact, that’s my number one favorite city in the world.

(Cameron, reading club transcript, 11/3/14)

Cameron had memories of watching the Saints at his grandmother’s house with his mom, his uncles, aunts, cousins, and other relatives and friends. He fondly remembered the year the Saints won the Super Bowl in 2010. He stated, “My family, especially my dad, went bananas when we won.” (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14). Cameron and his father were able to go to the Super Bowl victory parade in New Orleans. They had fond memories of seeing quarterback Drew Brees and other players on floats in the streets of New Orleans. His family moved from New Orleans when he was in kindergarten, but he still visited the city in the summer to see his cousins and grandmother. Cameron emphasized that he followed the highs and lows of the New Orleans Saints. He stated, “A real sports fan supports the team no matter what” (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14). Cameron often called those sports fans who change their allegiance on a whim, “bandwagoners.” According to Cameron, a “bandwagoner” was not a true fan because the fan usually was not knowledgeable about the team. Cameron believed fans should cheer for their favorite team through the times when the team was winning as well as the times when the team was losing (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14).

Cameron emerged as the vocal leader of the sports reading club group. On the first day of the club, I had a YouTube video of the top sports highlights from 2013 playing on the digital
projector when the participants walked in. There were lots of “oohs” and “ahhs” from all of the
group members, but Cameron’s reactions were often the loudest and most enthusiastic. From the
start, he told me and the other group members all about his interest in NFL football and NBA
basketball. In many ways, Cameron’s interests in sports that he exhibited during the reading club
program mirrored that of a sports reporter. In his final interview he stated:

I really like reading sports magazines. It’s kinda funny to me. To read critics and figure
out why some players aren’t as good and stuff like that. (Cameron, interview transcript,
12/18/14)

He expressed that he loved the drama and competition of sports. Cameron indicated that his
primary interest during the program was reading about his favorite athletes and teams in the
current sports news cycle.

Engagement inventory. In this section, I present a multifaceted description of
Cameron’s engagement in the reading club program (see Table 4.1). Cameron showed a number
of indicators of engagement throughout the reading club. I discuss each aspect of engagement
(cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) as it applied to Cameron’s interactions in the
reading club. I break down each aspect of engagement into the indicators that showed each facet
of engagement. I end this section with a discussion of Cameron’s engagement in the reading club
as a whole.

Table 4.

Cameron’s Engagement Moments Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evident</th>
<th>Not Evident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Described cognitive strategies (e.g. made predictions about game winners)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Went beyond minimum</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Minimal use of cognitive strategies (e.g. did not discuss a sports subject with)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Emotional
- Showed feelings of acceptance (e.g. expressed that he enjoyed an activity) 29
  - Did not feel accepted 5
- Showed curiosity (e.g. discussed a new video he found) 4
  - Did not show involvement (e.g. leaned back in chair) 3
- Was having fun (e.g. used catch phrases) 15
  - Showed boredom (e.g. expressed that he read a book he did not like) 2

### Behavioral
- Followed protocol of reading and discussion (e.g. allowed group members time to speak) 39
  - Did not follow protocol of reading and discussion (e.g. did not follow independent reading time protocol) 10
- Attentive (e.g. looked at the other group members as they spoke) 14
  - Inattentive (e.g. read article that was not related to chosen topic) 3
- Followed Directions (e.g. moved from one activity to the next easily) 10
  - Disruptive behavior/Did not follow directions (e.g. did not respond in reaction journal) 3

### Agentic
- Asked questions 15
  - Not proactive in asking questions (e.g. did not ask questions to group when the opportunity arose) 5
- Expressed Opinions (e.g. made connections between sports and social issues) 0
  - Did not express opinion (e.g. fidgeted in his chair when a sport he was not interested in) 3
- Let others know what he was interested in (e.g. discussed the merits of his favorite teams and players) 7
  - Did not express opinion (e.g. fidgeted in his chair when a sport he was not interested in) 2
For Cameron, cognitive engagement was evident thirty nine times throughout the reading club program. Cameron showed twelve notable instances when he described cognitive strategies as he read, watched, and discussed texts in the sports reading club. Of these twelve instances, he made predictions and causal judgments during seven of the moments. Three of these moments took place when he watched Belman’s (2009) *More Than a Game* about LeBron James’s experiences playing high school basketball. Cameron predicted that James and his team would win the high school state championship, that James and the coach would get in an argument about James’s playing style during a playoff game, and that James would talk about the influence his high school coach had on his knowledge of basketball (Video field notes, 12/15/14). Cameron took Langer’s (2011) stance of “being in and moving through an envisionment” as he watched the Belman (2009) documentary. He took in the series of events and subjects, made reflective comments based on what he experienced, and wondered what would happen to James and his teammates as the documentary developed.

Cameron made two predictions when he discussed what he read in the sports section of the local newspaper during group roundtable discussions. Both of these predictions related to predicting the winners of upcoming NFL football games. During one of the occasions, Cameron made an accurate prediction about a matchup between the New Orleans Saints and the San Francisco 49ers (Field notes, 11/6/14). In these instances, Cameron made what Rosenblatt (1994) in her transactional theory of reading called efferent readings of texts. He disengaged from the aesthetic, or qualitative and personal connections he had to the players and teams, and made
reasoned predictions based on facts about the teams (p. 27). Additionally, Cameron stepped out and objectified the experience of reading about NFL teams when he made predictions about upcoming football games (Langer, 2011). He worked through what he learned from the sports section; then, he stepped back and defended his position through what he read about the two teams in the newspaper. All twelve of these instances of describing cognitive strategies took place during reading club discussion time. Cameron did not use the reaction journal to express his thoughts about what he read and watched. Instead, he preferred to relate what he learned during the roundtable discussions.

Cameron showed eleven instances of going beyond the minimum required. In nine of these moments, he offered comments to the group about a topic the group was discussing. These moments occurred during the group discussion of favorite NBA athletes and during the group’s discussion of who would win the college football national championship (Video field notes, 12/8/14). On one occasion, he added to the reading club discussion about Florida State’s narrow win over Georgia Tech in their conference football championship, and how Florida State was positioned for a possible second college football national championship.

Additionally, Cameron went beyond the minimum required when he spent two club sessions reading and talking about Paul Pierce, a veteran forward in the NBA. He read articles online and created a player podcast of Paul Pierce. In one of our discussions when the group talked about who they thought were the best players in the NBA, he said: “You know who I think. I think Paul Pierce. He doing good, too. I have my reasons. All these players are on the wrong team, but Paul Pierce. He on the Wizards and they been playing well.” (Cameron, reading club transcript, 12/1/14). Cameron elaborated on why he thought Paul Pierce was a great player. He acknowledged that Pierce is an older player, but he had found his niche with the Washington
Wizards. He made convincing points that Pierce may not be a superstar, but he had contributed around younger players, acting as a mentor to them. Cameron stressed that they were learning from Pierce on “how to play the game right” (reading club transcript, 12/1/14). In his learning about Paul Pierce, I witnessed Cameron’s attitude about Paul Pierce change as he read about the basketball player. After reading online texts, Cameron “stepped out” as he reflected on what he learned and re-thought what he knew about the basketball player (Langer, 2011, p. 21). Cameron recognized that Pierce was more than just an average basketball player. Based on his interactions with texts about Paul Pierce, Cameron modified his beliefs to include that player experience and being a mentor for younger players are important characteristics of player quality.

On ten occasions throughout the club, Cameron showed evidence of recalling information he learned in the club. He often was the first person the group members asked to clarify the name or statistics of particular players. For example, when the group discussed the Atlanta Falcons during a roundtable discussion, Cameron quickly gave a detailed description of their star wide receiver, Julio Jones, noting where Jones played college football and his statistical success at the wide receiver position in college and professional football (Cameron, reading club transcript, 11/6/14). Cameron also recalled the information he learned from reading online articles about Paul Pierce, a veteran forward on the Boston Celtics, and LeBron James, a star player for the Cleveland Cavaliers.

An additional time, Cameron recalled in depth what he learned about his favorite players; he read an online article about his favorite college football team, the Florida State Seminoles. During discussion time, Cameron stated:
Florida State is for real. They have their quarterback, their wide receivers, their defensive line. They got it all. All they need is the coach to get them in the right place. (Cameron, reading club discussion transcript, 11/6/13)

Discussion proved to be an important time for Cameron to step out of the envisionment building process to objectify his experiences with the texts he read. Based on what he read, Cameron argued the Florida State Seminoles had all the talent they needed to win a college football national championship; Cameron “stepped out” in Langer’s (2011) terms when he added that what they needed at that point in the season was a coach “to put their heads in the right place” (Cameron, reading club discussion transcript, 11/6/13). Cameron became a critic when he distanced himself from moving through the envisionment (Langer, 2011). He stated that Jimbo Fisher, the Florida State head coach, needed to get his players focused on the goal of winning the college football national championship and motivate the players to succeed. Cameron elaborated that he believed that the quarterback for the Seminoles, Jameis Winston, would be a top draft pick in the upcoming NFL draft, and that Winston wanted the opportunity to prove himself to the teams he hoped to play for in the NFL.

When discussing what he read about LeBron James during a reading club session, Cameron recalled what he learned about James’s new approach to leading the Cleveland Cavaliers. In this real-time video recording response, Cameron appeared to be moving through an envisionment (Langer, 2011, p. 17). He worked through, stretched, and digested the new information he learned about LeBron James’s new leadership approach to his new team. Cameron stated that his new leadership style would be less direct and James would be more patient with the other players on the team. In the video response, Cameron stated:
LeBron James have good strong words in the ESPN article. He always watches his team back no matter what. Even when they’re losing, they still try to play with heart no matter what happens. The Cavs are not doing very good this season, but LeBron is trying to build their team back up, so they can start winning games again. (Cameron, reading club transcript, 11/10/14)

Cameron preferred to express himself through the video recording rather than through responding in a reaction journal. He expressed his knowledge about the rebuilding ahead for the Cleveland Cavaliers and LeBron James. Cameron also showed emotional engagement when he looked into the camera and talked about the article. Cameron’s voice heightened as he talked about the positive things James and his team were doing.

When cognitive engagement was not evident, I noted in my observation notes that Cameron only showed minimal use of cognitive strategies on two occasions. These two occasions both occurred during a roundtable discussion when the group was discussing a sports subject he was not interested in. On two notable occasions, Cameron showed minimum recall of learning events. First, when Cameron read a *Sports Illustrated* (2014) article during sports reading time, he only gave a cursory response to what he read during roundtable discussion time (Video field notes, 11/10/14). On a second occasion, Cameron read Robinson’s (2013) *Basketball Math on the Court* and stated that he did not like reading the book and had no comments to contribute to the roundtable discussion.

There were five notable moments when Cameron did only the minimum required. On one of those occasions, he read for twenty-five minutes about the New Orleans Saints and the challenges they were having at the beginning of the NFL season. Cameron wrote a short response in his journal. He stated, “I read about how the Saints are doing. They are doing ok
sence (sic) those four losses. They Saints are really improving” (Cameron, reaction journal, 11/10/14). In contrast to his short response in the journal, Cameron talked in detail about the problems of the New Orleans Saints offense during the roundtable discussion, but he did not include this information in his reaction journal. On a second occasion, Cameron responded to Belman’s (2009) documentary, *More than a Game*. He provided a cursory response in his reaction journal. He stated: “It reminded me of me and my friend Andre. We are real competitive when it comes to basketball” (Cameron, reaction journal, 12/3/14). By making a personal connection to his friend and the play of LeBron James and his teammates, Cameron had the beginning of a detailed response to the documentary and “being in and moving through an envisionment” in his reaction journal (Langer, 2011). However, Cameron indicated that he felt more comfortable talking about his on-the-court and off-the-court friendship with Andre during discussion rather than writing about his friendship in a journal. In the discussion time, Cameron showed he was “moving through an envisionment” when he compared how the two friends complemented each other on and off the court, like LeBron James did with his teammates. Cameron stated, “I just always know what Andre next move is. Whether he shoot a three or dish the ball for an easy score, I always know” (Cameron, reading club discussion transcript, 12/3/14).

Two additional times when cognitive engagement was not evident took place when Cameron chose not to do a journal entry during sports texts reading time. In my field notes, I noted on these two occasions that he was not writing in his journal. I asked Cameron about his lack of interest in writing in his journal. He stated, “It [the journal responses] felt too much like school” (Cameron, interview transcript, 12/15/14). He, instead, preferred to talk about what he read in the sports texts reading time, rather than write a journal entry. On the fifth occasion, I
noted that Cameron was not interested in writing a script or notes for his player podcast of Paul Pierce. He offered to me that he would rather read about the NBA player and create the podcast by memory, rather than by reading from notes or a script.

When emotional engagement was evident, Cameron was often one of the loudest and most excited participants when the group watched NBA and NFL highlights. He showed ten notable moments when he was having fun watching the highlights. He exclaimed catch-phrases like, “Nothin’ but net” (basketball player makes a shot without the ball hitting the rim), “He got trucked” (football player makes a great tackle of another player), “He broke them ankles” (basketball player beats another player to the net with a crossover dribble), and “I wanna see him splash” (anticipating a great shot in basketball) (Cameron, video field notes, 12/18/14). These were all creative ways Cameron showed his appreciation for excellent play on the football field and basketball court. These clever catch phrases also pointed to his burgeoning interest in sports reporting and commentary. On another five occasions, he expressed he was having fun when he watched the game action scenes in Belman’s (2009) documentary, More Than a Game. He, similarly, showed these moments of positive emotional engagement by reacting positively to the noteworthy plays during the documentary.

Cameron showed curiosity on four occasions. One of those occasions took place when Cameron watched the ESPN show, Pardon the Interruption (PTI). PTI is fast-paced television show where two well-known sports reporters debate current sports topics. Cameron had never watched the show before, but he indicated that he thought it might be interesting because of his interest in sports current events. In Rosenblatt’s (1994) terms, Cameron made choices on an efferent and aesthetic continuum as he watched PTI. He, initially, watched the show because he found it enjoyable, but the show quickly became an outlet for efferent explorations in which he
watched the show for information about his interest in sports current events. Cameron watched the show for fifteen minutes and was particularly curious of the format of the show and the debate between the two reporters about which upcoming college football game of the week had the greatest implications for the college football national championship. Cameron indicated that he wanted to be on a show like PTI, where he had a chance to express his opinions about sports to millions of viewers. Cameron showed curiosity on three other occasions when he sought out texts to read for the player profile he created. He located texts using the library’s online catalog as well as conducting a Google search on the players he chose.

Cameron showed feelings of acceptance consistently throughout the reading club program. There were three moments when he was vocal about the activities he enjoyed in the club, including when he was completing the player podcasts and watching NBA and NFL highlights. I noted two times when he showed that he was comfortable talking to all of the participants in the club, including me, about any concerns he had with the club and other challenges in his life (Video field notes, 11/18/14). For Cameron, he was comfortable when talking about his favorite teams and players; he sat up straight in his chair and confidently spoke with conviction to the other group members. I noted five times that he showed a cool, collected demeanor during the club meetings (Field notes, 12/1/14 & 12/3/14). During these times, Cameron would comfortably add his perspective to the sports discussion. Cameron, for example, discussed his interest in the New Orleans Saints, stating that it was his favorite NFL team (Observation notes, 11/6/14)

Cameron showed five moments when emotional engagement was not evident. On two occasions, Cameron showed boredom and disinterest when he read Basketball Math on the Court by Tom Robinson (2014). He indicated during our sports discussion that the book only had math
problems related to sports and not intriguing sports information for him to consider. He indicated that he liked math as an academic subject, but he did not like doing extra math work after school. On another occasion, Cameron did not show involvement when two of the group members discussed soccer during a roundtable discussion of sports (Field notes, 11/6/14). Cameron indicated this lack of involvement by leaning back in his chair and he did contribute to the discussion. On two additional occasions, I noted in the video transcript when he slouched back in his chair and he appeared to lose interest during a sports discussion about sports concussions (Field notes, 11/20/14).

Moments when behavioral engagement was evident were frequent. Since I was an active participant in the group, I primarily used video field notes to record the instances of behavioral engagement. There were fifteen notable instances that Cameron followed protocol, which involved Cameron following the general requirements of the club. Nine of these instances took place during discussion time when Cameron followed discussion protocol by allowing his group members time to speak. Three times were recorded during transition from the short discussion on current events at the beginning of each session to the reading time. He showed that he followed protocol by moving from one activity to another without losing focus. He did not interrupt the other group members reading during these transitions.

Three times of following protocol were recorded when Cameron searched for articles on the Internet and in the school library’s online catalog. During these times, I noted that Cameron was writing down call numbers for sports texts he was interested in and finding the texts on the library shelves (Video field notes, 11/17/14 and 11/20/14). There were fourteen notable instances when Cameron followed directions. Eight of these instances were recorded when Cameron
followed directions by actively reading during the designated reading time. For example, below is a screen shot of Cameron reading during reading club time.

Figure 10. Cameron Showing Behavioral Engagement During Reading Time

In this screenshot, Cameron was reading an article about LeBron James’s transition back to playing with the Cleveland Cavaliers after a stint with the Miami Heat (Field notes, 11/6/14). When Cameron was reading, Cameron’s shoulders hunched over the text. In the first screenshot, Cameron had his arms crossed as he reads. Cameron leaned over the text in the first few moments he began reading. In the second screenshot, a few moments later Cameron contemplated a difficult passage in the text. He adjusted his arms and continued reading. In both pictures, his closed posture showed intent on reading. Cameron indicated that his closed posture helped him block out distractions as he read (Field notes, 11/6/14).

Six instances of showing attentiveness were recorded when Cameron actively listened to other group members during discussion. Cameron communicated this to the group members by looking them in the eye when he listened to them and turning toward the group member as he and the group members spoke to each other. Below is an example of this behavioral engagement
when Cameron and the other members discussed the likelihood of whether or not the Florida State Seminoles would repeat as college football champions in 2015.

![Cameron Showing Behavioral Engagement During Discussion]

*Figure 11. Cameron Showing Behavioral Engagement During Discussion*

In this screenshot, Cameron was stating his case to Joshua and Khalil that Florida State had the talent to win another college football championship. He waved his arms to express his point to the other group members. Throughout the club, Khalil and Cameron often looked to Cameron as knowledgeable about current events in sports (Field notes 11/13/14). Joshua and Khalil’s body language reflected the respect they have for Cameron’s perspective. They looked at him as he spoke; Joshua turned his head toward Cameron and Khalil held his hands to his face as he considered what Cameron said.

When behavioral engagement was not evident, Cameron’s engagement changed depending on the activity at hand. On three occasions, he told me he was tired from a long school day or he did not particularly feel inspired to work on an activity at hand. At these times, he became inattentive and did not show involvement. He put his head on his desk during reading time. On one occasion, Cameron fell asleep during sports reading time. He indicated that he did not have enough sleep the night before. On four occasions, I recorded that Cameron did not follow the recommended protocol during sports reading time. During these times, I reminded
Cameron not to interrupt another group member when they were talking. On three times, Cameron did not follow directions. He did not enjoy the voluntary time he had to jot down thoughts or draw pictures in a reaction journal about the texts he read. He preferred to record his responses in a voice recorder, a video response, or discuss what he read during our roundtable discussion. He reported that he was not comfortable with the strictly voluntary journal responses, and he was not required to complete them.

When agentic engagement was evident, Cameron expressed his opinion seven notable times in the reading club. On four occasions, he discussed his reasoning behind why he enjoyed watching his favorite teams and players. These moments of engagement occurred during the short discussions the group had about current events in sports at the beginning of each sports reading club session. On one notable occasion, Cameron showed complex thinking and stated his opinion when he talked about the connections between sports and social issues. Cameron commented on a major news story in Ferguson, Missouri where a white police officer shot and killed an unarmed black teenager. During our discussion of current sports events, he noted that before a recent football game a small group of St. Louis Rams football players showed a gesture of solidarity toward the victim of the shooting, Michael Brown, by putting their two hands in the air, symbolizing “Don’t Shoot.” Cameron stated:

The St. Louis Rams guys are showing that they’re sad and angry bout it. I didn't even know about it until towards Thanksgiving. I was like what!?! The story got big then.
They said it was really racist there [Ferguson, MO]. You never know. They can use that against them [the police officer]. Cause he [the white police officer] may be really racist and don't like black people. It's a crazy story. Kinda ridiculous. (Cameron, reading club transcript, 12/11/14)
Cameron showed a connection to these players and their protest against the Michael Brown death. In Langer’s (2011) envisionment building stances, Cameron stepped out and objectified the experience of interacting with the text, in this case the St. Louis Rams football game. Considering social and political issues became a part of Cameron’s thinking and our discussion in the club. So much so that Cameron went on to say that he made a collage picture on Instagram, the popular photo sharing application, with Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin. Cameron reported that he found the images through a Google images search. He called the photo collage “One Life” because he wanted to communicate the importance of each and every life. He was surprised and impressed with the number of likes his photo received on his Instagram account.

On another notable occasion, Cameron stated his opinion when he expressed his disregard for the Atlanta Falcons, a bitter rival of the New Orleans Saints. Cameron explained his disregard below:

Joshua: Is it because you a Saints fan? You can’t like the Falcons?
Cameron: Nah, it’s not cuz of that. It’s because certain people on the team. The coach. Uh, coach #1. Two, Roddy White [wide receiver for the Atlanta Falcons]. Those my two main reasons there. He talk way too much…for one. He talked all that smack. He was um, like that one game bout two years ago, he said that’s why New Orleans got flooded and something and something like that. That wasn’t funny at all!
Joshua: But what about Matty Ice [Matt Ryan, the popular quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons]. You like him, right?
Cameron: Matty Ice…Matty Ice!?! Matty Ice my behind! Oh, I don’t see why they call him that! Yeah, I see why they call him that nickname. He ice right under pressure
[makes like a statue]. He is the most overrated quarterback. He is overpaid! Folks don’t give him a buck to do nuthin’! Look…[Throws an imaginary pass]. Interception.”

(Cameron and Joshua, reading club transcript, 11/3/15).

Cameron and Joshua’s spirited discussion showed Cameron’s knowledge of NFL football. He addressed the questions Joshua asked about why he did not like the Falcons. Cameron expressed his opinion when he offered that the coach was subpar, and that Cameron did not like the attitude of one of the Falcons star players, Roddy White. He then criticized the play of their quarterback, Matt Ryan, noting that he threw too many interceptions to be considered one of the elite quarterbacks in the NFL. He showed an additional moment when he expressed his opinion when he rethought Matt Ryan’s nickname, Matty Ice. Cameron reported that Matt Ryan had been known in the past for being cool under pressure, but Cameron said the opposite --that Matt Ryan turned into ice and couldn’t perform under pressure. Cameron took the knowledge he had of an athlete, in this case, Matt Ryan, and dug deeper to criticize the player. Cameron “stepped out and objectified an experience” when he examined his own knowledge against what he learned in the texts he read (Langer, 2011, p. 20).

Alternatively, at the initial interview, he stated that he very rarely stated his opinion in school. Referring to his lack of agentic engagement in school, he said, “I just go through it [the work and reading at school]. I don’t say anything. I may complain every once in awhile, but she [the teacher] doesn’t hear me though. Other than that, I don’t want her getting mad at me.” (Cameron, interview transcript, 11/3/14). In this club, however, he communicated his knowledge of sports often and was relaxed and willing to let others know what he was interested in. On seven occasions, Cameron discussed what he was interested in. On four occasions, Cameron discussed his interest in the New Orleans Saints, and the challenges the team was having at the
beginning of the 2014-2015 football season. On three additional occasions, Cameron discussed his interest in LeBron James. He discussed his interest in James as a high school player and James’s transition back to playing with the Cleveland Cavaliers after playing with the Miami Heat.

In the final interview when I asked Cameron if he expressed his opinion in the reading club, he stated, “Oh yeah! From day one. And from there, I liked talking about my favorite teams” (Cameron, interview transcript, 12/15/14). He continued with an example:

When Anthony said he liked OKC (Oklahoma City Thunder), I had to give him a few words about my thoughts. I had to, you know, give him my honest opinion. Set the bar line. Set it straight. Had to try to make him change his favorite team. Ha! Now he like the Golden State Warriors now. I know that’s his new favorite team. (Cameron, interview transcript, 12/15/14)

Cameron convinced Anthony with facts about that the Golden State Warriors’ team and individual players that they were a stronger team than the Oklahoma City Thunder for the season. In Langer’s (2011) envisionment stances, he considered the perspective of Anthony on the Oklahoma Thunder, but he came to the conclusion, and he was able to convince Anthony, that the Golden State Warriors were the team to beat in the 2014-2015 NBA regular season.

Cameron was so successful in his agentic engagement that he was able to change one of his group members’ perspective on a team they both were familiar with.

Cameron showed five minor instances when agentic engagement was not evident throughout the program. On two occasions, Cameron did not express his opinion during discussions of soccer teams and players. When Khalil talked about soccer, Cameron would lean back and fidget in his chair. He stated, “I don’t know nothing about soccer. They just kick the
ball around and stuff” (Cameron, reading club transcript, 12/03/14). I recorded three times that Cameron had potential opportunities to ask questions, but he did not. These three times all took place during discussion time when the group was discussing current sports events such as soccer and college basketball events. During these moments, Cameron stated his opinion, but he did not ask questions to his peers to help to clarify his point or challenge their perspective against his perspective.

Overall, a number of different factors affected Cameron’s level of engagement throughout the program. The indicators of cognitive engagement were evenly distributed around the use of cognitive strategies, going beyond the minimum required, and showing detailed recall of events. All three of these indicators occurred during discussion of texts, not through the reaction journal. Additionally, Cameron showed cognitive engagement when he expanded upon his prior knowledge of favorite teams and players including the Florida State Seminoles, the New Orleans Saints, Boston Celtics basketball player Paul Pierce, Cleveland Cavaliers player LeBron James, and Green Bay Packers quarterback, Aaron Rodgers. As a result of his prior knowledge of these sports figures and teams, Cameron was better able to tap into these indicators of cognitive engagement. It also appeared the Cameron’s player podcast of Paul Pierce was a catalyst for Cameron going beyond the minimum required. Cameron had the freedom to explore any player he chose, and he created a convincing player podcast of one of his favorite players, Paul Pierce. A number of texts appeared to be catalysts for cognitive engagement including Belman’s (2009) documentary, *More than a Game*, articles in the sports section of the local newspaper, and online articles on Cameron’s favorite athletes. Cameron was comfortable recalling what he learned from texts during discussion, especially texts pertaining to NFL and NBA statistics. In contrast, Cameron showed a lack of cognitive engagement when he wrote in
his reaction journal, when he had a lack of interest in the topic discussed, and when he had a lack of interest in the text he chose.

Moments of having fun and showing feelings of acceptance were the most frequent indicators of emotional engagement when Cameron explored and discussed sports texts. He reacted with “ooohs” and “ahhs” and pumped his fist as indications he was having fun watching sports highlights. He also used vivid language and catch phrases as he enjoyed watching NBA and NFL highlights. Cameron was vocal and comfortable during discussion time as he showed feelings of acceptance during reading discussion time. Cameron showed curiosity to a lesser degree, but when he discovered something new, such as the sports reporting show, ESPN’s Pardon the Interruption (PTI), he wanted to emulate the spirited debate of the two hosts of the show. In contrast, Cameron showed a lack of emotional engagement when he explored texts that he considered too similar to the ones he read in school, and when the discussion involved a topic he was not interested in or unfamiliar with. During these moments, Cameron would show emotional disengagement by leaning back in his chair and not contributing to discussion.

Cameron’s positive indicators of behavioral engagement were frequent and consistent throughout the program. He followed protocol, followed directions, and showed attentiveness consistently throughout the reading club sessions. He showed behavioral disengagement when he was tired after a particularly long day at school, when he was excited about a topic and he interrupted the other group members as they were talking during discussion, and when he was not interested in writing his thoughts in a reaction journal. He instead indicated that he preferred to record his thoughts in a voice recorder or share his thoughts during discussion.

Cameron’s indicators of agentic engagement happened to a lesser degree than the other three facets of engagement. Agentic engagement appeared to be more of a challenge for
Cameron than showing behavioral engagement (i.e. following directions and protocol) or emotional engagement (i.e. showing that he was having fun). Cameron expressed his opinion about current events in sports, and he made connections to major news stories through what he read about sports and experienced in his life. When topics and texts related to Cameron’s favorite teams were addressed, Cameron’s agentic engagement increased. Furthermore, when the other group members addressed a topic Cameron was familiar with, Cameron offered what he was interested in about the topic. In contrast, Cameron showed agentic disengagement when he did not see the value or appeal of a sport or when he was not familiar with the sport. When he was uninterested in a topic, Cameron was less likely to offer his opinion about the sports topic.

\textbf{Joshua, Age 14, 8th Grade}

Joshua was an 8th grader with an athletic build. He played on the middle school’s football team as a running back and defensive back, and he played on the middle school’s basketball team. During his initial interview, when the football season was wrapping up for the year, he talked about his love of football, and a desire to get better at the sport:

I play running back and fullback and sometimes kick return. Football keeps me motivated. I gotta keep working harder. I gotta practice like everyday and stuff. My coach says I need to work on my fundamentals, especially how to hold onto the ball if someone tries to strip it and find seams in the defensive line (Joshua, interview transcript, 11/3/14).

Joshua spent most of his free time outside of school playing basketball and football. He wanted to play high school football and dreamed of playing professional sports, but he knew that it was a long shot to be able to play professional sports. Therefore, he regarded getting good grades and succeeding in school as important. He stated, “My mom says you gotta have a second thought or
plan. I like football and basketball because it’s fun, but I know I need to do well in school as a backup” (Joshua, interview transcript, 11/3/14).

When Joshua was not playing on recreational sports teams, he liked to play pick-up games and practice sports with his friends. Joshua told me about a time that he was having so much fun playing basketball that he lost track of time. He stated:

After school last week, as soon as I got home, I put my stuff down and I went down to this person name Demarco house. It was a long walk. And then I just played basketball for a long time and we kept on practicing and stuff and playing. It was getting dark. I thought it was 6 o’clock or something. But daylight savings time messed me up. It was 8 o’clock before I got home. I lost track of time. (Joshua, interview transcript, 11/3/14)

Joshua relished the time he spent playing basketball with his friends. He liked to work on fundamentals with his friends as well as play one-on-one and two-on-two games. During the matchup games, Joshua and his friends liked to work on their spin moves to the basket, free throw shooting, boxing out for rebounds, and other fundamentals of the game. Joshua liked having time, outside of practice with a coach, to work on getting better at basketball and had fun playing the game with friends.

Joshua informed me that he had one sibling, a brother in the 6th grade who also attended the middle school with him. His mother was a nurse who worked long hours. Sometimes he did not see his mom for a couple of days at a time because she often worked the night shift. She was asleep when he went to school, and she was at work when he got home from school. Joshua informed me that he was an average student, with As and Bs in humanities classes and Cs in science and math. He said that he was an enthusiastic student, but he often neglected or forgot to turn in his work on time.
Similar to Cameron, he talked about being bored in his classes. He stated, “I just get tired by the end of the day. These teachers be driving us too hard sometimes” (Joshua, reading club discussion transcript, 11/3/14). One exception for Joshua was language arts class. During the reading club, in language arts class, he was reading S.E. Hinton’s (1967) *The Outsiders*. He said it is one of his favorite books. He loved the characters and the “fast-moving” plot (Joshua, reading club discussion transcript, 12/1/14). He did not like writing in language arts class, but he liked doing projects. One thing he missed from other language arts classes in the past was having a chance to go to the school library once a week. He stated, “We went once at the beginning of the year and we haven’t been back since.” (Joshua, interview transcript, 11/3/14). He used to enjoy taking Accelerated Reader tests regularly in the school library with his 7th grade teacher and checking out a number of books on sports and other topics of interest to him.

Joshua showed a keen interest in the technology-based projects he did in the reading club. He enjoyed creating a podcast stating his case for who should receive the NFL Most Valuable Player Award for the 2014 season. He chose Tom Brady, the star quarterback for the New England Patriots. He researched Brady’s statistics and his background, and he wrote a player podcast in first-person explaining why he thought Tom Brady should be selected as MVP. He then recorded the podcast using Apple’s Garage Band. As further evidence of Joshua’s interest in technology based projects, he also made a digital presentation on his favorite NBA player after creating the NFL player podcast. In this project, he collected photos and video on his favorite NBA player, Kevin Durant.

**Engagement inventory.** In this section, I describe Joshua’s engagement in the reading club program (see Table 4.2). I discuss each aspect of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) as it applied to Joshua’s interactions in the reading club. I break down
each aspect of engagement into the indicators that show each facet of engagement. I end this section with a discussion of Joshua’s engagement in the reading club as a whole.

Table 5.

*Joshua’s Engagement Moments Inventory*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evident</th>
<th>Not Evident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Described cognitive strategies (e.g. made predictions about game winners)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Went beyond minimum required (e.g. read additional articles)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Detailed recall of learning events (e.g. recalled information about favorite team)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Showed feelings of acceptance (e.g. expressed that he enjoyed an activity)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Showed curiosity (e.g. discussed a new video he found)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was having fun (e.g. used catch phrases)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Followed protocol of reading and discussion (e.g. allowed group members time to speak)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attentive (e.g. looked at the other group members as they spoke)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Followed Directions (e.g. moved from one activity to the next easily)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did not follow protocol of reading and discussion (e.g. did not follow independent reading time protocol)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding cognitive engagement, like Cameron, Joshua had a strong knowledge base of football and basketball. Joshua showed fourteen times that he used cognitive strategies during the program. During the reading club discussions, Joshua showed seven notable times that he used cognitive strategies. He showed that he was well versed in the players and teams of the NBA and NFL. In these instances, Joshua added information about a favorite player or team to the discussion. In contrast to Cameron, Joshua jotted down what he read in his reaction journal. Below is an example of a typical reaction journal entry from Joshua. In these entries, Joshua would write a short description of what he read.

Trading article on ESPN.com – The post is talking about NBA trades for the 14-15 season. I learned about the LeBron trade and how they think that one is big.

Leading off – They can’t win for losing. When I had watch the game I thought Florida State was going to lose so I continued to watch the game and Florida State won the score was 31-27 they won by four points.
Alabama Crimson Tide beat Texas A&M. They won 59 to 0 and they got annihilated.

(Joshua, reaction journal, 11/13/14)

This entry showed his knowledge of his favorite teams and players. First, Joshua jotted down what he learned about key trades in the NBA. He noted that the LeBron James trade from Miami to Cleveland was an important one. Next, Joshua jotted down ideas about the Florida State Seminoles game the weekend before, and how the game was a close one. Finally, he jotted down that he watched the Alabama Crimson Tide play the Texas A&M Aggies. Joshua brought his personal perspective to the texts he read, as a result of his interest in sports (Rosenblatt, 1994; Langer, 2011). These notes Joshua took showed him “being in and moving through an envisionment” (Langer, 2011, p. 18). Joshua jotted down ideas, took in what he read and wondered about what would happen next with his favorite teams. Joshua referred to these notes when the group discussed what they read during discussion time. He referred to articles he read and made comments about the sports events he watched.

Joshua showed seven additional times that he used cognitive strategies during the club. While watching Belman’s (2009) documentary, More than a Game, Joshua made predictions about what would happened throughout the documentary during the game action scenes of the documentary (Field notes, 12/11/14). Joshua also showed examples of his burgeoning independent learning ability when he read Nate LeBoutillier’s (2010) Play Basketball Like a Pro: Key Skills and Tips (Field notes, 11/20/14). When Joshua showed his burgeoning independent learning ability, he experienced what Langer (2011) called “stepping out and rethinking what you know” (p. 19). Joshua propelled his own learning through his interest in getting better at basketball. In his reaction journal, Joshua stated, “I want to try these tips when I get on the basketball court this afternoon. I really want to try that crossover to the basket it was
telling me about in the book” (Joshua, reaction journal, 11/20/14). Joshua reconsidered what he already knew about the fundamentals of basketball when LeBoutillier (2010) text intersected with his own life. Joshua wrote down ideas in his reaction journal that he shared with the group and as a reference point for what he learned from the texts.

Joshua went beyond the minimum required on six notable occasions during the program. On one occasion, Joshua created a digital presentation in addition to a player podcast on his favorite NBA player, Kevin Durant. Joshua decided to create a digital presentation because he wanted to “show more of KD’s (Kevin Durant) sick moves” (Joshua, reading club transcript, 12/2/14). Joshua wanted an opportunity to share the photos he found when he was creating his player profile of Durant. Joshua felt the photos represented Kevin Durant’s appeal as an elite athlete. Below is an excerpt from the digital presentation Joshua created:

![Figure 12. Joshua’s Digital Presentation of Kevin Durant](image-url)
Through this digital presentation, Joshua created a dynamic exchange between what he read and his interpretation of the text (Rosenblatt, 1994). For instance, Joshua provided facts about Durant, background information, and reasons for why he thought Durant was the best player in the NBA. Referring to Durant, Joshua included in the presentation, “I’m the best player because I always try my best no matter how difficult the team is. I always finish strong no matter what I do” (Joshua, reading club transcript, 12/2/14). Joshua emphasized that showing one’s best effort was an important characteristic of a quality basketball player. “Finishing strong” was an important characteristic, according to Joshua; Durant went strong to the basket and was not intimidated by players on the opposing team. Joshua also wrote about the challenges Durant faced when he recently broke his foot. Acting as Durant, Joshua stated, “I’m going to make sure I come in first and take LeBron’s spot. You can bet on that.” (Joshua, reading club transcript, 12/2/14). Joshua acknowledged that LeBron James, in his opinion, was a better player, but Kevin Durant would be back after he recovered from his injury and better than ever.

On a second occasion, Joshua became interested in a novel about a teenager who secretly joins a rough and tumble football league, titled *The League* by Heldring (2014). Joshua decided to read the book outside of the reading club as well as during the regular reading club time. Joshua did not finish the book by the end of the sports reading club program, but he reported that he wanted to finish the book during the upcoming winter holiday break. On four additional occasions, Joshua went beyond the minimum required when he offered personal connections to the discussions we had in class. For instance, Joshua made two personal connections when he discussed a time he got a sports-related injury when the group discussed sports concussions (Field notes, 11/20/14). On two additional occasions, Joshua made personal connections to the nonfiction texts he read about basketball. The texts where Joshua made personal connections to
his own ability in basketball were Glaser’s (2010) *Small Forward* and LeBoutillier’s (2010) *Play Basketball Like a Pro: Key Skills and Tips*.

Joshua showed additional technical knowledge of basketball when he read Glaser’s (2010) *Small Forward*. Joshua recalled what he learned about the characteristics that made up a quality small forward in the NBA. Once again, Joshua went into detail about what he learned from the text in his reaction journal:

> It was telling me how to play basketball. It says you need to keep it low to keep the defense players from stealing the ball from you. And they said it’s important to keep your head up while dribbling the ball. And dribbling is done with your finger tips. It helps you if you can dribble with both hands. If the defense is trying to pressure you, try using a reverse layup. When you force the ball too hard during a layup it might bounce off the rim. And it tells me about some like Rick Barry. They said he was one of the greatest free throw shooters in NBA history like around 1970s. It was a pretty good book overall. (Joshua, reaction journal, 12/8/14).

Joshua provided details about what it means to be a small forward in basketball. Joshua stepped in and out of envisionment with the text when he addressed the fundamentals of the game, he talked about the history of the small forward position, and he connected to the basketball tips that helped out his own game (Langer, 2011). Regarding the fundamentals of basketball, in Langer’s (2011) stances, Joshua “rethinks what he knows” (p. 19) when he went into detail in his reaction journal about key concepts including keeping your head up when you dribble, doing a reverse layup to counteract a defensive player pressuring you, and having finesse at the rim. He reflected on these new basketball concepts to adapt them to his own play. Since Joshua played basketball, this book helped him tune into a key interest --improving his own basketball game. He reported
during his final interview that if the text is something he was interested in getting better at, he was more likely to read about it (Joshua, interview transcript, 12/15/14). Joshua also displayed that by reading and relating to the text he found a new athlete to look up to when he learned about Rick Barry. Joshua reported in the roundtable discussion on the day he read the text that Rick Barry lead the NBA in scoring for several years, and he maintained an excellent free-throw percentage (Field notes, 12/8/14). Joshua wanted to emulate Rick Barry’s success and perseverance in his own playing.

On six occasions, Joshua showed minimal use of cognitive strategies when cognitive engagement was not evident. In these instances, he did not offer predictions or complex thinking in his reaction journal or in discussions during that session. He, instead, summarized the events of the texts. On one notable occasion, Joshua showed minimum recall of learning events when he discussed Alexander’s (2014) *The Crossover*. Joshua, at that time, was looking for a nonfiction text on basketball, but he settled on a fiction text instead. This lack of interest in fiction texts at that time seemed to affect his willingness to write in the reaction journal. There were no notable instances when Joshua only completed the minimum required. He often wrote more than the other members of the group in his reaction journal and expanded the player profiles into a digital project he was interested in completing.

Also in line with Cameron, Joshua’s emotional engagement was evident when he watched sports highlights. Joshua showed fifteen instances of emotional engagement when he watched basketball highlights. He had fun making comments such as “Oh I saw that!” (Field notes, 12/8/14). Additionally, he made comments such as, “He thought he was going back. Then, he said boom! He barely even spin. He just turned around.” (Joshua, reading club transcript, 12/8/14). In my field notes, I recorded that he spun around as if he was taking part in the
basketball move while watching the highlights (Field notes, 12/15/14). On two occasions, while he watched basketball highlights, he dribbled an imaginary basketball and made imaginary moves to the basket (Field notes, 12/15/14). He was so excited that he would get out of his chair as he watched the highlights. His enthusiasm for the game and willingness to learn about basketball was notable. During one moment while having fun watching the highlights, he referred to the book on small forwards he read in the club. He stated, “Oh, I read about that in the book, too. They was telling how you do that in the book.” (Joshua, reading club transcript, 12/8/14).

Joshua showed notable moments of curiosity four times during the reading club program. Joshua had a keen sense of understanding what was happening in the texts he read and in the interactions around him. On two occasions, he reported that he enjoyed the reading time we set aside for each session, because he was curious about the games he loved. He wanted to get better and learn as much as he could about basketball and football. On two other occasions, he showed curiosity when he dug deeper into his player podcast of NBA basketball player, Kevin Durant. He added information he learned from online articles about Kevin Durant’s background as a college player to his player podcast. Additionally, Joshua created a digital presentation with photos and texts about Durant. From the data, Joshua revealed himself as feeling accepted five times by the group. In these instances of feeling accepted, he included his perspective in the reading club discussions. On two occasions, Joshua showed these feelings of acceptance by leaning in as he discussed a text he read and adding to the discussion seamlessly without raising his hand (Video field notes, 11/17/14 and 12/1/14). In these instances, Joshua talked about current sports events. He used language in rich ways, talking about his favorite players and teams as a sports enthusiast would.
For Joshua, moments when emotional engagement was not evident were rare. On two occasions, Joshua did not show involvement. These instances took place when Joshua did not contribute to the discussion. On both occasions, I asked Joshua what sports texts he read and to give the group thoughts about those texts. On one occasion, Joshua showed boredom. From video evidence during reading time, Joshua looked out the window and slouched in his chair, rather than continue reading (Video field notes, 11/17/14). On this instance, I reminded Joshua that he could read any texts he wanted about sports. He found another sports text, and this appeared to change his demeanor (Video field notes, 11/17/14).

Joshua’s behavioral engagement throughout the club was overwhelmingly evident. Joshua showed thirteen times of following the protocol of reading and discussion and seventeen times of following directions. In my field notes during the third week of the program, I wrote, “Joshua rarely has to be told to stay on task.” (Field notes, 11/17/14). He followed directions and stayed attentive throughout each session and throughout the program. Joshua showed that he was following protocol after settling down to read each session. Below is a typical example of Joshua reading during the program:

*Figure 13. Joshua Showing Behavioral Engagement During the Club*
Joshua preferred to read at his desk and wear a hood on his head when he read. He reported that wearing the hood helped him concentrate (Field notes, 11/17/14). He often kept his arms to his side and leaned forward slightly when he was reading.

Joshua followed directions when the group transitioned through the three aspects of the reading program each session (5 minute current events discussion, 20-25 minute reading time, 10-15 minute discussion time). When the group decided to lengthen reading time to work on their player podcasts, Joshua welcomed the opportunity. I noted from video evidence on fifteen occasions that Joshua was attentive. On eight occasions, Joshua showed attentiveness by sitting up in his chair and interacting comfortably throughout discussions. Because of his attentiveness, Joshua often sparked conversations during the roundtable sports discussion time. Below, Joshua and Cameron discussed a particular notable touchdown from running back Mark Ingram of the New Orleans Saints:

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 14. Joshua and Cameron Showing Behavioral Engagement During Discussion*

Joshua and Cameron used body language to show that after a running back gets past the initial defenders, he needs to get past the safeties and defensive backs in the secondary. Then, it’s “all downhill from there” according to Joshua (Field notes, 11/17/14). He compared the last ten yards to the goal line to enjoying the breeze down a steep hill on a bicycle. On seven occasions, Joshua showed notable moments of attentiveness while reading sports articles online. From the video
evidence, I noted that Joshua was reading and attentive. He was largely still during these
dmoments, reading across the page and making short notes about what he read.

There were a small number of occasions when behavioral engagement was not evident.
On two occasions, Joshua did not follow protocol. During one of the recorded video sessions, I
wrote in my field notes, “I had to tell Joshua not to cut up when the camera is on” (Field notes,
11/6/14). Below is a screenshot example of a time when behavioral engagement was not evident.
Joshua is waving at the camera while the camera was recording:

![Image of Joshua waving at the camera]

*Figure 15. Joshua and Khalil Reading During the Club*

Joshua, jovially, made funny faces and pretended he was combing his hair and looking at himself
for approximately two minutes while the camera was recording (Video field notes, 11/6/14).
When the camera was off, he focused and behavioral engagement was evident. Joshua appeared
to get comfortable with the camera as the program progressed. I asked him if the camera
bothered him, and he reported that he just needed to get used to it and he would be able to work
while it was on (Field notes, 11/6/14). He did not show behavioral disengagement as a result of
the camera recording beyond the first two weeks of the program. On a second occasion, Joshua
did not follow the reading time protocol in the third week of the program, and he had to be
reminded to continue reading (Field notes, 11/17/14). He appeared to be losing focus because of
the text he chose. On two additional occasions, Joshua was inattentive during discussion. He lost focus when discussing current sports events at the beginning of each session (Video field notes, 11/17/14 and 11/20/14). He slouched in his chair and looked out the window as the other group members talked about current sports events (Video field notes, 11/17/14 and 11/20/14). This may have occurred because he was not familiar with the current sports events being discussed at the time.

For Joshua, agentic engagement was evident eight times. Joshua asked questions on four notable occasions. On one occasion, Joshua read Glaser’s (2010) *Small Forward*, a text about what made a good small forward in basketball. Joshua shared the tips he learned about basketball with his peers, and he asked questions to the group about what it means to be a good small forward and tips for improving as a basketball player. Cameron and Anthony contributed tips they learned from their coaches and friends about playing small forward, as a result of Joshua asking questions to the group. On a second occasion, Joshua asked about the long-term effects of concussions on athletes. He inquired about whether or not concussion injuries could cause permanent brain damage. On two additional occasions Joshua asked questions surrounding basketball plays while watching Belman’s (2009) documentary, *More Than a Game*. These questions from the documentary served to clarify why a particular move from a player call caused a turnover.

Additionally, Joshua expressed his opinion two notable times during the program. When he reflected on a film adaptation of Spinelli’s (1990) middle grades novel, *Maniac Magee*, he wrote in his reaction journal:

I really like this sports story. It was very emotional and sad. The reason I say that is because the boy ran away from home and found more homes and kept running and
leaving and at the end he found a permanent home. The reason he kept running is because people talked about him on the east-side. So he showed them how it feel if they went to the other-side (Joshua, reaction journal, 12/1/14).

Joshua touched on the emotional impact the story had on him. He began to process the challenges the main character, Maniac Magee, had in the story. Maniac is a foster-child who does not feel welcome in black side of town nor the white side of town. Joshua pointed to major plot point in the story when Maniac took his friends to the other side of town to experience that people are not as different as they may seem. Joshua expressed his positive opinion of the text by pointing to the emotional effect the book had on him.

Joshua expressed his opinion a second notable time when he created a player podcast on Tom Brady. In this project, Joshua argued why Tom Brady should be selected as NFL Most Valuable Player for the 2014-2015 season. The transcript of Joshua’s player podcast follows:

I’m Tom Brady, and I think I should be the NFL MVP for the 2014-2015 season. I play for the best team in the league. My team is 8-2. Yeah, we had one bad loss. We lost to Kansas City by two touchdowns. But since we lost that game, we’re 5-0. We crushed the Bengals, and we crushed the Bears. We even beat up on the Colts, who everyone thought was so good. We beat up on them Monday night. Everybody thinks they’re the next great team. In this 5-0 stretch, I threw for 1,600 yards, 18 touchdowns, only one interception that whole time. Some people may not think I’m not as flashy or have as good of an arm as someone like Aaron Rodgers or maybe even Russell Wilson. But we’ll see who’s the best when my Patriots play the Packers and Aaron Rodgers on November 30. Then, we’ll really find out who the MVP is. I think it’s me, and I know my team is the best and we’re
going all the way this year. I’ll be holding that MVP trophy with my Super Bowl trophy at the end of this football season. (Joshua, reading club transcript, 11/20/14)

Joshua included a number of convincing statistics on individual player performance and team performance to state his opinion about Tom Brady. Joshua was convincing in his podcast of Tom Brady, according to the group members. Javeon stated, “You said a few bad things that happened, but you said a lot of good things too. You said everything clear, like it’s gonna happen” (Javeon, reading club transcript, 11/20/14). Cameron said, “You threw in some confident things. Then you threw in some stats, too. You said you only had one interception since that 5-0 stretch. That was a good one” (Cameron, reading club transcript, 11/20/14). Joshua created, rehearsed, and performed his player podcast with success. Joshua reported losing track of time as he created the podcast when he needed extra time to finish before recording the podcast. He also reported feeling challenged to prove his opinion about Tom Brady, thereby moving beyond recall of facts about Tom Brady to analysis. Langer (2011) called this “stepping out and objectifying the experience” (p. 20). Joshua examined related issues from the texts he read on Tom Brady to create a reasoned analysis of the athlete. On two occasions, Joshua let others know what he was interested in. He discussed his interest in improving his basketball game by emulating Kevin Durant, the subject for one of Joshua’s player podcasts.

During moments that agentic engagement were not evident, Joshua showed three times that he was not proactive in asking questions. On one occasion, Joshua did not ask about the protocol of reaction journals. He thought they were required and he was worried that he would not have time to write in them during regular reading time. I assured him that the reaction journals were strictly voluntary. He could, instead, talk about what he read during discussion time. Joshua showed two times that he did not express his opinion. Both instances when Joshua
could have expressed his opinion, he was discussing football with Cameron. Joshua, instead, agreed with Cameron without offering his own opinion.

Joshua emerged as a polite, reserved participant in the group. Joshua’s overall engagement in the group indicated that he was a leader in a different sense than Cameron. His maturity as the oldest participant in the group kept the reading club conversations grounded and connected to the topic at hand. On several occasions, Joshua chose his words wisely and kept all the other group members in check. For example, during a spirited discussion of the NBA’s Cleveland Cavaliers, Joshua said, “Give him [Anthony] a chance to talk” and “Y’all should listen to this” to direct the conversation to another group member’s comment he deemed worthy (Field notes, 12/8/14). If the group veered off topic or another participant was not paying attention, he was often the first person to draw the group back to what they were supposed to be talking about and doing (Field notes, 12/8/14). He did not joke around as much as the other participants. He loved reading and learning from nonfiction texts, and he showed this learning through the technology projects he created.

Overall, Joshua’s indicators of cognitive engagement were intriguing. Joshua’s most frequent indicator of cognitive engagement was the use of cognitive strategies. Joshua made predictions and causal judgments about the articles he read on the internet, and he made predictions during Belman’s (2009) documentary, More than a Game. He often used his reaction journal and discussion time to express these thoughts. Joshua went beyond the minimum required when he created a digital presentation in addition to a player podcast of Kevin Durant. Joshua enjoyed researching Kevin Durant and wanted a medium to share pictures of the athlete. Joshua made a player podcast of Tom Brady, showing his deepening cognitive engagement during the program. Joshua also integrated the knowledge he learned from instructional texts on
basketball, and shared what he learned with his peers and used the text to help improve his own basketball game. Texts that were catalysts for cognitive engagement for Joshua were Small Forward by Glaser (2010), Play Basketball Like a Pro: Key Skills and Tips by LeBoutillier (2010), The League by Heldring (2014), and online articles about his favorite athletes. In contrast, cognitive engagement was not evident when Joshua was not interested in a text, and when he did not offer predictions or complex thinking during discussion time.

Moments of having fun were the most frequent indicator of emotional engagement for Joshua throughout the program. Joshua showed positive emotional engagement when he watched basketball and football highlights. He showed this emotional engagement when he used clever phrases (e.g. “I wanna see him splash” and “He broke them ankles”), moved in his chair, and stood up from his chair while watching highlights. He also had fun when he watched basketball highlights by making connections to instructional texts he read in the program. Joshua showed curiosity during reading time when he sought out more texts on a topic he was interested in, and as he sought more information in his player profiles of Kevin Durant and Tom Brady. Texts that served as catalysts for Joshua’s emotional engagement were instructional texts on basketball and football, basketball and football highlights on YouTube, and online information about Joshua’s favorite athletes. In contrast, Joshua showed negative indicators of emotional engagement when he did not contribute to discussion. On these occasions, I reminded Joshua to add his contributions to the group discussion and he complied. Joshua also did not show emotional engagement when he found a text he chose uninteresting.

Joshua’s indicators of behavioral engagement were evenly distributed across the three indicators. Joshua rarely had to be reminded to stay on task. Joshua followed protocol of reading and discussion, followed directions, and he was attentive throughout the program. In contrast,
Joshua had some trouble focusing when the video camera recorded reading and discussion time in the club. This may have affected his behavioral engagement in a negative manner. Joshua also lost focus when discussing current sports events in the beginning weeks of the program and during designated reading time. When the group decided to create player profiles of their favorite athletes, Joshua behavioral disengagement diminished completely.

Like Cameron, Joshua showed agentic engagement a lesser number of times than the other facets of engagement. When Joshua showed positive agentic engagement, he asked questions to the group members about ideas connected to what he read. He also stated his opinion about the merits of the fictional text, Spinelli’s (1990) *Maniac Magee*. His most notable instance of stating his opinion was when he argued in a player podcast that Tom Brady should be selected as the NFL MVP for the 2014-2015. He expressed his opinion through convincing statistics and other information about the football star. Joshua’s work on the player podcast was praised by the other group members. He reported that he felt challenged when he was asked to prove that Tom Brady was the best quarterback in the NFL. Texts that were catalysts for Joshua’s agentic engagement were Glaser’s (2010) *Small Forward*, Belman’s (2009) documentary *More Than a Game*, Spinelli’s (1990) *Maniac Magee*, and online texts about Tom Brady and Kevin Durant. In contrast, Joshua’s agentic engagement was not evident when he did not ask questions and did not offer his opinion during discussion time. In these instances, he may have deferred to Cameron, instead of formulating his own opinion. Joshua had no negative instances of failing to express what he was interested in. He often expressed his interest in football and basketball players and teams with the group members.
Khalil, Age 12, 6th Grade

The youngest member of the sports reading club, Khalil lived in a trailer park with his four siblings and his parents. His mother worked as a receptionist at a local hospital and his father was looking for work. His father, at the time of the study, was helping out around the house until he could find a new job. Khalil’s interests included watching TV, playing soccer, playing the trumpet, and playing video games. At the time of the study, Khalil was excited about getting the opportunity to perform a trumpet solo in the upcoming holiday concert. In his initial interview, Khalil mentioned a time when he enjoyed something from start to finish. He spoke about his interest in music and soccer during this discussion. He stated:

When I memorized my basic scales on my trumpet, I accomplished it. I did something by myself and now I have something to remember. Another time I won a trophy for soccer. I had something to remember it by. I did something cool. (Khalil, interview transcript, 11/3/14)

Khalil’s interest in music and sports helped him feel a sense of accomplishment as he explored new things in middle school. Khalil mentioned that he enjoyed the afterschool program. He liked the snacks provided at the afterschool program and having a structured time to get homework done. He was grateful that there were teachers available to help if he was having trouble with his homework. On Wednesdays and Fridays, he enjoyed club days, when he had time to go to afterschool music class and explore other extracurricular interests.

Khalil is small in stature and did not dwell as much on peer pressure as the other members of the group. Conversations between the older group members before and after the reading club session sometimes devolved into criticism of one another’s hair or clothes, but Khalil rarely participated in these put-downs. He instead, emerged as more “bookish” than the
other group members. He talked in his interview about losing track of time in social studies class. He stated:

Sometimes I forget about what time is it and when the bell rings I just keep doing the work. Then the teacher says, "Come on, you gotta go." Sometimes I do it in the hallway. Certain subjects like social studies. The teacher is good and so is the stuff that I'm learning. It's interesting. You learn new things. Stuff you don't know about. Then you get to know more. (Khalil, interview transcript, 11/3/14)

Khalil may have been closer in social and emotional development to a typical elementary school student than a high school student. He talked about the transition from elementary school to middle school, reporting that he had enjoyed the transition. He stated, “In elementary school, it’s not really fun because middle school you can do sports and you have more freedom. And there’s more people you can have friends with” (Khalil, interview transcript, 12/8/14). He loved the freedom of middle school, but he was still navigating the challenges of peer pressure, especially from the kids that were older than him in the reading club.

Khalil emerged as the least likely to contribute to discussions in the group. Often, during the sessions, Khalil would listen intently but he did not join in the discussion. I asked him about why he chose not to participate during our discussions. He stated, “I like to be on the outside looking in. Sometimes, I don’t think I know as much about sports as the other kids do. I like sports. I just don’t know as much.” (Khalil, interview transcript, 12/08/14). This shyness and unwillingness to contribute to discussion may have been partly because he was the youngest member of the reading club, and that he was somewhat intimidated by the older group members. When I was able to talk to him individually, he often opened up about what he experienced in the club.
Although Khalil enjoyed learning about basketball and football like the other group members, he also had interest in other sports outside of what the other group members were interested in. Khalil enjoyed reading websites about his favorite sport, soccer, and keeping up with his favorite soccer player, Cristiano Ronaldo. Khalil talked about his interest in soccer and his favorite player, Ronaldo, with Joshua. An excerpt from the interaction is below:

Joshua: I thought he was the best player.
Khalil: No, he’s not! Because Ronaldo has better pace and better skills, free kicks all that. All Messi do is dribble. That’s all he got! Is dribbling. Dribble. He’s a mini man. Dribble like this [Khalil shows what he considers bad dribbling in soccer]. A ballerina.

Khalil showed deepened engagement when he discussed soccer, as evidenced in the exchange with Joshua above. In contrast to his usual shyness with the older participants in the sports reading club, he told me about his leadership role on his recreational soccer team. He told me he enjoyed playing forward because he was the leader. He stated:

I play forward. The forward is like the captain. You gotta keep everybody organized and then everybody think it’s easy to be forward but it’s not because you have to go against mostly everybody. Defense is the easiest part of the game. But you get scared when they come at you with the ball. But me, I have to run back to get the ball. I have to go and make the goal. It’s hard because sometime the team if I’m not there sometimes they do the wrong thing. Sometimes they get disorganized. So then if I’m not there sometimes my team gets mad if they’re losing. Cuz if I’m late I get in trouble because I’m the leader. Once I get back, we get organized and we start winning. (Khalil, interview transcript, 12/15/14)
Khalil appeared to be a leader among peers in his own age and friend group. Khalil helped his teammates stay organized on offense and defense, directing his teammates to move the ball around as they approach the goal, and other leadership roles. He displayed confidence with his peers on the soccer field when he discussed the importance of being on time to lead and organize his teammates to success when they play soccer. Khalil may not have displayed this confidence in the sports reading club to the extent that the other participants did, perhaps because he was the youngest in the group. However, it is apparent that when he was in the right situation he did speak up. He showed this sense of confidence when I was able to talk to him individually.

When Khalil did open up about his experiences in the club, he showed a burgeoning interest in fictional sports texts. He reported that he liked reading for fun at his initial interview, especially comic books such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and the *Big Nate* series, so other fictional texts lent themselves to this interest (Field notes, 11/3/14). As the reading program progressed, Khalil particularly enjoyed reading Korman’s (2012) short story “The Trophy” and Peirce’s (2014) *Big Nate: In the Zone*, two fictional texts with sports themes.

Khalil emerged as the “rookie” of the sports reading club. He was new to many of the sports topics, and often was attentive during the reading club discussion, but he did not offer insight. He was more compliant of the typical rules of school than the other participants. He was smaller in stature and younger than the other members of the group, and he did not dwell as much on peer pressure. He read a number of sports texts, improved his knowledge base of sports, and began to speak out in more of our discussions as the club progressed. He also expressed a burgeoning interest in fictional sports texts. Khalil began to feel successful in what he accomplished when he read, and he discussed his favorite fictional sports texts and completed player podcasts as the program progressed.
Engagement inventory. In this section, I present a detailed description of Khalil’s engagement in the reading club program (see Table 4.3). Khalil showed various indicators of engagement throughout the reading club. I will discuss each aspect of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) as it applied to Khalil’s interactions in the reading club. I break down each aspect of engagement into the indicators that show each facet of engagement. I end this section with a discussion of Khalil’s engagement in the reading club as a whole.

Table 6.

Khalil’s Engagement Moments Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Evident</th>
<th>Not Evident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Described cognitive strategies (e.g. made predictions about game winners)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Went beyond minimum required (e.g. read additional articles)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Detailed recall of learning events (e.g. recalled information about favorite team)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minimal use of cognitive strategies (e.g. did not discuss a sports subject with group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did only the minimum required (e.g. limited response in reaction journal)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minimum recall of learning events (e.g. cursory response during discussion time)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Showed feelings of acceptance (e.g. expressed that he enjoyed an activity)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Showed curiosity (e.g. discussed a new video he found)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Was having fun (e.g. used catch phrases)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did not feel accepted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did not show involvement (e.g. leaned back in chair)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Showed boredom (e.g. expressed that he read a book he did not like)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Followed protocol of reading and discussion (e.g. allowed group members time to speak)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attentive (e.g. looked at the</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did not follow protocol of reading and discussion (e.g. did not follow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other group members as they spoke

- Followed Directions (e.g. moved from one activity to the next easily) 15
- Inattentive (e.g. read article that was not related to chosen topic) 5
- Disruptive behavior/Did not follow directions (e.g. did not respond in reaction journal) 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agentic</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asked questions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expressed Opinions (e.g. made connections between sports and social issues)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Let others know what he was interested in (e.g. discussed the merits of his favorite teams and players)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not proactive in asking questions (e.g. did not ask questions to group when the opportunity arose)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did not express opinion (e.g. fidgeted in his chair when a sport he was not interested in was discussed)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did not express what he was interested in</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When cognitive engagement was evident, Khalil showed five moments of describing cognitive strategies. On two occasions, he made predictions about Gordan Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy,” a short story from Jon Scieszka’s (2012) collection of sports stories *Guys Read: Sports Pages*. “The Trophy” follows protagonist Lucas and his friends as they search for their school’s missing basketball trophy. I asked Khalil to share his thoughts with the group about the text. When Khalil discussed what he read to the group, he told them about the premise of the book and he gave the group predictions of what would happen next in the story:

I think they’re gonna actually find that trophy. And I think the dude that stole it is gonna get really sad. Then they all gonna become friends afterwards and all that. I think there’s
gonna be a happy ending on Monday when I finish it. (Khalil, reading club discussion, 11/13/14).

Khalil’s first prediction was that the group would find the trophy by the end of the story. Then, Khalil took his prediction a step further. He predicted that the person who stole the trophy and the friends looking for the trophy would make amends by the end of the story and become friends. Additionally, Khalil also made connections to a time that he had a keepsake taken from him, and he searched for it. On two additional occasions of making predictions, Khalil made judgments about current events discussed during the kickoff of each session (the short, five-ten minute period when the group talked about current sports events). In both of these occasions, Khalil agreed with Cameron about predictions for upcoming NFL football games (Field notes, 11/3/14 and 11/6/14).

Khalil went beyond the minimum required five times. He took two texts, Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy” and Peirce’s (2014) Big Nate: In the Zone, home to read outside of the reading club in addition to reading the texts during reading club time. Khalil also went beyond the minimum required when he read an article from Sports Illustrated. Khalil read about the well-regarded center for the Kansas University Jayhawks, Joel Embid. Below is an excerpt from his reaction journal:

I read about Joel Embid the 7-foot center for Kansas and how when he is alone he plugs in his laptop and goes on YouTube and watches Hakeem Olajuwon show off spins, pivots, crazy dunks and nasty blocks. (Khalil, reaction journal, 11/10/14)

Khalil went beyond the minimum by not only describing what he read, but he also used descriptive, vibrant words to do so. He had fun with adjectives describing the play of Joel Embid’s idol, Hakeem Olajuwon. Khalil’s flourishes of complex vocabulary showed his
willingness to describe the play of Olajuwon beyond a rudimentary description. On two additional occasions, Khalil went into greater detail than the other group members in his reaction journal about the fictional sports texts he read. In both instances, he wrote about Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy.” For example, Khalil wrote in vivid language in his reaction journal while he was reading Korman’s (2012) short story, “Big Nate made a miraculous half court shot! It was his lucky shoes and it was unbelievable” (Khalil, reaction journal, 12/8/14).

Khalil showed detailed recall of events on five occasions. When Khalil read Coy’s (2013) Hoop Genius: How a Desperate Teacher and a Rowdy Gym Class Invented Basketball, Khalil enthusiastically made connections as he read the story. Hoop Genius tells the true story of James Naismith, the inventor of basketball. Khalil told the group that Naismith was a struggling gym teacher who needed to come up with a new game to excite the students in his gym class (Field notes, 11/20/14). The students in the class were bored with the usual exercises in gym class. Naismith tried indoor football, indoor soccer, lacrosse and other traditional sports with no success. Khalil continued, “He tried one last game where the basket was put up high and players couldn’t roughhouse or they would be called for a foul” (Khalil, reading club discussion notes, 11/20/14). He told the group that this game was a great success and later became the game of basketball, a sport millions of people enjoy around the world. During his description of the book to his peers in the club, Khalil provided a glimpse of himself “being in and moving through an envisionment” by explaining to his group members what he explored and observed in the text (Langer, 2011, p. 18). On four additional occasions, Khalil gave a detailed synopsis to the group of what he watched to that point in Belman’s (2009) documentary, More Than a Game. Khalil appeared to enjoy recalling what he learned to the rest of the group. However, it was more
difficult for Khalil to make judgments when discussing texts with the group, that is to “step out and objectify the experience” of reading texts (Langer, 2011, p. 20).

For Khalil, cognitive engagement was not evident a total of seven notable times. Khalil did not show any notable times of minimal use of cognitive strategies. Additional evidence of when cognitive engagement was not evident included five moments when Khalil did only the minimum required. These moments all took place during reading club discussion time. During these times, Khalil read the texts of his choosing during reading time, but he did not contribute to the discussion time. On two occasions, Khalil did only the minimum required by listening to the other group members talk about the texts they read, but he only provided a short synopsis of what he read or watched. Khalil showed two moments of minimal recall of learning events. These moments also took place during discussion time. I asked Khalil to provide more detail about what he read, but he was not interested in doing so. I assured him that I did not want to put him on the spot and that it was okay if he preferred to use the reaction journals to jot down his thoughts, rather than talk during group discussion time.

Khalil’s indicators when emotional engagement was evident included two notable moments of showing curiosity and thirteen notable moments of having fun. During one of the moments where he showed curiosity, Khalil discussed Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy” during group discussion time. During a second moment, he showed curiosity as he researched Seattle Seahawks cornerback, Richard Sherman, for a player podcast. He told the group that he had heard about Richard Sherman, that he liked the Seattle Seahawks, and that he wanted to learn more about the athlete (Field notes, 11/17/14).
In one notable instance of having fun, Khalil read Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy.” I asked him what he thought of the story compared to the nonfiction articles he read in previous weeks. He stated:

Solving a mystery is fun. I think it’s fun. You know that thing called imagery? I make a picture in my head about these kids getting on the subway and trying to find the trophy. It's fun to watch that all happen in your head. I really wouldn't do that about a news article. I just read that for the facts. (Khalil, reading club transcript, 11/13/14)

Khalil was emotionally engaged in reading fictional stories like Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy.” He had fun reading the story; he enjoyed picturing the scenes as he read along, which is an instance of Khalil objectifying his reading experience by focusing on the literary elements of the short story (Langer, 2011). He showed his preference for reading fictional stories over new stories about sports.

Additional moments when Khalil was having fun occurred when he watched Belman’s (2009) documentary More Than a Game, when he completed the player profiles of Richard Sherman and Kobe Bryant, and when he watched basketball and football highlights on YouTube. Although it was rare in comparison to the other two focal participants in the group, Khalil showed two moments of feelings of acceptance during the program. Both of these instances took place while all of the group members watched basketball and football highlights. In my video field notes, I recorded two times he looked at the other group members for approval and received approval for his comments (Video field notes, 12/1/14).

When emotional engagement was not evident, Joshua sometimes appeared to struggle with feelings of acceptance and belonging. He was the youngest in the group and the one with the least background knowledge about the prevailing sports of interest of the group, football and
basketball. On three occasions, Khalil slouched back in his chair and may have not felt accepted when he made what other members deemed an incorrect observation about a basketball player. On another occasion, he did not show involvement and showed boredom when the group discussed the college football playoffs (Field notes, 11/20/14). It was apparent that he did not have the background knowledge of the teams and players discussed. In contrast, Khalil reported an interest in soccer during his interview and during casual conversations with his peers, a sport interest that he did not have in common with any of the other members of the group. Because he did not contribute to discussion as much as the other participants, it was at times difficult to tell whether he was bored, confused, or simply taking in what the other participants were talking about.

Khalil’s moments of behavioral engagement were intriguing as well. Khalil showed nineteen times of following protocol. Like the other group members, Khalil often followed the protocol of reading and discussion. In addition, according to the evidence from video observation, he was conscientious and followed directions on fifteen occasions. He sat still in his chair during discussion, and he read without being distracted during reading time. There were no notable instances when Khalil disrupted the group because he was dissatisfied with a topic we were covering. There were six notable moments that I recorded Khalil being attentive. I recorded these moments in my video field notes while he was reading texts, while he was watching basketball and football highlights, and while he was watching Belman’s (2009) documentary, More than a Game. Below is an example of Khalil showing attentiveness while reading the sports section of the local newspaper:
Khalil sat up in his chair and held the newspaper high as he read it. He kept his gaze on what he was reading and largely sat still in his chair. Through his body language, Khalil showed he was reading during the designated reading time, but he rarely talked about what he read during discussion time without a prompt from me or another group member.

Khalil’s moments when behavioral engagement was not evident were consistent with Joshua’s levels. On three minor occasions, Khalil did not follow directions during the reading session. In the field notes, I recorded that I had to remind Joshua and Khalil to save their discussion for discussion time instead of during reading time. These occasions when Khalil did not follow directions appeared to be isolated instances that were not indicative of a larger problem with behavioral engagement. On five occasions, I recorded in my field notes that Khalil appeared inattentive during reading club discussion time. For example, Khalil appeared to not be paying attention when Cameron was discussing the Cleveland Cavaliers with Joshua (Field notes, 11/6/14). Khalil looked away from Joshua and Cameron and began looking in his backpack. Khalil did not show notable moments of disruptive behavior at any time throughout the program.

Figure 16. Khalil Showing Behavioral Engagement During Reading Time
Khalil’s predominantly compliant and positive behavioral engagement may have affected his level of agentic engagement. He showed one notable moment when he expressed his opinion. He expressed his opinion to the group about his favorite soccer player, Cristiano Ronaldo.

Below is a screenshot of Khalil discussing Cristiano Ronaldo (Video field notes, 11/3/14):

![Figure 17. Khalil Expressing his Opinion About Soccer Player Cristiano Ronaldo](image)

In this screenshot, Khalil stood up to make his point about Ronaldo. He had a smile on his face as he talked about his favorite soccer player. Joshua kept his gaze on Khalil as he listened intently to Khalil’s opinion of Ronaldo. Khalil defended Ronaldo’s play and stated that Ronaldo was the best soccer player in the league. Perhaps, because Khalil was knowledgeable about soccer, he felt that he could state his opinion with confidence to the group.

Khalil showed two notable moments of letting others know what he was interested in. Near the end of the reading club program, Khalil described his interest in Lincoln Peirce’s (2014) *Big Nate: In the Zone* to the other group members. Khalil shared his response of the book with the reading club. Khalil previously read one other book about Big Nate, so he indicated that he was excited to read a Big Nate book with connections to sports. He talked in more depth than
during any other time during the club when he discussed *Big Nate: In the Zone*. First, he made connections to sports texts. He said:

Khalil: Yeah, it had a lot to do with sports like field day and stuff. They was also in a band. They sounded horrible. They sucked. Him, Francis, Eddie, and Arthur. That's the dude. I read every book in the series *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books. I've never read these Big Nate books. They're good. These books are like those. They're funny and I like the comics in them. It only took me a day to read it. That was fun. (Khalil, reading club transcript, 12/8/14)

Khalil read from an aesthetic point of view as he was not seeking information, but reading the text elicited understandings through his reflections of the text (Rosenblatt, 1994). He continued by making aesthetic connections to show that his focus while reading was centered on experiencing the text (Rosenblatt, 1994):

Khalil: There was this one part when he was wearing the lucky shoes. He had made this extremely lucky shot. I think it’s right here, right here [He shows an illustration of the main character making a miraculous half court shot]. Right here, he barely did that. He threw it behind his back. Then, next thing you know, nothing but net. Nothing but net. Javeon and Joshua: Wow.

Khalil: I can do that. He go behind his back and say nuthin' but net.

Group: Laughs

Khalil: And they got to play basketball in the gym as you can see in this picture. So yeah it was a good book. And I liked the sports stuff in it. I want to read some more when I get a chance.
In this instance when he added to the discussion during reading club discussion time, Khalil mentioned wanting to read more of the *Big Nate* series. Khalil talked about how much fun it was to read and that it only took him a day to finish the book. He also encouraged others in the group to read the series and compared it to another book they are familiar with, Kinney’s (2007) *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. He talked about one of his favorite scenes in depth, where the player makes a lucky shot wearing magic shoes. Through his description of the highlights of the book, he received positive responses from his peers about the scene in the book. Although these moments of agentic engagement were not as prevalent as they were with other participants, Khalil developed confidence as the reading program progressed.

In contrast to Khalil’s low number of positive agentic engagement moments during reading club discussion, Khalil relaxed and showed confidence during the interview and other casual moments in the club outside of discussion time. He talked with confidence about his role on his soccer team and his interest in fictional sports texts. His comments were deep and intriguing. The number of agentic moments may have been lower because he was the youngest in the group, and his background knowledge of the sports we primarily discussed (football and basketball) was not as extensive as it was the for the other group members.

Overall, Khalil’s number of indicators of cognitive engagement were lower than the two other focal participants. Khalil was less likely to participate in discussion than the other group members. Khalil showed the same number of notable instances of using cognitive strategies, going beyond the minimum required, and detailed recall of learning events. These instances often occurred when Khalil wrote and talked about the fictional sports stories he read during the program. These instances of cognitive engagement also occurred when he read texts that sparked his interest, including Coy’s (2013) *Hoop Genius* and *Sports Illustrated* (September, 2014).
Khalil showed negative cognitive engagement when he did only the minimum required during discussion time. He also showed minimum recall of learning events during discussion time. During these instances, I asked him to provide more detail about what he read.

Having fun was the most frequent indicator of emotional engagement for Khalil. He showed he was having fun when he read the sports fiction texts, including Korman’s (2012) short story “The Trophy.” He also showed he was having fun when he watched Belman’s (2009) documentary, More Than a Game, when he completed player podcasts of Richard Sherman and Kobe Bryant, and when he watched basketball and football highlights on YouTube. Khalil showed curiosity when he discussed Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy” with his peers and when he researched Kobe Bryant and Richard Sherman for player podcasts. Khalil’s numbers related to feeling accepted were lower than his peers. He was often quiet during discussion time in the group, and he did not have the extensive background knowledge of football and basketball that the other two focal participants had.

Khalil’s number of positive indicators of behavioral engagement were similar to the two other focal participants. Khalil followed directions, followed protocol, and was attentive throughout. As a result of Khalil’s interest in a variety of sports texts, the number of instances of negative behavioral engagement remained low throughout the program. In contrast, Khalil did not show behavioral engagement when he appeared to be inattentive during discussion time. Khalil did not contribute to the discussion and would appear to be losing focus with the conversation of the group. Khalil also did not show behavioral engagement when he talked with Joshua during reading time. These instances when behavioral engagement was not evident, however, were rare during the program.
For the most part, Khalil was comfortable with the expectations of behavioral engagement. In contrast, regarding agentic engagement, Khalil showed few instances of asking questions, expressing his opinion, and stating what he was interested in. When he did show agentic engagement, he expressed these moments in the reaction journal or in the interview sessions. He did not express agentic engagement during discussion time, except when the topic of soccer was discussed and when he offered his opinion about fictional sports texts he read.

Khalil was less likely than the other two participants to show agentic engagement when the group discussed current sports events. Texts that were catalysts for Khalil’s agentic engagement were online articles on soccer and fictional texts such as Peirce’s (2014) *Big Nate: In the Zone* and Korman’s (2012) “The Trophy.

Table 7.

Overview of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>• Mom is an elementary school teacher&lt;br&gt;• Has a twin sister&lt;br&gt;• Outgoing&lt;br&gt;• Emerged as a leader of the group</td>
<td>• Basketball and Pro Football&lt;br&gt;• Sports Highlights&lt;br&gt;• Sports Analysis&lt;br&gt;• Sports Documentaries&lt;br&gt;• Comic books&lt;br&gt;• Sports Video Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>• Mom is a nurse who works late hours to make ends meet&lt;br&gt;• Has a younger brother at the school&lt;br&gt;• Polite; enjoys participating in discussion.&lt;br&gt;• Plays on the school’s football and basketball teams</td>
<td>• Basketball and Football&lt;br&gt;• Customizable Sneaker websites&lt;br&gt;• Technology&lt;br&gt;• Playing outside with friends&lt;br&gt;• Enjoys video games such as Minecraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalil</td>
<td>• Youngest of five brothers and</td>
<td>• Soccer, Football, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cross Case Analysis

In this section, I provide a description of the three cases as a whole. I will begin by analyzing the indicators of student engagement during the reading club program, discussing patterns in the levels of engagement in the group. Next, I discuss in greater depth each of the themes I gleaned from the data. The themes abstracted from the data were (a) the indicators of student engagement were diverse across the three participants, depending on personalities, learning preferences, and their knowledge and interest in particular sports (b) the formats, topics, and genres of sports texts the participants read affected student engagement, (c) participant-driven discussion around the sports texts affected student engagement, and (d) participants indicated increased student engagement when they were given opportunities to create a project about a favorite athlete. Each of these findings emerged during the analysis of the case study and were shown by each of the three focal participants. The findings not only point to the emerging themes of the study, but they also provide information for the reader to learn about the components of student engagement as they apply to the participants’ interactions in the reading club.
Finding 1: Personalities, Learning Preferences, and Knowledge and Interest in Particular Sports Affected Student Engagement

In this section, I will discuss what happened to student engagement across the three participants. I will discuss patterns seen in the data as they apply to the participants’ engagement in the program. I will note indicators that were particularly prevalent and ones that were not for each aspect of engagement. Below, I have included a table with an overview of the indicators of student engagement for the three focal participants.

Table 8.

Total Engagement Numbers for the Three Focal Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evident</th>
<th>Not Evident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Described cognitive</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies (e.g.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made predictions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about game winners)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went beyond minimum</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>required (e.g. read</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additional articles)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed recall of</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning events (e.g.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recalled information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about favorite team)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed feelings of</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acceptance (e.g.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expressed that he</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoyed an activity)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed curiosity (e.g.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussed a new</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>video he found)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was having fun (e.g.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used catch phrases)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed protocol</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of reading and</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion (e.g.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both sets of indicators for cognitive and emotional engagement occurred approximately the same number of times, 73 times and 70 times respectively. The participants showed cognitive engagement when they articulated what they learned about their favorite teams and players, and when they discovered a new text or team they were interested in. These instances of cognitive engagement were examples of the participants creating a dynamic exchange, or “transaction” in Rosenblatt’s (1994) terms, between text and reader (p.34). The participants were not only consumers of sports texts, but they conducted analysis of texts based on their personal experiences. The participants conducted analysis of texts by using cognitive strategies, seeking to learn from each other, and sharing their thoughts with the other group members. Joshua and
Cameron built upon their extensive knowledge of basketball and football coming into the program to show cognitive engagement, whereas Khalil discovered new players and athletes to show cognitive engagement. Khalil also showed cognitive engagement through the sports fiction texts he read and through his interest in soccer. Joshua and Khalil primarily showed cognitive engagement through the reaction journals and discussion, whereas Cameron showed cognitive engagement during discussion time.

The indicators of cognitive engagement were more evenly distributed across the indicators, whereas the indicators of emotional engagement weighed heavily on the indicator of having fun. The difference in emotional and cognitive engagement indicators may have occurred because the participants were experiencing a topic (sports) they already had interest in, so having fun became an important indicator for emotional engagement. All of the participants showed they were having fun by sitting up in their chairs, verbal acknowledgement when they enjoyed a sports topic or scene, and using vivid language as they talked about and watched sports. This was present in the data of this study when participants read and talked about sports texts, and showed through the indicators of engagement presented in the participant profiles they were having fun reading and talking about sports texts in the program. They laughed with each other about what they discussed, enjoyed learning from each other’s perspectives, and they reported they were having fun.

The participants showed lower numbers of feeling accepted within the facet of emotional engagement. This may have occurred because Khalil did not participate in discussion to the degree that the other participants in the group did. Additionally, this may have occurred because showing feelings of acceptance are not as easily expressed by the participants and discerned by the researcher as showing the indicator of having fun. The participants did show acceptance
when they participated in discussion by showing an interest in each other’s thoughts and actions. The participants also showed lower levels of the indicator of curiosity than the other indicators of emotional engagement. When they did show curiosity, the moments were important. Showing curiosity appeared to lead to tapping into other facets of engagement, including cognitive engagement. For instance, Joshua was curious about instructional texts on football and basketball which led to showing cognitive engagement with the same texts, as well. The participants primarily showed emotional engagement when they watched sports highlights on YouTube and when they made emotional connections to texts what they read. Khalil primarily made emotional connections to the sports fiction he read, whereas Joshua and Cameron made emotional connections to nonfiction sports texts. The participants primarily showed emotional engagement through the discussions in the group and through the shared experiences of watching Belman’s (2009) documentary, *More Than a Game*, sports highlights on YouTube, and through their independent choices of texts they read.

The numbers are higher in behavioral engagement than in any of the other facets of engagement. Three reasons may explain these higher numbers for behavioral engagement. First, all of the participants appeared to be adept at following the typical rules of school. As seasoned veterans of the basic rules of school, they were comfortable complying with the rules of the program. Second, the numbers for behavioral engagement may have been higher because the participants found it easier to follow rules, follow protocol, and be attentive than to show the other facets of engagement. Over the years of schooling of the participants, they may have become comfortable with following the rules of school. Third, the structure of the program may have affected behavioral engagement. There were designated times for reading and discussion, and a simple protocol to follow for reading and discussion times. The participants had choice in
what texts they read and discussed built into the structure of the protocol. There was also flexibility in the program when engagement decreased. Approximately halfway through the program, the participants had the opportunity to explore what they considered more engaging activities to them in the player podcasts they created. The participants showed behavioral engagement through the day-to-day experiences of reading, viewing, and discussion during the program.

The number of times the participants showed agentic engagement was the lowest of any of the four facets of student engagement. Two possible reasons for a lower number of positive moments of agentic engagement emerged. First, agentic engagement may have occurred as a result of the other three facets of engagement. When the participants were having fun, were cognitively engaged, and were following directions, they were more likely to show agentic engagement. Therefore, agentic engagement often occurred at the point when the other facets of engagement were satisfied. Second, agentic engagement appeared to increase in the latter half of the program, explaining why the numbers of agentic engagement were lower in total for the entire program. This may have occurred as a result of the participants becoming more comfortable with each other and more likely to ask questions, state their opinions, and share what they were interested in. Joshua’s moments of agentic engagement primarily revolved around the player podcasts he created near the end of the program, whereas Khalil’s moments of agentic engagement revolved around the fictional sports texts he shared with the group near the end of the program. Cameron, alternatively, maintained a steady number of agentic engagement moments when he discussed current events in the group, and when he created the player podcasts.
When the participants were fully engaged, the moments of engagement in one facet may have helped to fuel the other facets. For instance, when the participants were having fun and following directions, these positive levels of behavioral and emotional engagement led to increased cognitive and agentic engagement. Additionally, cognitive engagement may have occurred at a greater rate than agentic engagement because the participants were more comfortable with the typical school expectations of showing cognitive strategies, than asking questions and stating their opinion. These cognitive strategies, perhaps, may be emphasized in school and school-related activities more than the indicators of agentic engagement.

When the participants created player podcasts near the end of the program, a synergy of facets of student engagement occurred. In Langer’s (2000) research, she called these kinds of moments, “stepping out and objectifying the experience” (p. 20). In these types of experiences, the reader becomes a critic; he or she develops understandings through a reasoned analysis of what was read. The participants made personal connections and insights (cognitive engagement), they were having fun (emotional engagement), and they were more likely to ask questions and express their opinions (agentic engagement) during the creation and presentation of player podcasts.

There were texts that appeared to increase engagement for all of the participants. First, Belman’s (2009) More Than a Game increased emotional and cognitive engagement in the group. The participants enjoyed the game action in the text, and they showed detailed recall of the text during discussion of the documentary. Additionally, the participants reported that they enjoyed watching and talking about video. Second, basketball and football highlights on YouTube served as catalysts for increased emotional engagement. The group watched sports highlights on three separate occasions for approximately 20 minutes each time, and each time
they showed excitement as they interacted with the video, made personal connections, had fun, and traded tips on how to play football and basketball. Third, nonfiction articles on favorite players and teams appeared to increase all four facets of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) in the group. When the participants chose these texts, they had the freedom to independently explore personal interests within the realm of sports. For instance, Cameron read about his favorite NFL team, the New Orleans Saints, and a favorite NFL quarterback, Aaron Rodgers. Joshua researched Kevin Durant, forward for the Oklahoma City Thunder, and Tom Brady, quarterback for the New England Patriots. Khalil learned more about his favorite soccer player, Cristiano Ronaldo and researched NFL defensive back Richard Sherman and NBA player Kobe Bryant. The participants brought their individual identities and knowledge about sports to the reading they did about their favorite athletes. They built upon what they learned from these nonfiction sports texts and transformed those thoughts into player podcasts. In these podcasts, they created a personal and critical response in which they expressed reasoned arguments about why an athlete they admired was worthy of recognition.

**Finding 2: The Formats, Topics, and Genres of Texts the Participants Read Affected Student Engagement**

All of the participants read a variety of types of sports texts in multiple print and online formats. The amount and quality of reading the group members squeezed into a six-week period of time was noteworthy. In Table 4.5, I include a summary of sports texts read by each participant during the club. The group members read books under four categories: game action (texts about fair-play and the immediate experience of watching and playing sports), sports reporting (articles, blogs and non-fiction pieces), character development (character and coming-of-age texts), and social issues (texts that address social issues as they relate to sports). To
maintain a shared set of ideas during the discussion time, they read texts of their choosing related to one of these topics for each session. Online and prints sports texts were an equal part of the reading club experience. The participants were given no incentives to only read online texts or vice versa. They chose a mix of both online and print texts.

Engagement changed depending on the genre of text the participant chose to read. For example, Khalil showed deepened engagement when he read fictional sports texts more than sports reporting texts. He stated, “I like the stories about sports. They have sports but they also have a good story to follow. The adventure and excitement side of it is fun” (Khalil, 11/17/14). The three participants brought along individual experiences that affected how they approached a text. Engagement was evident for Khalil when he was able to connect with his knowledge base of sports, while also having fun following a fictional story. Joshua showed deepened engagement and developing interest in primarily nonfiction sports texts. Cameron showed deepened engagement and developing interest in primarily current event sports texts.

During a social issues session, Joshua and Cameron read about sports-related concussions. Cameron read a book about sports concussions, while Joshua watched a short video. Cameron read McClafferty’s (2013) *Fourth Down and Inches: Concussions and Football’s Make-or-Break Moment*. Joshua watched a YouTube video titled “Sports Concussions.” This discussion about sports concussions is an example of Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading when the goal of reading is to reach a state of “evocation” (p. 15). These moments occur when readers experience a text in a critical manner, while also making personal connections to the texts. The participants had the dual potential of increasing their self-awareness about sports concussion while acknowledging other points of view about the topic.
First, the participants made connections to the times they sustained injuries to their heads while playing sports. Joshua’s story was especially noteworthy. He said:

I was on the football team you know. We was on the inside. It was before football practice and people was playing basketball. I was guarding someone and then while I was guarding them we both went head to head. We hit each other. When I went to football practice I couldn't do anything. I couldn't run, I couldn't keep my balance. I was all over the place. (Joshua, reading club transcript, 11/20/14)

In this passage, Joshua recounted a time when he believed he may have suffered a head injury. After he bumped heads while playing basketball, he felt confused and “out of it” as he transitioned from playing basketball to football practice (Reading club transcript, 11/20/14).

Then, he made connections between what he read and his own experiences on the football field.

Joshua: I have a question, does a concussion affect your brain in the future?

Cameron: I read that if you have a lot of concussions it could affect your brain. They some retired NFL players who are suing the NFL because of the concussions they had when they played back in the day.

Kevin: Yes, Cameron. I think the NFL may have settled that case with the NFL players union. We'll have to look that one up on the internet.

Javeon: Can it start back hurting again and then it will stop?

Kevin: Yes.

Joshua: Could you die from a concussion?

Cameron: The book I read tells about a guy who died a long time ago. They didn’t even wear helmets then. You could die. It depends how hard the impact is.
Kevin: You could have bleeding in the brain, for sure. That's why we take precautions like wearing helmets and letting coaches know that you’re not feeling right when we play sports. (reading club transcript, 11/20/14)

The participants showed a deep concern about the problem of sports concussions. Joshua, Cameron, Javeon, and I participated in a complex exchange between our own interpretation of a text, in this case on the subject of sports concussions, and our social interactions in the group (Rosenblatt, 1994). Joshua, first, asked about the severity of concussions and whether or not there are long term effects. Cameron, then, made a reference to the text he read, moving into Langer’s (2011) “stepping out and objectifying the experience” (p. 20) stance. He examined the group members’ related experiences about concussions to the text he read. He added that retired NFL players were experiencing long-term effects, and they have sued the NFL over the league’s mishandling of concussion incidents in the past. Joshua then asked whether a person could die from a concussion. Cameron made another connection to the text he read, *Fourth Down and Inches* by McClafferty (2013). This time, he recalled information that a man died from a concussion he sustained while playing college football in the early 20th century. It caused an uproar during that time and a bill was nearly passed in the state legislature of Georgia outlawing college football.

Cameron then continued this conversation by discussing the changes that had been taking place to minimize the number of concussions in the NFL. Cameron referred to the new rules against overly vicious hits. He stated:

Cameron: And outlawing illegal hits. Like if you go head to head. If you hit above the shoulders that's an illegal hit.
Javeon: Yeah, like grabbin' em by the neck. Grabbing' them by the facemask and throwing them.

Cameron: They call it targeting in college football. That's when a player makes an illegal hit and he trying to hurt the player. It's a big penalty. If you have two of those, for sure you thrown out of the game.

The discussion concluded when Cameron made a connection to the New Orleans Saints bounty scandal that took place from 2009-2011. Members of the New Orleans Saints organization, including the head coach, the defensive coordinator, and the general manager were all suspended for their connections to paying out bonuses to Saints players who intentionally hurt opposing players. Cameron stated:

Cameron: It's like that bounty story when they paid players to hurt other players. It was bad. It got the Saints coach, Sean Payton, he had got suspended for an entire year. He was paying people to hurt people.

Javeon: Paying people to hurt people? That's crazy.

Kevin: Defensive players were paid to hurt their opponents. They got extra money if they hurt a particularly famous player.

Joshua: Why would you pay somebody to hurt somebody? That's terrible.

(Joshua, Cameron, Javeon and Kevin, reading club transcript, 11/20/14)

Cameron, as the expert on current events in sports, talked about his favorite team, the New Orleans Saints. He offered a connection that the coaches and front office of the New Orleans Saints were paying their players to make hard hits on the players of the opposing team. The group was concerned about this development and voiced their opposition to such a lack of judgment on the part of the New Orleans Saints’ coaches and administration. During this
exchange about sports concussions, the participants were not strictly consumers of information; they, instead, made shared connections and interpretations of the texts they encountered.

Additionally, all three participants enjoyed Belman’s (2009) documentary More than a Game, about basketball star LeBron James’s high school basketball team. The documentary followed LeBron James as he and his high school teammates vied for a national championship. The documentary was as much about sports as it was about the players on the basketball team dealing with the challenges of being a teenager and playing basketball. All three participants reported building and elaborating understandings, or “being inside and moving through an envisionment,” (Langer, 2011, p. 18) an important component Langer’s (2011) envisionment building process. Joshua described the personal connections he made to the documentary. He said:

It’s talking about they personalities. LeBron and his three mates they been together since they was little and they been trying to…They play 110% on the court when they play a game. They try their best no matter what. (Joshua, reading club transcript 12/15/14)

Building on their previous understandings emerged as the participants interacted with the texts and with each other when they watched the documentary (Langer, 2011). Initially, they were interested in LeBron James because they knew him as a famous basketball player they admired. They considered James one of the most elite players in the NBA. The participants were curious about what high school basketball was like for the star athlete and his high school classmates. They offered connections between their own experiences playing basketball and learned about what it might be like to play on a high school basketball team vying for a championship. The participants showed involvement, as they watched the documentary intently and followed the developments in the documentary, both in their positive mannerisms (i.e. paying attention and
watching the video intently) and in their enthusiastic comments about the documentary (Video field notes, 12/15/14). They were involved as they watched the game action and the individual stories of the players on LeBron James’s team unfold.

In sum, the format, topics, and genres of texts, and the freedom the participants had to read what they wanted affected engagement. The participants showed varied engagement when they read. They reported that they liked being able to make their own choices about the books they read. Joshua commented, “I like reading about my favorite teams. They be bossin’!” (Joshua, reading club transcript, 11/6/14). He loved having time to explore the ESPN website. He said:

It's amazing how much time you can spend on ESPN.com. You start clicking on things and more things. You can spend a long time. You want to get off but you keep seeing more stuff to read. (Joshua, reading club transcript 11/6/14)

When Joshua read sports texts online, he became deeply engaged and focused on what he was reading (Video field notes, 11/6/14). When the participants had choice in what they read, they satisfied one of the components of Langer’s (2011) envisionment building process, which suggests individuals become a part of the text world as they interact with a text by considering possibilities and varying multiple perspectives. Additionally, the sports taxonomy (game action, sports reporting, character development, social issues) added variety to the books the participants read. They liked to choose books off the suggested list and to find books on their own that fit the categories. The taxonomy helped the participants conceptualize sports and think of it as more complex than they may have thought otherwise. The texts they added to the list were impressive. Among many others, they shared their thoughts on *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander; *Derrick Rose* by Michael Sandler; *Fourth Down and Inches: Concussions and football’s make-*
or-break moment by Carla McClafferty; Hoop Genius: How a desperate gym teacher and a rowdy gym class invented basketball by John Coy, Basketball math on the court by Tom Robinson; Math 24/7: Sports Math by Rae Simons, Play basketball like a pro: key skills and tips by Nate LeBoutillier, and Small Forward by Jason Glaser.

Table 9.

Summary of Participants Reading of Sports Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sports Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>• Online articles on LeBron James, Paul Pierce, Drew Brees, and Aaron Rodgers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NBA highlights on YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sports Illustrated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local newspaper Sports Sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Basketball math on the court by Tom Robinson; Math 24/7: Sports Math by Rae Simons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fourth down and inches: concussions and football’s make-or-break moment by Carla McClafferty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More than a Game Documentary by Kristopher Belman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• PTI (Pardon the Interruption) - ESPN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Derrick Rose by Michael Sandler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>• Online articles on Kevin Durant, Drew Brees, and Tom Brady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sports Illustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Video on sports concussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NBA highlights on YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hoop Genius: How a desperate gym teacher and a rowdy gym class invented basketball by John Coy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More than a Game Documentary by Kristopher Belman</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Small Forward by Jason Glaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Play basketball like a pro: Key skills and tips by Nate LeBoutillier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The League by Thatcher Heldring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maniac Magee (film adaptation) by Jerry Spinelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Crossover by Kwame Alexander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalil</td>
<td>• Nonfiction online articles on athletes Kobe Bryant and Richard Sherman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Big Nate: In the Zone by Lincoln Peirce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local newspaper sports sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sports Illustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “The Trophy” by Gordan Korman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NBA highlights on YouTube</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding 3: Participant-Centered Discussion Around Sports Texts Affected Student Engagement

The opportunities for discussion proved important to determining the participants’ level of engagement in the program. Quality of discussion changed throughout the program. Discussion in the program began very spirited with the participants sharing their knowledge of sports, but the participants rarely dug deeper into what they knew to present reasoned analysis of their favorite players and teams’ strengths and weaknesses. Halfway through the program, quality discussion began to decrease as the participants indicated they wanted more challenge than reading and discussing texts of their choosing. At this point, the group members and I decided to create player podcasts to stimulate discovery about their favorite players and teams and to stimulate discussion with the other group members. Discussion in the program ended on a high note as the participants created and presented player profiles and watched the Belman (2009) documentary, *More Than a Game*. In both creating of player podcasts and watching and discussing the Belman (2009) documentary, the participants experienced an intrinsically motivated and self-rewarding activity. They were intrinsically motivated by their interest in discussing what they knew about their favorite players in the player podcast, and learned about one of their favorite NBA player’s experiences in high school through the documentary. They felt a sense of control in both of these activities, the player podcast and the documentary, by participating in discussion.

My first impressions of discussion during the program were primarily positive. In my field notes on the first week of the program, I wrote:

The kids came in two at a time as the first reading club session began. I had 2013
highlights of top sports events on the digital projector. I was amazed at how many of the highlights they were familiar with, especially Cameron and Joshua. These are shared experiences we already have going into the program. There were a lot of “oohs” and “ahhs” as we watched these highlights. They were having fun watching the highlights and talking about the players and teams in the highlights. Today we spent a little more time getting to know each other than I had first expected. Off the cuff, I decided to ask each member of the group to name their three favorite teams and why. I got some intriguing answers that showed the individual interests of each participant. It will be useful when they explore what to read and discuss in the group (Field notes, 11/3/2014).

This excerpt showed the enthusiasm and interest, evident in Langer’s (2011) envisionment stances, when the participants were “being outside and stepping into an envisionment” (p. 17). In this stance, the participants formed initial questions and made associations as they interacted with each other in the group. The participants were excited about watching highlights of their favorite sports stars. They were also excited to share their knowledge of sports. They had extensive knowledge of the sporting events they watched. Because of the sports knowledge they brought to the club, discussion flowed easily. The participants loved sports and talking about it with each other.

Joshua and Cameron, for instance, were particularly avid fans of the NBA. They discussed the challenges superstar LeBron James faced with his new team, the Cleveland Cavaliers. Below is an interaction, during the second meeting of the reading club, when Joshua and Cameron discussed the challenges the Cleveland Cavaliers and LeBron James were going through:

Joshua: I read about the Cavaliers sucking. They suck bad right now. But LeBron is
trying to put them straight back together. He's giving powerful speeches and strong stuff. That's all he do ---words.

Cameron: Cavaliers need help badly. Cavaliers need to move the ball around more to the bench players. They are keeping the starters in the most. But they need to get the bench players in there. The bench players are going to get important as the seasons goes on. Mike Miller, Shawn Marion, they need everybody. (Reading club transcript, Cameron and Joshua, 11/6/14)

From the onset of the club, the participants revealed extensive knowledge of their favorite players and teams. In this exchange, Cameron showed high-level thinking when he offered that bench players needed to get in the game more often, so they could work toward making meaningful contributions to the Cavaliers’ offensive and defensive game plan. Cameron communicated that the starters needed the bench players as the season progressed, especially if there was an injury to a starter and as the teams entered the playoffs. Also, Joshua made an interesting judgment that words of encouragement off the court may not be as important as the actions of LeBron James on the court.

Cameron and Joshua could easily name and describe all the players on the roster of their favorite NBA teams. In fact, the group members would often ask each other for clarification of players’ names and attributes during our sports discussions. This exchange above between Cameron and Joshua was just one of many examples of their knowledge, appreciation, and enthusiasm for NBA basketball, especially LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Participants reported that reading sports texts acted as a human connector and as a means for rich discussion. First, sports served as a “human connector.” It removed cultural and linguistic barriers. Sports connected the participants from different backgrounds. For example,
Joshua and I had a brief conversation during one of the sessions about the struggles of the Falcons and what had been working with the bootleg offense of the Seahawks (Kevin and Joshua, reading club transcript, 11/17/14). I was interested in what he was saying, but I did not fully understand it, because I was not familiar with the Seattle Seahawks’ bootleg offense. I did some online research on my own about the Seahawks and how the Seahawks changed their offensive approach. I found that the large number of passing attempts each game were not as common as emphasizing the running game for NFL teams at the moment. Teams were finding success getting 10-15 yards on the ground each time using a bootleg offense and having a balanced passing and running attack. Since the participants knew how to talk about sports, it proved to be an important means of rich discussion. Since we all knew sports topics and considered ourselves sports enthusiasts (even at varying levels of understanding of particular sports topics), our discussions were rich with detail and enthusiasm. For example, we had conversations about the strengths and weaknesses of NBA and NFL players, we predicted winners of upcoming games, and debated current topics in sports, including whether or not college players should be paid, the risks of sports concussions, and technical knowledge about sports.

Second, as a participant observer, I often sat back and listened to the participants’ conversations about sports. Engagement sparked in front of my eyes. Often, I knew very little about the details of the players and games they were talking about. But the participants’ knowledge of the sport was impressive. They talked about the effectiveness or lack thereof of specific plays, the details of numerous players, they debated the potential of each player, and expressed how impressed they were by athletic abilities of particular players. All of these characteristics pointed to the indicators of engagement discussed in each of the focal
participants’ profiles. The participants showed emotional engagement when they watched NBA and NFL highlights and exclaimed, “He got trucked!” (a great hit in football), “He a bandwagon!” (he is a fair weather fan), and made other enthusiastic comments (Field notes, 11/9/14).

The participants not only showed emotional engagement with sports, but they also explored additional facets of engagement. Below is a typical example of discussion during the reading club. In this session, the group members read texts and discussed who they thought would win the college football national championship. I began by asking the group members about Jameis Winston and the autograph scandal that he, at the time, was involved in. Joshua offered that college football players should not be punished for selling their autographs. He stated:

Joshua: Our coach said they was selling these autographs. My mom and my dad was like they shouldn't do that. They shouldn't take him out for four games, because the coaches making more money than he did selling the autographs. It's not really right.

Kevin: The rules are you're not supposed to do it. So? What do you think?

Joshua: People wanted it. It's his own name.

Javeon: Exactly

Joshua: It's my name and my signature, why can't I sell it? People treating him like he's plagiarizing or something. That ain't right.

This conversation flowed from one participant to another. The participants began by discussing the off the field issues of the star quarterback for FSU, Jameis Winston. Joshua showed his knowledge of the recent autograph scandal involving Jameis Winston and University of Georgia running back, Todd Gurley. Both players were accused of selling their autographs, which is a
violation of National College Athletic Association (NCAA) rules. Joshua and Javeon agreed that college athletes should be able to sell their autographs. Joshua stepped back for a moment to consider the social ramifications of not allowing an athlete to sell his own signature. He, in Langer’s (2011) terms, “objectifies the experience” (p 20) when he stated that Jameis Winston and Todd Gurley were not copying or “plagiarizing” another person’s signature, and they were entitled to the money for their own autographs.

Cameron, then, shifted the conversation from a debate on the autograph scandal in college football to a discussion about who he thought would win the college football national championship. Cameron offered:

Cameron: I think FSU. They’ve already won a national championship. They pretty much have the same team they had last year.

Kevin: I think Florida State is a good option. Anyone else have any other ideas?

Anthony: Alabama Crimson Tide

Javeon: Oregon. They have an easy schedule, so they be ready when the big boys come to town. Marcus Mariota is a beast.

Anthony: Alabama has a chance. Because they just good. (Reading club transcript, 11/6/14)

Cameron still believed FSU could win a national championship even though Jameis Winston seems to get in a great deal of off the field trouble. Cameron believed since they won last year and their team was still largely intact that they will win again this year. Javeon brought up an interesting pick in Oregon, who was not as well known as the other teams. He argued that Oregon played an easier schedule of teams than the other possible national champions, so they would be ready when the big games (the conference championship and national championship
playoff) at the end of the year take place. Anthony was pulling for Alabama, “Because they just good” (Anthony, reading club transcript, 11/6/14). At first glance, this appeared to be a cursory response. However, Alabama had won three national championships in the last six years, so Anthony made the statement because they were always a team to consider when predicting a national champion in college football.

During another session, discussion around sports texts affected student engagement. In this interaction, the participants read about who they thought was the best player in the NBA, and discussed in detail with the other group members. Anthony began by mentioning Kevin Durant as a possible best player in the NBA, a star for the Oklahoma City Thunder:

Anthony: Kevin Durant but he's hurt. Or Westbrook.

Cameron: You know why I don't say Westbrook, because he kinda ball hogs.

Anthony: Yeah, he don't pass the ball to KD. It was on NBA TV. They said the reason KD can't score this amount of points is because Westbrook is a ball hog.

Cameron: He literally looked at KD and was like, nah, and he slammed it. I'm like, he wide open though.

Cameron: KD, I think he on the wrong team. Westbrook, he's holding KD back, I think.

Anthony: I think KD is gonna take the cash and go to another team next year. A team where they will get him the ball.

Cameron: He might go to a bigger market. Like, he almost left Nike to go to Under Armour because they were offering him a better deal. (Cameron and Anthony, reading club transcript, 12/1/14)

During this discussion between Cameron and Anthony, they covered a great deal of ground about two stars of the NBA, Russell Westbrook and Kevin Durant. Anthony showed cognitive
engagement when he compared the two players and asked Cameron what he thought. Cameron made a particularly nuanced response by mentioning that Westbrook may have been holding Durant back from being the best player in the NBA, because Westbrook did not get the basketball to Durant enough. He referred to NBA TV, a sports reporter show, to substantiate his point. Cameron predicted that if Durant got more attempts to score, Durant would have better statistics and the Oklahoma City Thunder would be a more successful team. If this was the case, Durant would be a possibility for best player in the league. Cameron, however, offered that Durant would need to find a team where the other players and coaches considered Durant the star for Durant to reach most valuable player status. This instance as well as others showed that increased engagement in the sports reading club occurred as a result of the rich discussion that took place between the participants.

In sum, when participants were given opportunities to discuss sports texts, they showed extensive knowledge of sports. They discussed highlights they watched, they discussed current events in the sports, they discussed upcoming matchups, and they debated the strengths and weaknesses of particular players. Because of their knowledge of sports, they had a built in repository of ideas to discuss. The discussion time also gave the participants a place to share their reactions to texts from an aesthetic standpoint as well as an informational standpoint. They shared discussions about the nuances of sports as well as the facts around their favorite players and teams with fervor and consistency.

**Finding 4: Participants Indicated Increased Student Engagement When They Created a Project about a Favorite Athlete**

The group members could have continued on the same path of reading and discussion for the entire program. However, the group members and I noticed a change in engagement about
halfway through the program. During discussion, the interaction would devolve into a traditional initiate, respond, and evaluate protocol so prevalent in traditional school and school-related activities. Below is an example of a stilted discussion we had after the participants read sports texts at the beginning of the program:

Cameron: I read bout the Saints record. How their offense is. Their ups and downs. Mainly the downs that they had in the first four games. Drew Brees threw a real bad interception against the Detroit Lions. And when Michael Colston fumbled the ball against the Falcons.

Kevin: The Falcons beat the Saints this year? I didn't know that. What's their record?

Cameron: They're 4-4. They gonna have to get it together.

Kevin: Who's next?

Javeon: I read about Russell Wilson. He's really a good player for the Seahawks. He threw the ball for 200 yards and stuff like that. And another player on that team. He's a linebacker. Bobby Wagner. I think the left guard or right guard or something. He was playing with a real bad toe on offense. And he really helped them so far this season.

Kevin: Who's next? (Reading club transcript, 11/17/14).

This exchange served as an example of the challenges the group had with discussion in the first half of the program. One group member would share what he read, then another group member would share what he read, until all of the group members had presented what they read. The group members would not bounce ideas of each other and did not respond with rich discussion to each other’s comments.

The group members and I decided to mix things up and capitalize on each other’s individual interests in sports. Below is an excerpt debating how to capitalize on student
engagement. I stated:

Overall, I’m excited about what’s to come. These kids are very giddy and excited about talking about sports. I think one of the challenges may be getting them to settle in and soak in information as well as state their opinions. There’s a lot, at this point, of “my team is good and your team is sorry.” I’m looking forward to nudging them to dig deeper in their appreciation of their favorite teams and players. (Field notes, 11/5/14)

These excerpts showed my impressions about the participants’ engagement and interaction in the beginning weeks of the club. It showed the expectations I had in store with the program as well as some of the challenges I thought I might face as the club progressed. The participants, from the beginning of the program, showed great emotional engagement to sport. They loved watching sports highlights and trash-talking with the other members of the group. I, therefore, often toed the line between helping the participants go a little deeper in their understanding of sports and giving them space to explore their interests on their own. As the program progressed, the group members found a middle ground that worked for them. Participants often sought this sense of challenge as they dug deeper into the sports texts they read.

Three weeks into the program there was evidence from the video and audio transcripts that discussion was lagging. To illustrate, this is what I wrote in my field notes three weeks into the club:

During discussion time, each participant in the group talked about what sports texts they read, but there was not rich conversation beyond a synopsis of what the participants read. We would hear what one participant read, and then we go onto the next until everyone in the group had spoken. I’m worried that our discussion are becoming too stilted and monotonous. (Field notes, 11/17/14)
Cameron, for instance, showed less interest in reading the sports texts, and sharing and discussing what he read with his peers. After one of the sessions, I asked him what we might be able to do to keep the club from lagging. He shrugged his shoulders and said, “Can we do a project about sports? That could mix things up. I like doing projects” (Cameron, reading club transcript, 11/17/14). This comment from Cameron led to the group brainstorming ways to create a project together, while maintaining their individual interest in reading about their favorite sports figures.

At the following club meeting, the group brainstormed ideas to include in the player podcasts. This list included statistics generated throughout the year, success of team, and overall numbers. Below is an excerpt from my field notes elaborating on the change in engagement during the player podcasts.

Today, we worked on player podcasts during almost the entire session. They worked out really great. They were engaged and the audio shows it. They were spirited and articulate. You can tell they enjoy thinking and writing about their favorite players. We had about 35 minutes or so and Joshua even put together a digital presentation of his favorite player.

I think it was Kevin Durant. He also did a cool audio recording too. (Field notes, 12/1/14)

When the participants were able to explore athletes they were interested in and created a player podcast around that athlete, they moved from experiencing the text world to distancing themselves and reflecting on what they read (Langer, 2011). The participants researched their favorite athletes and developed reasoned analysis in comparison to other athletes their group members were creating. In fact, this project ended up being the most successful project of the program according to their positive reactions to the player podcasts in the final interview.
Because the group members and I decided to make this change to include player podcasts, engagement changed. I included an example of the player podcast of Tom Brady that Joshua did in his participant profile earlier in this chapter. Below, I include Cameron’s player podcast on Green Bay Packers quarterback, Aaron Rodgers.

I’m the best MVP right now. I am leading my team with a record of 7-3. We are in a tough division with the Minnesota Vikings and the Detroit Lions, but we’re in first place. We are averaging 39.4 points over the last two months, and we just beat the Vikings on Sunday. I hold the league’s lowest career passing interceptions and I’m the only quarterback to have a career passing rating of over 100 in the regular season. I got great receivers around me like Jordy Nelson, who can catch anything, and a great running back in Eddie Lacy. These guys around me help me play quarterback at a higher level than all of the other quarterbacks in the NFL.

This player podcast showed that Cameron was not just recalling facts, but he was beginning to analyze what he read about Aaron Rodgers. He included a number of convincing statistics. Cameron also considered that other players on the team were important and that the Packers had the best record in their division.

As a result of these player podcasts, all of the participants indicated that they were able to have rich conversations about these sports stars. In the final interview, Cameron stated, “The player podcasts were, hands down, my favorite thing we did. I got to read about my favorite players and practice talking about them too. It was more than just stuff like, “My favorite player is better than your player!” (Cameron, interview transcript, 12/18/14). Joshua had a similar reaction. He stated, “Oh, the player podcast. Being able to look up the stuff. Then being able to talk into the microphone. And do all that. Yeah.” (Joshua, interview transcript, 12/18/14). Khalil
also considered the player podcasts his favorite activity during the club. He said, “I usually don’t like talking much, but I don’t want nobody trashing my favorite player Richard Sherman (cornerback on the Seattle Seahawks). That guy is a boss.” (Field notes, 12/18/14). The participants wanted to feel successful in what they were doing in the reading club, and the player podcast served as a catalyst for feeling successful.

To summarize, discussion was sometimes a challenge when students read their own texts. Having a shared set of ideas to discuss helped curb this challenge. This shared set of ideas included a shared interest in football and basketball in the participants, and a theme for most of the sessions that we read (game action, social issues, character development, and sports reporting). Also, when the group members and I noticed engagement waning, we focused on player podcasts about NBA and NFL players, which increased engagement and were a highlight of the program for the participants.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I began with a statement summarizing the purpose and research questions for the study. Next, I presented profiles of the three focal participants and key findings from the data. In the following chapter, I will discuss in more depth these three cases. I will analyze the findings in chapter 4 and discuss these findings in relation to the current research. I will conclude the following chapter with a discussion of implications for practice and implications for future research.
The goal of this study was to (a) investigate cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic factors that contributed to student engagement when three adolescents explored sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club, (b) to provide material for the reader to learn about the multifaceted components of student engagement, and (c) to explore the use of reading clubs as they apply to adolescents’ reading and discussion of sports texts. Two questions guided the research: (1) What were the indicators of engagement when selected adolescents interacted with sports texts? (2) What contextual factors brought about the features of student engagement when adolescents explored sports texts?

In this chapter, I discuss the findings in chapter 4 in relation to the current research. I use the two research questions for this study to frame my discussion. First, I address research question 1. I discuss, in relation to current literature, how the participants’ thinking, emotions, behavior, and sense of agency communicated student engagement. Second, I discuss research question 2. I discuss the factors that contributed to the various forms of engagement in relation to current literature. In the final two sections of this chapter, I discuss implications for future practice and implications for research on adolescents’ engagement with sports texts. Findings suggest that adolescent sports enthusiasts may benefit from opportunities to use sports texts to show their engagement in semi-structured reading and discussion programs through the connections and responses to the texts they read. Findings also suggest that maintaining engagement over a six week program is a difficult endeavor. Providing almost all-out choice, a casual space to talk and discuss texts, and acknowledging the social dynamics of the group may strengthen engagement in school, afterschool, and community small group reading programs. Finally, the study emphasized the important role that teachers and other adults can play in
providing an environment for rich discussion and response by focusing on the features of student engagement.

What Were the Indicators of Engagement When Selected Adolescents Interacted with Sports Texts?

In this first section, I will show how the participants’ thinking, emotions, behavior, and sense of agency communicated engagement in the program. I discuss in detail the elements that made up each facet of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) and I provide the interpretation of these findings. In each of the four facets of engagement, I compare and contrast the current literature with the present study.

**Cognitive engagement.** First, making judgments about players and teams proved to be an essential indicator of cognitive engagement for the participants. When the participants made judgments about players and teams, they were articulating what they had learned about their favorite teams and players. Additionally, this process of making judgments about players and teams led to the participants’ discoveries of new texts and teams in which they had gained interest. A second important indicator of engagement for the participants in this study occurred when the participants connected what they had learned to their own knowledge base. Cameron, Joshua, and Khalil had come to the reading club with varying degrees of knowledge about a variety of sports topics, and they were able to build upon that knowledge through reading and discussion.

Third, when the participants connected what they learned to the knowledge base of their peers, these instances proved to be essential indicators of engagement. Discussion from the participants about the athletes and teams the participants chose to discuss was heated, fun, and insightful. The participants analyzed the athletes and teams like characters in a running story of a
season with ups and downs from game to game and personality quirks of the athletes. When the participants discussed these athletes, they conducted an examination of the human condition through sports: the sadness of loss, the happiness of wins, the importance of sticking to a goal, and other complex aspects of sports and life.

The participants showed these three strongest indicators of cognitive engagement (making judgments, connection to knowledge base, and teaching and learning from their peers) in different ways. For instance, Joshua and Cameron built upon their extensive knowledge of basketball and football coming into the program. Cameron already had extensive knowledge of the challenges facing the New Orleans Saints during the 2014 football season, and he sought to learn more about possible changes that could take place to aid the team in reaching the playoffs. Joshua already was a fan and had extensive knowledge of NBA player Kevin Durant, and he sought to learn more about the athlete’s recovery from a foot injury during the 2014-2015 basketball season. Khalil, on the other hand, discovered new players and athletes. Khalil made judgments and connected to his knowledge base through the sports fiction texts he read and through his interest in soccer. Joshua and Khalil primarily made judgments through the reaction journals and discussion, whereas Cameron made judgments during discussion time.

The finding in this study that making judgments about teams and players is an essential indicator of engagement fits into the previous findings on the types of cognitive strategies adolescents use when they read and discuss texts (Beers, 2001; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Maloch, 2002; Ruddell, 1997). This research found that when students used cognitive strategies, such as making judgments, they moved beyond literal recall of text information into interpretive, applicative, and transactive thinking levels (Ruddell, 1997). For instance, Alvermann and Hagood’s study (2000) showed the unique ways in which adolescents articulated what they
learned from popular texts. The participants in Alvermann and Hagood’s (2000) study made judgments when they shared their critical thoughts about popular music they enjoyed. They interpreted lyrics by favorite music artists and made connections and judgments across music genres. Alvermann and Hagood (2000) found that adolescents cultivated complex understandings of the popular music they enjoyed. While Alvermann and Hagood (2000) uncovered benefits to critical thinking as it applied to adolescents’ analyses of popular bands and song lyrics, this study adds a new understanding about making judgments as it applies to adolescents’ analysis of sports texts.

Other researchers have found that cognitive engagement occurs when adolescents clarify meaning with their peers and instructors (Beers, 2001; Lawrence and Snow, 2011). Although an emphasis on the observation of cognitive strategy skills was important to cognitive engagement in the present study, the findings in the present study suggest that reading is more than an accumulation of these skills (Gee, 2004). The interactions of the group in the sports reading program in the present study proved to be more important to fostering cognitive engagement than explicit strategy instruction. For example, the cognitive strategy process worked in a different way than it worked in Maloch (2002) in which the participants were given explicit instruction on the use of cognitive strategies. In this study, I observed the use of cognitive strategies without explicit instruction. I used probe questions and Critical Response Protocol (CRP) to observe cognitive engagement (Beach, Campano, & Edmiston, 2010) and the participants’ use of cognitive strategies.

Finally, my study contributes to the current knowledge base in that emphasis of growth over ability appears to be an important element of cognitive engagement (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck, 2007; D’Erizans & Bibbo, 2015; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005).
First, I focused on the students’ individual interest in sports texts in which participant-centered discussion was encouraged. Providing this place for reflection and discussion helped the students have opportunities to practice growth mindset. As sports enthusiasts, the participants in the present study showed complex thinking when they explored and engaged with sports texts. The problem solving and critical thinking encouraged in the Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) intervention was similar to that of the present study. However, Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) used intervention and a series of generic activities to promote cognitive engagement, whereas the present study did not use direct instruction to examine growth versus fixed mindset or other cognitive skills.

D’Erizans and Bilbo (2015) address an additional aspect of focusing on student growth not addressed by Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) – student growth and development through the use of ePortfolios. Although the participants in the present study did not create portfolios, the reaction journals and player podcasts could potentially serve as items in ePortfolios. Activities such as the reaction journals and player podcasts help to curb the inconsistent use of student reflection, because students have the opportunity to reflect on how they grow socially, emotionally, and intellectually through the portfolio (D’Erizans & Bilbo, 2015).

Overall, the participants in the present study exhibited new layers of understanding about features of cognitive engagement as they participated in the sports reading club. The social environment (Rosenblatt, 1997), in this case the sports reading club contributed to deepening cognitive engagement through the interactions in the club (I will discuss these contextual factors of engagement later in this chapter). By highlighting these unique elements of cognitive engagement, the present study showed the viability of sports reading clubs for sports enthusiasts.
when participants made judgments, connected what they learned to their knowledge base and the knowledge base of the others in the group, and showed a growth mindset as they discovered new ideas and texts.

**Emotional engagement.** First, having fun proved to be an essential indicator of emotional engagement for the participants in the present study. The participants’ facial expressions changed, they talked to each other, and they reported they were having fun throughout the program. The findings in this study suggest that it is particularly important to observe the indicator of having fun, as it was a voluntary afterschool activity. Second, the indicator of feeling a sense of belonging proved to be a significant indicator of engagement. The participants felt a sense of belonging because they came into the program knowledgeable and curious about the content addressed, and they continued to showed enjoyment when they talked to their peers about sport topics throughout the program. Joshua, for instance, showed a sense of belonging when he sought out information online about one of his favorite basketball players, Kevin Durant, as a college player to share with his peers.

The participants exhibited these two strongest indicators of emotional engagement (having fun and showing a sense of belonging) in different ways. Khalil primarily revealed he was having fun when he read sports fiction, whereas Joshua and Cameron indicated they were having fun when they read and discussed nonfiction sports texts. The participants not only showed feelings of belonging through the discussions in the group, but also through the shared experiences of watching Belman’s (2009) documentary, *More Than a Game*, sports highlights on YouTube, and through sharing their independent choices of texts they read. While watching these videos together, Cameron and the other group members laughed and commented with each other to communicate this sense of belonging.
The findings in this study on emotional engagement showed two significant similarities to other recent studies on emotional engagement. First, the sports reading club was an outlet for “being inside and moving through an envisionment” while the participants experienced an activity they enjoyed (Langer, 2000/2011). They navigated the text worlds of their choice through their emotional interest in sports and sports texts (Langer, 2000). The participants often got caught up in what they were doing during reading time and during the culminating player podcast projects. Similar to the present study, this sense of enjoyment was particularly evident in Crowe’s (2001) study in which he emphasized the emotional connections adolescents made when they read and discussed sports texts. He found that it was easy for adolescents who loved sports “to get caught up in the characters, situations and emotions” of sports texts (p. 129). Crowe’s (2001) study, however, used primarily participant feedback to uncover students’ interest in sports texts, whereas the present study adds an additional layer of understanding by evaluating the moments of having fun and talking and discussing sports through participant observation as well as interview. In fine-grained ways, the present study showed what happened to emotional engagement in the program when participants, such as Khalil, became emotionally engaged in sports texts. Khalil showed he was noticeably excited when he found a sports fiction text he loved; he showed more confidence, sought to gain approval from other members of the club, and became more likely to contribute to the ideas of other participants.

Additionally, the participants in the present study were having fun because they were intrinsically motivated (Larson, 2012; Oldfather & Dahl, 1995; Turner, 1995). They enjoyed what they were doing when they explored sports texts for its own sake, not for external reward. Khalil, for instance, showed intrinsic motivation when he moved in closely to listen to Cameron and Joshua mimic basketball moves while watching highlights of his favorite teams.
Furthermore, the use of player podcasts in the present study built upon getting adolescents as close as possible to a state of intrinsic motivation to foster emotional engagement (Beach, Campano, & Edmiston, 2010; Elmore, 2009). Joshua showed he was intrinsically motivated when he shared his player podcasts with the group, while Cameron exhibited intrinsic motivation through his verbal excitement when analyzing NBA basketball highlights. When the participants in this study found a text they loved, watched a documentary on a famous basketball player, or watched basketball highlights on YouTube, their body language, demeanor, and willingness to participate in reading and discussion changed as engagement was evident.

The finding that feeling a sense of belonging is an essential indicator of emotional engagement in my study compares to other recent studies as well. (Crowe, 2001; Shernoff, 2008; Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). Like Shernoff (2013), in which he examined emotional engagement in an alternative school environment, the participants in the present study rarely reported the typical experiences in school including boredom and disengagement. They felt a sense of belonging and connection to the content they examined and the environment in which they participated in the program. The participants in my study as well as in the alternative school in which Shernoff (2013) examined had opportunities to get up from their desks, get excited about an activity, and smile and laugh with their friends about a common interest. These findings from my study, as well as Shernoff’s study (2013) point to the importance of continuing to observe whether or not students feel a sense of belonging in a learning environment. With a sense of belonging, comes emotional engagement and a decrease of boredom and frustration in afterschool and alternative school activities.

The participants were also able to show a sense of belonging because they had a common interest to explore: sports content. First, they were eager to learn more during discussion of
Sports. They asked questions of the peers in their group and interjected their analysis of favorite players during discussions. Second, they showed a sense of belonging when they sought approval from their peers. Joshua, for instance, bounced ideas off Cameron who had more knowledge of particular sports topics, such as the New Orleans Saints run defense. Third, the participants showed a sense of belonging when they used sports catch phrases. Joshua and Cameron often used catch phrases, including “Nuthin’ but net” and “I wanna see him splash,” to show their heightened level of comfort around fellow sports enthusiasts; the use of these catch phrases indicated a sense of camaraderie around the participants in the group. The participants knew the language of sports. They understood what the catch phrases meant and shared them as they watched sports highlights. They may have not displayed this sense of belonging if it were not for the content matter they enjoyed, read, and discussed.

Overall, the present study adds to our collective understanding of recent research on the indicators of having fun, being intrinsically motivated, and feeling a sense of belonging as important to emotional engagement (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). Participants in the present study showed new layers of understanding of the indicators of emotional engagement as they participated in the sports reading club. They showed these elements of emotional engagement in detailed ways when they were eager to learn more during discussion of sports, when they used sports catch phrases, and when they sought approval from their peers.

**Behavioral engagement.** Under the facet of behavioral engagement, following protocol, following directions, and being attentive proved to be important indicators of behavioral engagement for the participants in the present study. These indicators were important to the day-to-day activities of the program, but they were not the ultimate goal of the program to deepening student engagement. I came into the program worried about behavioral engagement as I was new
to the school and the students, but I had few challenges with it. Perhaps, this was the case because of the structure of the activities and the participants’ intrinsic interest in reading and talking about sports. There were a handful of flare ups of behavioral disengagement from the participants during the program, but they were few and far between and easy to extinguish and move on from. Additionally, the overall lack of challenges in the realm of behavioral engagement may point to the notion that when other facets of engagement (cognitive, emotional, and agentic) are evident, behavioral engagement follows suit.

Similar to the other facets of engagement, the participants showed the strongest indicators of behavioral engagement (following protocol, following directions, and being attentive) in different ways. Cameron acted as a leader in the group, because of his extensive background knowledge in sports. This led to Joshua and Khalil showing behavioral engagement as their posture changed (i.e. looking at Cameron when he spoke, turning their heads toward Cameron) when Cameron made comments about sports topics (Vygotsky, 1986). Cameron showed behavioral engagement when jotting down thoughts and drawing pictures in the reaction journal, whereas Cameron often did not show behavioral engagement when he used the reaction journals. Cameron, instead, preferred to state his opinion and share his thoughts in a voice recorder, a video response, or through response in the roundtable discussions. If it was not for the freedom of choice in format of response allowed in the club, it could have been construed that Cameron was often not behaviorally engaged during the program. This finding points to the importance of giving students the opportunity to show engagement through a variety of means, including reaction journals, video response, drawing a picture, roundtable discussion, and other means of communication. The more variety and opportunities they get to show their behavioral engagement, the better the likelihood they will show engagement.
The findings in this study build upon current research on behavioral engagement (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012; Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2012). First, Guthrie, Klauda, and Ho (2012) found in their recent large scale study that a defined structure to the activities affected whether students followed directions and protocol. The researchers used the Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) method, a reading engagement and motivation intervention. They found through intervention that informational text comprehension (ITC) increased due to emphasis on cognitive strategies such as inferencing, summarizing, and concept mapping and through promoting self-efficacy by aiding students in reducing the perception of difficulty they felt about texts. In the present study, the data also showed that the participants were behaviorally engaged when the participants followed a clear structure for activities. For instance, the participants in the present study enjoyed the structure of the player podcasts, and behavioral engagement deepened. My program also had a defined structure with goals for each session and daily schedule of activities that included defined reading, discussion, and project time.

However, Guthrie, Klauda, and Ho’s (2012) focus in the study was on the use of informational texts in the ELA classroom. The present study suggests that allowing choice in all kinds of texts, including informational texts, is an important factor in promoting behavioral engagement. The participants in the present study had a clear set of activities to promote engagement, but they also had freedom to read and discuss what they chose as it related to sports. They read and talked about a variety of texts, including traditional (e.g. books and magazine articles) and non-traditional texts (sports highlight videos, sports blogs) about sports. Additionally, Guthrie, Klauda, and Ho’s (2012) focus was primarily on cognitive engagement (e.g. inferencing, concept mapping, and summarizing), whereas the findings in the present study
suggest the importance of the social when adolescents read and discuss texts as well as cognitive strategies to observe engaged reading (Ivey & Johnson, 2013; Rosenblatt, 1994). The participants in the present study showed behavioral engagement as a result of the beneficial interactions they had with their peers and the sense of camaraderie that developed in the sports reading club. If the sole focus of the present study was on cognitive skills, I would not have had opportunities to witness the social behaviors that led to behavioral engagement in activities such as the player podcast and roundtable sports discussions.

Additionally, other recent research has explored behavioral engagement through the use of self-report surveys (Fredricks, 2013; Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012; Guo, Sun, Beit-Smith, Morrison, & Connor, 2015). For instance, Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) found that students with high levels of intrinsic motivation also showed high levels of behavioral engagement. They, however, did not examine these indicators of behavioral engagement in a qualitative study through interview and observation as is analyzed in the present study. Rather, they conducted a large-scale study using self-report surveys. Therefore, the present study suggests an additional option to large-scale self-report studies. The participants in the present study showed, beyond a self-report questionnaire, that a number of elements of behavioral engagement contributed to the participants’ involvement in the activities in the program. Highlighting the details of behavioral engagement (e.g. participants looked at each other when they spoke, moved from one activity to another easily, and showed they were attentive) adds an additional layer to Guthrie, Wigfield and You’s (2012) findings that examining behavioral engagement is crucial to fully understanding the complex elements of engagement.

**Agentic engagement.** When observing agentic engagement, researchers examine how participants contributed to the instruction they received (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012).
Expressing opinions, asking questions, and telling others what they were interested in proved to be essential indicators of engagement during the program. Agentic engagement did not happen as often as the other indicators, but when it did happen, it was important. First, agentic engagement served as an indicator that an activity was effective. Khalil and Cameron, for instance, showed that the player podcast activity was effective by asking Joshua questions after he presented his player podcast on NFL player Tom Brady. During our current events discussions at the beginning of most of the sessions, the participants showed the activity was effective by stating their opinions about players and team performance in past games. However, asking questions did not happen enough throughout the program. The present study’s findings suggest the importance of developing and encouraging additional ways to ask questions. Additionally, agentic engagement appeared to increase in the latter half of the program, explaining why the numbers of agentic engagement are lower in total for the entire program. This may have occurred as a result of the participants becoming more comfortable with each other and more likely to ask questions, state their opinions, and share what they were interested in as the program progressed.

There were differences in the ways the participants showed agentic engagement. Joshua, as evinced in the opinions he expressed about NFL player Tom Brady and NBA player Kevin Durant, primarily revolved around the player podcasts he created near the end of the program, whereas Khalil’s agentic engagement as shown in the moments he told his peers about his interest in Lincoln Peirce’s (2014) *Big Nate: In the Zone* revolved around the fictional sports texts he shared with the group near the end of the program. Cameron, alternatively, maintained a steady number of moments throughout the program as shown in the opinions he expressed when the participants discussed current events, and during the player podcasts. These findings suggest
the importance of exposing sports enthusiasts to a variety of texts, so they have opportunities to
tap into agentic engagement.

The participants displayed certain forms of agentic engagement in one way, while other
participants took other routes. Cameron expressed his opinion about local sports teams,
providing convincing reasons for why he did not like the team. When he expressed his opinions
about sports players and athletes, these were opportunities for him to practice agentic
engagement, since he stated that he rarely contributed to discussion during the regular school
day. In the player podcast, Joshua shined in the facet of agentic engagement. He included
convincing statistics on individual players and team performance to create a convincing analysis
of Tom Brady’s performance during the 2014 football season. These indicators of agentic
engagement point to providing adolescents the opportunity to share their opinion, not just
through roundtable discussion, but through an activity like player podcasts in which they can
create a coherent narrative to express their opinions. In addition, knowledge of subject matter, in
this case knowledge of sports topics, allowed space for the participants to develop opinions.
Joshua and Khalil were less likely to express their opinions about players and teams of interest to
them. Instead, they expressed their positive opinion of texts by pointing to the emotional effect
the texts had on them, for Joshua he made emotional connections to Spinelli’s (1990) Maniac
Magee and for Khalil he made emotional connections to Peirce’s (2014) Big Nate: In the Zone.

When the participants in the present study showed agentic engagement, they developed
their own opinions about the sports texts they read. Additionally, they developed their own
opinions about the athletes and teams they explored. This development of opinions manifested
itself in the player podcasts they created, and the reading and discussion during the club
meetings. Regarding agentic engagement, the data in the present study showed how the
participants actively contributed to the reading club program by stating their opinions (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Similar to the research of Reeve and Tseng (2011), the data in this study showed that stating their opinion was an important determinant of student engagement. Reeve and Tseng’s (2011) research was a large scale study (365 participants) of adolescents in Korea; the researchers used self-report questionnaires and semester grades to show the positive correlation between agentic engagement and the three other facets of engagement as well as the importance of agentic engagement to motivation. The present study, however, explored agentic engagement via case study methodology during a voluntary sports reading program with three focal participants; I used participant observation, interview, and other case study methods to show the effect of agentic engagement on overall student engagement.

Similar to Reeve and Tseng’s (2011) study, agentic engagement did not occur at the frequency of the other facets of engagement occurred (agentic occurred approximately 1/3 of the time that other elements of engagement occurred in the present study), but the moments when agentic engagement were evident proved to be important. During these moments, the participants expressed their interests and opinions about sports and sports texts. This evidence of participants’ expression of interest and opinions was also evident in Reeve and Tseng’s (2011) study of agentic engagement in adolescents in Korea. Reeve and Tseng, however, were interested in agentic engagement in a general classroom environment, whereas the present study shows the importance of agentic engagement to small reading and discussion groups.

This study has shown new ways that agentic engagement reveals itself when students ask questions, express opinions, and tell others what they are interested in (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009; Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Reeve, 2013). In the present study, the participants expressed their voices when they discussed their favorite team and players and created player podcasts about
their favorite players. The participants were able to explore their specific interests in professional athletes including Tom Brady, Aaron Rodgers, Paul Pierce, and LeBron James through the player podcasts. Then, they were able to present and discuss their interests in these players with the other participants.

What Contextual Factors Brought About the Features of Student Engagement When Adolescents Explored Sports Texts?

In the previous section, I discussed the complex elements that make up the construct of student engagement, and the new aspects of student engagement observed in the present study. In this section, I discuss the contextual factors that brought about the various features of engagement discussed in the previous section. These contextual factors included participants’ freedom of choice in texts, participant-centered discussion, and the use of player podcasts and project-based activities during the program. I discuss each of these factors that brought about engagement in the present study as they compare and contrast to current literature.

Choice in texts promoted student engagement. The participants in the study reported that they enjoyed having choices in what they read during the program. Additionally, the evidence showed that instilling choice gave the participants opportunities to explore topics they were individually interested in. In the present study, not only was choice important when it came to topics and genres of texts, but also format. All three participants showed preferences in the types of texts they read and in the formats. Khalil showed strengthened engagement when he had the choice to read fictional sports texts that complemented his knowledge base on particular sports topics, including soccer. Joshua enjoyed nonfictional sports texts, such as Nate LeBoutillier’s (2010) *Play Basketball Like a Pro: Key Skills and Tips* because of his interest in
improving his personal skill set at basketball. Cameron often chose texts about current events in sports because of his burgeoning interest in sports reporting.

The findings in this study complement the work of other recent research on the importance of choice to strengthening engagement (Beers, 2001; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Kittle, 2013; Lesesne, 2010; Miller, 2009; Wilhelm, Smith, & Fransen, 2014). In fact, Guthrie and Humenick (2004) found in a meta-analysis that the two most influential factors to improving engagement and student success in reading were access to a variety of texts and the number of opportunities students had to make personal choices about what they read. There are several aspects of choice that I will discuss below. A large amount of the research on choice evaluates reading programs from an instructional perspective (Beers, 2001; Kittle 2013; Lee, 2011; Miller, 2009). In these studies, the researchers examine effective practices for teachers to promote engaged reading with their students. The present study took a different approach to this emphasis on instructional practice; the focus was not primarily on uncovering instructional strategies for allowing choice in texts for adolescents. Instead, the present study parsed out what happened within the multifaceted components of engagement when adolescents had the opportunity to read texts of their choosing. For instance, Cameron and Joshua had the choice to read texts about social issues in sports. They chose to explore concussions in sports; Cameron read McClafferty’s (2013) Fourth Down and Inches: Concussions and Football’s Make-or-Break Moment, while Joshua watched a YouTube video titled “Sports Concussions.” Cameron and Joshua increased their self-awareness about sports concussions and were able to explore multiple points of view on the topic through the texts they chose.

A smaller body of research has focused on identity when adolescents are given choice in what they read (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Tatum, 2008). In Ivey and Johnston’s study (2013), they
found that independent reading of compelling young adult literature had cascading and reciprocal effects on the students’ social and intellectual development. The students wanted to read more and they developed their identities around the texts they read. Although the present study was not about identity, the participants were more likely to show interest in the text when they were able to choose what they read independently. When Cameron independently read online articles on his favorite athletes LeBron James, Paul Pierce, Drew Brees, and Aaron Rodgers, he showed his engagement through expressing his opinions during discussion and creation of player podcasts. The participants also showed a developing sense of agency, which is closely related to identity development, when they read texts of their choosing (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). They showed control of their own learning, or agentic engagement, during our discussions of the texts they read and in their development of ideas about their favorite athletes in the player podcasts they created. For instance, Cameron and Khalil responded with rich discussion when analyzing Joshua’s player podcast of NFL player Tom Brady.

In the present study, choice did not always mean allowing the adolescents complete freedom to choose whatever they wanted to read. In this study, engagement was evident when I gave adolescents *almost* total choice, while also providing recommendations for them such as the Sports Text Taxonomy (See Appendix G). I also challenged the participants to read texts they were interested in, while also broadening their scope of interest in sports. Seeking out an understanding of the participants’ interests (see Interest inventory, Appendix D) also helped to guide participants to engage with texts. Similarly, Lesesne (2010) used reading circles in which participants chose from a genre of texts or a selection of texts curated by the instructor. Then, participants were given all-out choice within those broad parameters as the reading club progressed, similar to what occurred in the present study. Lesesne (2010) acknowledged that
adolescents may get overwhelmed by the choices in a school library, public library, or bookstore. However, as was found in the present study as well as Lesesne’s (2010) study, these feelings of apprehension about finding texts diminished as participants got comfortable with finding their own texts. Additionally, this study provides new evidence that if the participants already have a shared intrinsic interest in a topic such as sports, this will also help to strengthen student engagement.

Tatum (2008) took a slightly different angle to exploring both identity and choice as it compares to the present study and Ivey and Johnston’s (2013) study on choice in reading. He examined one African-American boy’s experiences with texts that Tatum recommended. Tatum used what he considered “culturally relevant” texts to encourage and challenge the participant in his study (p. 157). Tatum recommended texts based on the participant’s interests and cultural background, but the participant had final say on the texts he chose to read. In the present study, I also recommended texts that I thought the participants would find relevant, based on their interviews and discussion in the reading club. However, I allowed more freedom in participant exploration of texts than the freedom the participant in Tatum’s study had. I recommended texts, but I also observed when the participants searched for texts online and in the school’s library media center. As a result of Tatum’s (2010) model and my reading engagement model in the present study, allowing choice and guiding the participants to texts they found relevant led to deepened engagement. For Tatum (2010), this deepened engagement led to changes in identity for the participants, whereas the present study analyzed what happened to engagement and the factors that influence engagement with sports texts. Tatum (2010) recommended texts based on the participant’s identity as an African American male from a high-poverty neighborhood, whereas I used information I collected about the participants’ interest in sports to tap into
relevant texts for the participants. Shown by the unique ways they engaged with the texts, the participants benefitted from the sports texts they found relevant.

Choice, as evidenced in this study, also, not only has to do with genre of texts (e.g. sports texts or graphic novels), but format (e.g. online versus print) of texts plays a role. The National Literacy Trust (2013) found that children prefer to read text on screen, with 39% of youth using electronic tablets such as eReaders and tablets, but only 28% of the respondents read printed material on a daily basis. These convincing statistics show the evolution from print to screen in young people’s lives. This evolution occurred in this study as well, but in a more nuanced manner. Participants preferred online texts over print texts, depending on the information they were seeking. The data showed that they enjoyed reading the ESPN website as well as other sports websites about their favorite players and teams. However, if a print text had the information they were seeking, they preferred the print texts. Joshua, for instance, was able to gain more information on defensive fundamentals of basketball through Glaser’s (2010) *Small Forward* than he was from a YouTube video on a similar subject. Participants in the present study also spent more time reading a particular print text than an online article when they found a text they were interested in. Cameron, after finding a non-fiction book on NBA player LeBron James, was able to maintain focus longer than he did searching and clicking through a number of articles about LeBron James online. The shifts in interest level when the participants read a variety of texts show that engagement depended on the sports enthusiasts’ interests in different sports topics, including NBA basketball, NFL football, and major league soccer.

Overall, in the present study and in others (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Lesesne, 2010; Tatum, 2010) there is a great deal of support that choice plays a significant role in participants’ engagement with texts. However, as is shown in this study, choice may at
times need to be limited based on relevance and interest for the participants (Tatum, 2008; Lesesne, 2010). By allowing almost total choice, adolescents begin to hone their ability to choose texts for themselves and show engagement with texts (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Ivey & Johnston, 2013).

**Effects of participant-centered discussion on student engagement.** The present study included rich, participant-centered discussion. The participants made judgments, shared their knowledge, asked questions, and expressed opinions in their conversations with each other. Similarly, in Miller’s (2009) case study of adolescents’ independent reading practices, she found that when participants had opportunities to explore text suggestions and direction during group discussions, these discussions were interpreted and accepted in largely beneficial ways. Not all discussion was engaging for all participants, primarily because of the students’ varied interest in the topics discussed. However, providing opportunities for discussion often helped students discover new topics and interests to explore as well as helped to expand their understanding of the texts they read. Cameron’s discussion with his peers at the beginning of the program about his predictions for the 2014 NFL playoffs led to his own discovery of the sports reporter podcast, ESPN’s PTI, in which reporters debate daily sports topics, and a burgeoning interest in honing his own skills as a sports reporter. Whereas Miller’s (2009) study showed participant-centered discussion as a factor in fostering engagement as adolescents read young adult literature independently, the present study adds an additional layer of understanding that participant-centered discussion of sports texts is especially important to fostering engagement when adolescents read sports texts. This is the case because discussion of sporting events invites collective analysis and the weighing of the pros and cons of competing teams and athletes (Crowe, 2001). Cameron, Joshua, and the other group members often debated topics in this
manner, including the challenges of LeBron James’s change to a new team in 2014 and the Florida State Seminoles’ attempt at a second national championship in a row during the 2014-2015 college football season. These spirited conversations about current events in sports took place during most program sessions.

The findings in this study complement other extant research that found that conversation with peers improved engagement (Atwell, 1998; Cazden, 1988; Daniels, 1998). In fact, research by Fall, Webb, and Chudowsky (2000) showed more benefits for students when they simply talked to a peer about what they read than when they used the same amount of time pointing out important information after reading a text. Nystrand (2006) also found that increasing the amount of short conversations (10 minutes or less) when students talk to a peer about what they read improved reading comprehension. Similarly, in the present study, the quality of group discussion was an important factor that brought about student engagement. The group’s discussion of the recent controversies around sports-related concussions displayed the participants’ insights about the topic. Joshua contributed to the rich discussion by making personal connections to his own experiences on the football field, while Cameron brought in facts about the retired NFL players who suffered tragic, long-term effects from repeated head trauma during football games.

From a slightly different angle, this theme of the benefits of participant-centered reading and discussion on student engagement also aligns with Sabeti’s (2012) study of an afterschool graphic reading club. Sabeti (2012) found that discussion during voluntary reading clubs helped her better understand the notion that institutional critical reading practices (e.g. deconstructing literary texts to address character, plot, and other literary devices) is the predominant avenue of analysis used in schools. Sabeti offered that institutional critical reading practices can stifle adolescents’ interest in texts. Additionally, Sabeti offered that an afterschool reading club can
potentially be a place where students who are disengaged in the English language arts classroom can read and discuss texts in an engaging social context, away from institutional critical reading practice. In the present study, the participants were disengaged in school as they were in Sabeti’s study, showing low levels of all facets of engagement at the onset of the club. However, as both Sabeti’s club as well as the club in the present study progressed, the participants got comfortable with a different, participant-centered mode of talking and discussing books outside of institutional critical reading practices. The participants talked outside of institutional reading practice when they discussed a range of topics, including discussing highlights of their favorite moments of past NBA seasons, watching and commenting on Belman’s (2009) documentary *More Than a Game*, and making their own judgments about serious news events such as the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown.

Second, Sabeti (2012) found that the critical reading that students did in the afterschool reading group may not be transferable to the traditional English language arts classroom, where interpretation is often driven by literary criticism. In the graphic novel reading club, the participants made deep, personal connections that Sabeti found were not constrained by traditional literary criticism. For instance, one of the participants, Robert, was brought to an understanding of a text he did not like, the participants in the study all shared ideas, and they did not feel constrained by the “dominant critical thinking practice in English language arts classrooms” (p. 208). The club did not feel like work for the participants because they were interpreting texts they enjoyed within a context they enjoyed. Additionally, the participants did not associate the graphic novel reading club with their traditional English language arts classroom. In Sabeti’s discussion of her study, she stated, “The participants ended up clinging to the value of the extra-curricular space that had been carved out and what it had to offer them,
how it validated them” (p. 209). The participants in Sabeti’s study drew on a multitude of interpretive strategies outside of the parameters of traditional literary criticism.

On the one hand, the present study affirms Sabeti’s (2012) finding that examining what happens to engagement when students have a space to discuss texts of their choosing opened up different ways of thinking about how adolescents read and interpret texts than what can often be found in traditional English language arts classrooms. The participants in the present study showed immersion in a topic they were interested in. Khalil, for instance, immersed himself in the statistics and personal background of NFL athlete Richard Sherman when he completed a player podcast of the athlete. On the other hand, the findings in the present study suggest that examining the multifaceted aspects of student engagement may be applicable in non-traditional as well as traditional academic settings. With graphic novel and sports reading clubs, adolescents had a means of expressing themselves in ways other than through traditional literary criticism. The participants in the program expressed themselves through the rich discussion of their favorite teams and discussions; they made judgments, showed a sense of belonging, and formulated opinions about these current sports events. Additionally, the participants expressed themselves in other ways beyond traditional literary criticism when they appreciated and critiqued each other’s player podcasts through discussion. The unique characteristics of engagement shown by the participants in this study could be transferable, even necessary, to a re-thinking of the traditional English language arts setting (Sabeti, 2012).

**Effects of player podcast and project-based activities on student engagement.** The player podcast project provided opportunities for engagement for all three participants. This was the case for three reasons. First, the participants had the opportunity to respond in a personal and critical way to what they read (Rosenblatt, 1995; Langer, 2011). The participants made personal...
connections to the athletes they chose, while also comparing and contrasting the characteristics of their player podcasts with the other members of the group. They enthusiastically researched player podcasts that included statistics generated throughout the year, success of team, and overall numbers. Cameron, for instance, did not just recall facts about NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers, but he analyzed the athlete’s statistics against other elite quarterbacks in the NFL. Shernoff (2013) highlighted similar connections when he examined students’ personal and critical reactions of texts in an alternative school environment. The player podcasts in this study also compare to other project-based learning opportunities in current research. For instance, Lin and Anderson (2011) created Collaborative Reasoning (CA), an intervention to foster adolescents’ reasoning skills. In CA, with the facilitation of a teacher and teacher-librarian, students work in a sustained collaborative context to develop solutions to big questions raised by a story they read. In the present study, the player podcasts provided a place for the participants to critically analyze what they read about famous athletes.

Second, the player podcast presented opportunities for challenge; the participants had to convince the other group members that the player they chose was one of the best in the sport with measured analysis. The participants enjoyed getting beyond mere opinion to basing their opinions on facts they uncovered. Third, the participants were able to respond in a non-traditional way through podcasting. This use of the non-traditional form of response of podcasts aligned with Beach, Campano, and Edmiston’s (2010) research on encouraging varied response to texts to foster student engagement. Beach, Campano, and Edmiston primarily focused on cognitive and agentic engagement when they explored adolescents’ experiences with critical literacy activities. Through a number of project based learning activities including photography projects and role playing projects, they emphasized the importance of critical inquiry to construct
knowledge and establishing a sense of agency to “read, enact, and change the world” (p. 14) The present study builds upon the research of Beach, Campano and Edmiston’s (2010) study by exhibiting the importance of non-traditional, project-based forms of response in fostering engagement in the reading and discussion of sports texts. Through the player podcast, the participants showed their depth of understanding favorite athletes, including why they found particular athletes, including NBA players Kevin Durant and LeBron James important and worthy of distinction.

Overall, there were a number of new factors that contributed to student engagement in the present study. I categorized these additional insights into three areas: choice, participant-centered discussion, and project-based learning experiences. The present study shows the ways in which these factors manifest themselves in a sports reading club. These moments of engagement took place as a result of almost all-out choice with limited guidance, rich participant-centered discussion on topics the participants enjoyed talking about, and opportunities to analyze favorite athletes through player podcasts.

Implications for Practice

Brown and Crowe (2014) warned that language arts teachers, whether they love or loathe sports, cannot afford to ignore “the widespread presence of sports in society.” They added, “There is too much valuable content for students to contemplate and critique” (p. 11). The content of readings in the present study was vast, including texts from four main categories – game action, sports reporting, character driven, and social issues (See Appendix C- Sports Taxonomy for Adolescents). In this section, I provide suggestions, based on the present study and prior studies on engagement and sports texts, for using sports texts in the classroom.
Using sports texts in the classroom. The present study has opened up a number of additional ways sports texts could be used in schools. From non-fiction pieces on favorite athletes to fictional pieces that focus on social issues as they relate to sports, this study has shown the potential of not only connecting sports texts with adolescents, but also challenging adolescents to think deeply about sports topics. The following classroom applications could be used in reading clubs or in whole class instructional situations.

In using sports texts explored in this study, teachers could create projects for adolescents. One of the projects educators could use to encourage critical thought and consideration of sports texts is a sports radio podcast, an extension upon the player podcast used in this study. In this podcast, students could highlight several aspects of a sports text or they could create a roundtable discussion of notable sports events. Students choose a host, incorporate music interludes, and create clips for the broadcast. Clips may include news about athletes, characters, songs, poem recitations, a critic’s roundtable, interviews of characters in sports texts, short quiz show clips, and other creative ideas. Students could also create player podcasts, similar to the ones created by Khalil, Cameron, and Joshua in this study.

Another project for educators to consider is I-Search, a structured and innovative way to conduct a research project introduced by Macrorie (1998). It is called an "I-Search" primarily because the learner has the freedom to choose the topic as well as write all the findings in first person. Students could choose a topic based on their individual interests in sports. For instance, Rossuck (2014) used I-Search as students in her class researched a variety of sports-related topics. One student researched hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a heart condition that ran in the student’s family and a condition that young long distance runners are particularly susceptible to. Another student researched the role politics plays in sports by interviewing history teachers at the
school and visiting the Jesse Owens museum in Danville, Alabama. A young swimmer in the class interviewed a number of experts and conducted print and online research on whether protein or carbohydrates are the most important aspect to a swimmer’s diet. Since the I-Search should be written in first person, adolescents make the project their own, much like the player podcasts in this study. Adolescents have the freedom to express themselves in their own voices, rather than trying to paraphrase the ideas and research of others.

When conducting an I-Search, learners divide their research into the following sections: how and why the topic chose me, what I knew before I started, what I wanted to learn, the story of my search, what I learned, what's next, and self-evaluation (Tallman & Joyce, 2006). Students move up the research ladder as they gather information through this process. They use strategies such as webbing, pre-notetaking, double-entry drafting, and learning logs. The webbing activity helps students brainstorm topics, the pre-note taking allows students a means of narrowing down their topics, the double-entry drafting helps students incorporate the ideas of experts into their research without plagiarizing, and the learning log helps them monitor their progress.

Additionally, students could create a Storify (http://storify.com) webpage in which they curate new information on a controversial sports topic (McGrail & Powell, 2014). They could also recast a traditional sports novel or non-fiction text into a graphic novel or create a digital photo or drawing album. With the graphic novel, students could design a comic book depicting the main events and scenes from the sports book they read. With the digital photo or drawing album, students could create a photo or drawing illustration of the plot, character development, or an issue from multiple perspectives, based on a chosen sports text.

For teachers, encouraging the use of sports texts and sports reading clubs in the classroom may not be limited to just sports enthusiasts. For instance, in the present study, all
three participants were sports enthusiasts, but the level of understanding about different aspects of sports varied for each participant. Joshua and Cameron expanded their knowledge of a subject they were already very familiar with (NBA and NFL players), while Khalil began creating a knowledge base of his favorite players in the NFL and NBA. When the participants had the opportunity to read a variety of sports texts of their choosing, the data showed they felt a personal and critical connection to what they read (Rosenblatt, 1994). The participants created meaning through a complex transaction between text, author of texts, and the other participants in the reading club.

Finally, teachers should consider encouraging their students to explore all types of sports texts to foster engagement. The participants in the present study found a variety of texts engaging. Cameron gravitated toward primarily current event sports texts. He showed engagement when he read sports magazines, online and in print, and when he watched highlights and sports shows online. Cameron expressed that he loved the thrill of sports and learning about the current players and teams. He further developed this interest in current event sports texts with a player podcast of Aaron Rodgers and Paul Pierce in which he showed what he knew about these two players and created arguments based on the players’ athletic and personal characteristics. Joshua showed engagement and developing interest in primarily nonfiction sports texts. The data showed engagement when he read nonfiction print texts and online sports articles. He reported that he enjoyed reading and learning from nonfiction print and online texts, and he showed this learning through the technology projects he created, one project on Tom Brady and another on Kevin Durant. In the technology project on Brady, he researched Brady’s statistics and his background, and wrote and recorded a player podcast in first-person based on the player’s personal and athletic characteristics. With Kevin Durant, he created a player podcast and
digital presentation, also based on the player’s statistics and background. Khalil showed engagement and a developing interest in primarily sports fiction texts. Although Khalil did not have as much background knowledge of current events in the NBA and NFL as the two other participants, the data showed that he enjoyed learning more about his favorite players from those two leagues. He also enjoyed reading and learning about a sport that was not as popular with the other members of the group, soccer. All three participants agreed that when they were given the opportunity to read sports texts of their choosing, engagement increased. When teachers give their students opportunities to explore, they begin to develop their individual interests and increase their engagement in the reading material. Appendix D provides a list of recommendations of where teachers can find such texts.

**Providing a sense of challenge.** Along with allowing choice in type and variety of sports texts, the findings in the present study suggest that teachers should seek to provide a sense of challenge to strengthen student engagement in the classroom. In this study, I provided a place and time to read and discuss sports texts based on participant choice. I created a program in which participants read a variety of texts and reacted to the texts in discussion, journaling, and other activities. I left the program open-ended to suit the participants’ interests in how they wanted to respond to the texts they read.

At approximately the midpoint of this study, the participants and I noticed a lag in engagement through the observation of data and participation in the club meetings. The group members and I discovered that engagement in the club began to sputter because the participants wanted to take their reactions to what they read a step further and create a project based on their interest in sports figures. Acknowledging that moments when engagement wanes are inevitable, the participants and I changed course, rather than continue down the path set out for the club.
Flexibility in choices of activities was key to fostering engagement in the club. We brainstormed the parameters for player podcasts. In these podcasts, the participants first read several different types of texts on a favorite athlete. As they read, they compiled information including statistics generated throughout the year, success of the team, player background, and how the athlete compared to other players in the league. As a result of the player podcasts the participants created, they felt they were successful in creating an analytical project around a favorite athlete.

The findings in the present study show that the participants dug deeper in their understanding of the athlete when the participants conducted these two projects. In the first round of player podcasts, the participants convinced the group members who they thought was the NFL MVP for the current football season. In the second round of player podcasts, the participants practiced and audio recorded their player podcasts based on who they thought were the best players in the NBA. We listened to each other’s player podcasts together and determined who we thought as a group were the best players in the NFL and the NBA. The interview data showed that participants overwhelmingly pointed to the player podcasts as their favorite aspect of the program. This project was a highlight for all the participants.

Teachers could create similar player podcast projects with their students. Teachers should pay particular attention to helping students support their assertions about the players in similar ways that the participants in the present study showed cognitive engagement during the program. This can be done by helping students through the research process as they find information about players they are interested in, brainstorm characteristics of quality player podcasts including background of player, player statistics, and how the statistics compare to other players. With these recommendations in mind, the discussion of the favorite players could potentially be lively.
and enriching, as the students debate each other on the strengths and weaknesses of particular athletes.

Additionally, the findings in this study suggest that a sense of challenge, however, should be balanced with enjoyment when adolescents interact with sports texts. Adolescents seek an enriching psychological and learning experience. Participants in this study often showed Langer’s (2011) envisionment stances when they were reading, working on player podcasts, and discussing sports texts. Khalil, for instance, moved through envisionment while reading and talking about fictional texts. Cameron “stepped out and objectified” (Langer, 2011, p. 18) his experiences when he talked to the group about his favorite NBA player, Paul Pierce. Having fun during the group sessions served as a catalyst for deepening engagement and for envisionment building in the group.

This conclusion of providing a sense of challenge ties with the current research on using sports texts in the language arts classroom (Crowe; 2004; Dannen, 2012; Rodesiler, 2014). According to recent research, reading sports texts may serve as an entry point to complex thinking. Researchers have examined complex sports topics with students (Dannen, 2012; Rodesiler, 2014). When teachers challenged the students to dig deeper in the sports topics they loved, students showed deepened engagement. Dannen (2012) found that sports media topics could be used as a launching off point to introduce her students to effective argument. Beckelhim (2014) found that when students focused on rhetoric and analysis over proving their opinion on a particular subject dealing with sports, their critical thinking skills improved. All of these studies, including my current study findings, point to an evolution in the current literature on using sports texts. Researchers are uncovering the possibilities of not only fostering an appreciation of sports texts, but also helping students critically examine sports texts. This study points to the
possibilities of sports reading clubs and player podcasts as a tool for increased engagement with sports texts and instilling a sense of challenge in adolescent sports enthusiasts. Teachers, for instance, can use the methods in this study on engagement to determine their students’ engagement. They can observe cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic engagement in their students using the indicators discussed in the present study. Some of those indicators of engagement include making predictions about game winners, showing acceptance into the sports reading group, asking questions, and expressing one’s opinion about favorite players and teams (See Table 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 for an in-depth look at indicators of engagement). This observation of engagement on a micro-level could be an important starting point to uncovering the varied levels of engagement students experience in the classroom.

**Role of reading clubs in schools.** The use of reading clubs in schools has a well-documented past (Casey, 2009; Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstedt, 2005; Maloch, 2002). Often in semi-structured settings, adolescents over the last two decades have participated in small reading groups in school and school-related activities. The small reading groups have provided a casual setting for adolescents to enjoy and discuss books in the classroom in the ways that advanced readers do, although there has been little known research on the use of sports texts in reading groups (Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstedt, 2005; Young, 2000). As I discuss in the literature review of this study, the introduction of literature circles was a major change in giving the students the opportunity to read and discuss books together (Daniels, 2002; Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstedt, 2005). But these programs continue to evolve. They now have manifested themselves as open-ended reading clubs with projects that further enrich students’ exploration of texts (Casey, 2009; Harvey & Daniels, 2009).
This study builds upon the work of Casey (2009) and Harvey and Daniels (2009). In Casey’s extension of reading clubs, called learning clubs, she used shared interest grouping, while students created visual and written responses to what they learned. In Harvey and Daniel’s (2009) extension of reading clubs, called inquiry circles, students read texts of their choice while learning communication skills in small, peer-led groups. Both of these programs have characteristics in common with the program in this study. Similar to inquiry circles and learning clubs, participants in sports reading clubs are not required to read the same text at the same time. They, instead, can read and discuss around a shared theme, such as sports. Similar to inquiry circles and learning clubs, the sports reading program in this study can also incorporate technology projects to sustain engagement in the program. Teachers could adapt a number of characteristics of the sports reading club in the present study into their own curriculum. First, teachers could allow students to read texts independently and at their own pace. Second, teachers would allow space for their students to explore their interest in sports. Third, teachers could set up reading groups based on interest. For instance, a small group of students in the class may be interested in sports whereas another group is interested in fashion. The reading club model and the observation instruments in the present study could be adapted to fit other interests of students beyond sports. These suggestions of independent reading and allowing choice in texts within a reading club format could foster engagement and rich discussion in the classroom.

Additionally, the present study shows the challenges of sustaining engagement throughout a six-week reading club program. In the reading club in this study, engagement waned approximately halfway through the program. This finding showed that simply putting children into groups to talk about texts does not automatically mean that engagement will flourish. Instead, there should be a willingness by teachers and researchers to listen to the voices
of adolescents and change the course of the experience to foster engagement. Therefore, teachers and researchers should invite adolescents to talk about their interest to maintain engagement.

Other characteristics may make a reading group spark as well. The findings in the present study point to opportunities for further exploration outside of the typical school setting. Providing almost all-out choice, a casual space to talk and discuss texts, and acknowledging the social dynamics that may take place with the agency shifts in multi-age groups could be applicable to mentoring programs, afterschool, and community programs (Altus, 2015; Moje & Tysvaer, 2010). When matching mentors and mentees, shared interest might be an especially important characteristic to fostering these relationships.

When participants are selected by interest rather than by age, the participants may have additional avenues for learning from each other. Basing the selection process by interest results in the participants having a shared set of knowledge and ideas coming into the program; additionally, because of the older children’s higher level of experience, the younger participants may learn and interact differently from the older children. The younger children will also bring in their own experiences and perspectives. For instance, Khalil learned from Cameron and Joshua’s advanced knowledge about playing sports and current events of sports, while Khalil, the youngest in the group, brought in a burgeoning interest in fictional sports texts and soccer. Age differences complicate the social dynamics of the group, which can potentially make for stronger interactions in the group. These stronger interactions could manifest themselves in more opportunities for the participants to learn from each other and in navigating the social conventions of the mixed-age group.
Implications for Future Research

Examining what happens to engagement in adolescents’ learning situations is a complicated endeavor because of the difficulty of measuring the multifaceted components of engagement (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). In prior studies, researchers have primarily used self-report questionnaires and large scale studies to observe engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Other researchers also examined engagement primarily as a general, static construct, rather than a multifaceted, malleable construct that may change given each activity and topic an adolescent experiences (Malloy, Parsons, & Parsons, 2013).

The present study showed that engagement could be observed through qualitative means beyond self-report questionnaires. In the present study, detailed methods of analysis included observation protocols and interview protocols that can be adapted for use in the classroom. The multifaceted components of engagement go beyond traditional means of assessment and observation to examine adolescents’ willingness to invest cognitive effort in learning, attitudes and feelings toward learning, willingness to follow the rules of a given activity, and how adolescents contribute to their own learning by showing agency and enhancing the learning event. In a similar vein as the present study Malloy, Parsons, and Parsons (2013) offered that student engagement should be examined as a “fluid construct” (p. 124). Educators and researchers should get beyond general discussions of engagement to examining it as a multifarious construct.

This study sought to develop ways for educators and researchers to examine adolescents’ interactions during learning situations through detailed interview, video and audio observation, and analysis of activities. Studies have begun to examine engagement as a multi-faceted and
malleable construct that may change with each activity (Malloy, Parsons, & Parsons, 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Miller, 2009; Tatum, 2008). In these studies, researchers emphasized observation of engagement through qualitative measures. The present study sought to uncover the unique ways that sports enthusiasts engage with sports texts and implies the need for more research on the characteristics of engagement. For example, what are the indicators of engagement when adolescents read historical texts? The present study continues the conversation about engagement during project-based learning activities when the participants showed deepened engagement when they create player profiles. However, the player podcasts were not the sole focus of the present study. The findings of the present study suggest an examination of what happens to the multifaceted components of student engagement in a primarily project based learning environment. Second, the participants in the present study showed interest and deepened engagement when analyzing sports video including sports highlights and sports documentaries. The findings of the present study suggest an examination of what happens to engagement when adolescents exclusively analyze video. Are the indicators of engagement different when adolescents explore texts they are initially interested versus texts they are required to read? The questions surrounding student engagement speak to the importance of moving beyond a “right and wrong” answer to teaching adolescents to understanding what happens to student engagement during learning events (Bundick, Quaglia, Corso, & Haywood, 2014). As shown in the present study, student engagement is a complicated, malleable construct that researchers should continue to observe and analyze to uncover how and what adolescents are interested in and learning about.

This study also suggests that methods for examining student engagement should continue to be evaluated. For example, for Cameron, the use of reaction journals did not appear to be a
catalyst for showing student engagement. Additionally, Khalil often showed cognitive engagement during casual conversations and face-to-face interviews, but cognitive engagement was rarely evident during discussions with the group. Therefore, researchers should continue to develop innovative ways to examine what happens with engagement, when students are exposed to different forms and formats of response. This study sought to go beyond self-report instruments to examining student engagement (Ivy & Johnston, 2013) by analyzing participant observation through video and audio means. Audio and video proved to be useful tools for observing engagement because it gave me the opportunity to observe interactions beyond the participant observation and researcher notes I collected. However, limitations to my approach to evaluating video included participants being uncomfortable with a camera recording and positioning of the camera to capture the participants’ engagement in the program. Questions about examining the complicated nature of student engagement remain, including the development of innovative ways to examine behavioral engagement and new ways to capture them, from the methodology and technology perspectives.

The present study was conducted with three African-American boys between the ages of 12 and 14. This program could be built upon by modifying the participant selection process and including participants of different ages, background, and ethnicities. For example, a group of female sports enthusiasts’ participation in a sports reading club may differ from the experiences that participants in this study had (Denton et al., 2013). Adolescents of different social and economic backgrounds may gravitate toward different sports topics. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine if one would see the same or similar indicators of engagement when high school or college students, who may have a larger knowledge base of the current controversial issues of sports, interact in a sports reading club. Although we discussed controversial issues
connected to sports in the present study, these topics may be more appropriate to discuss in depth with high school and college students. Possible research questions, for instance, would address more mature current events topics such as domestic violence and college and professional athletes and race, power, class, and sports.

Additionally, exploring how pre-service teachers participate in a sports reading club could potentially be an interesting avenue of inquiry. Researchers have used reading clubs with pre-service teachers to explore topics ranging from bullying and suicide to e-book reading (Burbank, Kauchak, & Bates, 2010). A sports reading club for pre-service teachers could provide a place for pre-service teachers to discuss compelling issues of race and gender, as well as expose pre-service teachers to non-traditional texts. This exploration of a sports reading club with pre-service teachers may shed light on the use of non-traditional texts and the use of reading clubs in classroom instruction. Finally, a reading club model such as the one used in this study could be used to explore other topics of interest to adolescents not connected to sports. Educators and researchers could analyze the indicators of engagement in a music listening club or a film club, in which educators and researchers explore what happens to the multifaceted construct of engagement when adolescents participate in the club (Rodesiler, 2014; Beach, Campano, & Edmiston, 2010). The connections between other popular culture topics and literacy in the existing research points to a need for more discussion of adolescents’ reading of popular texts of interest to adolescents, including sports texts (Alvermann, 2000; Sabeti, 2012).

Chapter Summary

In this final chapter, I discussed the conclusions of the study. I began with a statement summarizing the purpose and research questions of the study. Next, I focused on how the participants’ thinking, emotions, behavior, and sense of agency communicated student
engagement as it related to extant literature. Third, I focused on the contextual factors that brought about the features of student engagement in the club as they related to extant literature. The present research builds upon previous research on the multifaceted and malleable construct of engagement, independent reading, envisionment building (Langer, 2000) in learning activities, and group interaction in small reading group situations.

In the final two sections of this chapter, I discussed implications for further practice and implications for further research. The four elements of engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic) address the problem of student disengagement by informing literacy teachers, teacher librarians, and other educators and researchers on a program that explores the use of sports texts to observe the indicators of adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts.

Epilogue

By considering each of the four dimensions of engagement in depth, the data I collected showed a detailed and nuanced picture of the three adolescents’ engaged reading of sports texts. These participants showed the potential of sports texts to foster deep discussions and thought about current events in sports, social issues, and exploring the human condition. I believe that not only should sports enthusiasts have opportunities to read, discuss, and transact with sports texts, but adolescents with an array of other passions should have opportunities to explore topics, genres, and formats of interest to them in a casual atmosphere with their peers. While this study suggests that sports is a viable avenue of exploration, so are other topics of interest to adolescents including comic books, graphic novels, anime, music, fashion, art, and other aspects of our culture.

Allowing students to explore texts based on their passions and interests, however, is not enough. We must recognize that engagement will inevitably ebb and flow throughout the process
of interacting with texts. At points throughout the present study, the participants and I found we were losing interest and engagement. After examining these moments through this study, I concluded that emotions such as boredom can be important catalysts of engagement. Initially, teachers, researchers, and other adults may think that boredom or disinterest are moments to consider negative or as moments to reprimand adolescents. However, as evidenced in this study, boredom and disinterest can be seen as opportunities to show the multifaceted nature of engagement. For instance, Khalil was often quiet and reserved during discussion during the program. In these quiet moments, for instance, he may have been resting, thinking about what to say or do next, or contemplating another group member’s comments. When a topic emerged of interest to him, such as soccer, Khalil expressed these moments of thought overtly through his interactions in the group. For all of the group members, I learned about the power of engagement as the participants went from quiet and reserved to energetic and physical as they showed their engagement with sports texts. These dynamic shifts in engagement should continue to be closely examined to show the full potential of the construct of engagement to observe adolescents’ interactions with texts.

Langer (2011) stated, “Engaging in a literary experience involves exploring the text as fully as one’s awareness permits, while still maintaining an open mind to future possibilities” (p. ix). In six weeks, I began by stepping into a world in which the participants and I interacted with sports texts. The study began with giddiness and excitement about the texts the club members and I read and talked about, and questions about what was to come. We then moved around in Langer’s envisionment building process, showing the ebb and flow of engagement based on our personalities and the ways we wanted to learn. Approximately half-way through the program, the participants and I, from Langer’s (2000) perspective, “stepped out” to rethink where we were in
the journey with the sports reading club. At this point, we stepped back in to offer suggestions and modify the program. Collaboratively, the participants and I considered what it was we needed to do to maintain our engagement, and we created and developed the project-based activity near the end of the program. In conclusion, as I step out of this experience at the end of my dissertation journey, I relished the opportunities I had to read and talk about sports with the participants in the study. Their enthusiasm and deep thinking about sports was infectious. As a result, I was able to witness that adolescents have many untapped skills, talents, and interests, and it is our responsibility to highlight these traits as they experience the world around them.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Participant Selection Guide – Sports Enthusiast

Please answer the questions below the best you can.

Tell me about the books you like to read. What do you learn from them?

Tell me about your favorite books and websites you read about sports.

Tell me about the sports you watch on TV.

What is your favorite sport? Tell me everything you know about it.

Tell me how you express yourself in your interest in a sport. Do you buy magazines, do you play the sport, do you collect posters or other things? Explain.
### Appendix B. Participant Selection Guide – Student Engagement (Adapted from Reeve, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read carefully</td>
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<td>I pay attention when I read something for the first time</td>
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<tr>
<td>The first time my teacher talks about a new topic, I listen very carefully</td>
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<td>I try very hard when I read</td>
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<td>I work hard when I read something new</td>
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<td>During lessons at school, I express my preferences and opinions</td>
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<tr>
<td>During lessons at school, I ask questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell the teacher what I like and what I don’t like</td>
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<tr>
<td>I let my teacher know what I am interested in</td>
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<tr>
<td>I offer suggestions about how to make an activity at school better</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Very Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I read, I try to relate what I’m learning to what I already know</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I read, I try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>I try to make all the different ideas fit together and make sense when I read</td>
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<tr>
<td>When what I am working on is difficult to understand, I change the way I learn the material</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I read, I stop once in a while and go over what I have been doing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I am doing a lesson at school, I feel curious about what we are learning.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we work on something in school, I feel interested</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tell the teacher what I like and what I don’t like</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy learning new things</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning is fun</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C. Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study will be to investigate cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic factors that may contribute to student engagement when up to five adolescents explore sports texts in a voluntary sports reading club.

Research Questions:
1. What are the indicators of engagement when adolescents interact with sports texts?
2. What contextual factors bring about the features of student engagement when adolescents explore sports texts?

Background Information
Provide your personal information (Your name, your age, your school, and your teacher)
Tell me about the sports books and websites you read.
Tell me about your favorite sport or athlete. Tell me what makes the sport or athlete special to you.
Tell me about what it means to be a sports fan.
Tell me about your experiences in an after school or before school club. Have you participated in a reading club?

Student engagement
Tell me about a time when you came across something that was difficult to read. (cognitive)
Tell me about an activity you enjoyed and completed from start to finish. (behavioral)
Tell me about a time you expressed your opinion at school. (agentic)
Tell me about a time when you were so excited about something you were doing that you lost track of time. (emotional)
Are you a die-hard sports fan?

Join us for the Sports Read and Talk Club

Read sports books, websites, and magazines

Watch and talk about sports video

Mondays & Thursdays 4:00-4:45 p.m.

First meeting Nov. 3

Sign Up in the Library Media Center
Appendix E. Observation Protocol (audio and video recording; participant observation)

Participant’s Pseudonym ________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Positive Indicators</th>
<th>Cognitive Negative Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ describes cognitive strategies during reading and discussion</td>
<td>___ minimally uses cognitive strategies during reading and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ uses think aloud strategies</td>
<td>___ does not use think aloud strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ goes beyond the minimum required</td>
<td>___ does only the minimum required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ provides detailed recall of learning events</td>
<td>___ minimum recall of learning events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Positive Indicators</th>
<th>Emotional Negative Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ shows feelings of acceptance and belonging</td>
<td>___ does not feel accepted and a sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ shows value in activity at hand</td>
<td>___ shows disinterest in activity at hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ shows curiosity</td>
<td>___ does not show involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ is having fun</td>
<td>___ shows boredom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral Positive Indicators</th>
<th>Behavioral Negative Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ follows protocol of reading and discussion</td>
<td>___ does not follow protocol of reading and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ attentive</td>
<td>___ inattentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ on time and attends all sessions</td>
<td>___ disruptive behavior does not follow directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ follows directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agentic Positive Indicators</th>
<th>Agentic Negative Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Asks questions</td>
<td>___ Is not proactive in asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Expresses opinions</td>
<td>___ Rarely expresses opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Offers suggestions to make activity better</td>
<td>___ Rarely offers suggestions for making activity better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Lets others know what he or she is interested in</td>
<td>___ Does not express what he or she is interested in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes (Adapted from Creswell, 2009):

Condensed notes: (portraits of participants, a reconstruction of dialogue, a description of physical setting, accounts of particular events or activities; verbatim notes; personal thoughts, such as “speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 121).

Expanded notes: (fill in details of condensed notes; begin recognizing patterns and themes throughout)
Appendix F. Reading Club Model Used in the Study

Student Engagement
(cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic components)

Support
(teacher as guide through the text world, cognitive strategies)

Reading Club

Exploratory Talk

Addressing Difficult Topics

Student Choice
### Appendix G. Sports Text Taxonomy for Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game-Action</th>
<th>Sports Reporting</th>
<th>Character Driven</th>
<th>Social Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on fair-play; immediate experience of watching and playing sports.</td>
<td>Articles, blogs, and non-fiction pieces; sports as big business.</td>
<td>Texts used to reveal characters, but texts are not exclusively about sports; coming of age texts.</td>
<td>Race, economic status, gender, bullying, and other social issues as they relate to sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Kid from Tomkinsville</strong> by John R. Tunis</td>
<td><em>Payback Time</em> by Carl Deuker</td>
<td><em>Sk8er</em> by Steven Barwin</td>
<td><em>The Man who Ran Faster Than Everyone: The Story of Tom Longboat</em> by Jack Batten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Game Changers</strong> by Mike Lupica</td>
<td><em>We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball</em> by Kadir Nelson</td>
<td><em>Crash</em> by Jerry Spinelli</td>
<td><em>Bat 6</em> by Virginia Euwer Woolf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jump</strong> by Elisa Carbone</td>
<td><em>You Never Heard of Willie Mays?!</em> by Jonah Winter</td>
<td><em>Stanford Wong Flunks Big Time</em> by Lisa Yee</td>
<td><em>Maniac Magee</em> by Jerry Spinelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pick-Up Game: A Full Day of Full Court</strong> edited by Marc Aronson &amp; Charles Smith</td>
<td><em>Last Shot: A Final Four mystery</em> by John Feinstein</td>
<td><em>Running Dream</em> by Wendelin Van Draanen</td>
<td><em>A League of Their Own, We are Marshall, Remember the Titans</em> (movies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hoosiers</strong> (1986)</td>
<td>ESPN PTI – Pardon the Interruption, ESPN 30 for 30 documentary series</td>
<td><em>Shutout</em> by Brenda Halpin</td>
<td><em>Kick</em> by Walter Dean Myers and Ross Workman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abner and Me</strong> by Dan Gutman</td>
<td><em>Steroids</em> (video) hosted by Curt Schilling</td>
<td><em>The Final Cut</em> by Fred Bowen</td>
<td><em>Home Court</em> by Amar'e Stoudemire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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