Postmodern picturebooks, gender, and reading difficulties: a phenomenological exploration of one boy's experiences

Diane Marie Hamilton

University at Albany, State University of New York, hamiltondianem@aol.com

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POSTMODERN PICTUREBOOKS, GENDER, AND READING DIFFICULTIES:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF ONE BOY’S EXPERIENCES

by

Diane M. Hamilton

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Abstract

The study presented in this dissertation emerged from a theoretical connection noted in the literature between the potential of postmodern picturebooks to affect change, the ways in which boys are socialized into literacy practices, and the problem of male disengagement from literacy. As such, this study adds a new voice to the extant literature on postmodern picturebooks and that of gender and literacy. This study is an initial exploration at the intersection between these two areas of inquiry focused on the experiences of one boy who self-identifies as disinclined toward reading, a boy whose history of reading difficulties throughout elementary school contributed to compelling insights.

A phenomenological approach was designed for this initial exploration to ensure a rich and comprehensive description of this boy’s experiences to share in order to open and expand our understanding of the reading experience of individual boys and the role postmodern picturebooks might be able to play in disrupting the problem of male disengagement. This phenomenological exploration focused on three focal phenomena – the boy’s experience of reading, his experience of reading traditional picture books, and his experience of reading postmodern picturebooks. Through examination of data collected during a book sort, think-aloud readings, and interviews with the participant and members of his family, along with historical data from school records and tutoring records, descriptive interpretations of each of the three focal phenomena were constructed then discussed in relation to each other and to theoretical connections noted above.

The experience of reading of the focal participant in this study is illuminating, pointing to not only gender influences but also pervasive influences from a concerted focus on learning to read proficiently. Differences between the experience of reading traditional picture books and
the experience of reading postmodern picturebooks are evident for this boy. Subtle shifts in reading behavior were noted by the end of data collection suggesting that experiencing postmodern picturebooks with a focus on think-aloud commentary may have provoked a shift in his perspective about what it means to read.
Dedicated first and foremost to:

My participant, his family, and other boys like him that I have been privileged to know, for without them I might never have engaged in this particular quest

Dedicated with deepest gratitude to:

David Hamilton, Sarah Hamilton, and Bob Araujo who walked through the sunlight and the shadows with me on this journey
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toward successful completion of the quest.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

If you’re just flipping through it’s confusing ‘cuz the whole book’s white, and then there’s a bunch of pages flying around… if you actually read through it, you understand why there’s the different things happening… but without reading the words, it’s also really hard to understand… but if you read it, it’s easy.

(interview transcript, 7/6/2014)

The opening statement above from my primary participant points to the focus of this dissertation – one boy’s experience of reading postmodern picturebooks as viewed alongside his experience of reading more traditional picture books and his experience of reading more broadly. This quote highlights his focus on understanding what’s happening in a story and his competing concern for the degree of ease with which he can do the reading. My interest in his experience as a reader, specifically his experience of reading postmodern and traditional texts, stemmed from a theoretical connection between the literature on student response to postmodern picturebooks and the problem of male disengagement from literacy. I began to wonder about the potential of postmodern picturebooks to serve as a catalyst for change in the problem of male disengagement. This study is an initial exploration at the intersection between these two areas of inquiry. It was conducted as a phenomenological exploration of three focal phenomena – one boy’s experience of reading, his experience of reading traditional picture books, and his experience of reading postmodern picturebooks. Through examination of data collected during a book sort, think-aloud readings, and interviews with the participant and members of his family, along with historical data from school records and tutoring records, I constructed descriptive interpretations of each of the three focal phenomena. This dissertation discusses both the theoretical basis for, and the potential of, exploring the intersection of postmodern picturebooks and male literacy.
Problem Statement

As a study at the intersection of student response to postmodern picturebooks and the problem of male disengagement from literacy, this dissertation focuses on a problem in each of the two academic areas of inquiry. The first is to address the specific lack of research on how disinclined readers respond to postmodern picturebooks; the second relates to the broader societal need to identify potential contexts for improving the problem of male disengagement from literacy:

Why are over 300,000 boys dropping out of high school each year? Why are 93 percent of young people in our prison system young men? Why do illiteracy rates correlate with the risk of a jail sentence later in adolescence, making it twice as likely for nonreaders to be incarcerated? And even in our highest performing schools, parents and teachers worry that the boys are the ones who seem less likely to want to read on their own or outside of school…. Let’s cultivate a culture of literacy that is welcoming for boys. (Allyn, 2011, pp. 6-7)

Below, I present a brief summary of the societal concern and call for contexts for boys to engage in literate activity, then I highlight the missing voice in the postmodern picturebook research.

In a climate of long-standing concern for boys (Klecker, 2006; Kleinfeld, 2009; Sullivan, 2009; Williams, 2007), some are calling for the creation of learning contexts in which boys can engage in literate activity and still be perceived as appropriately masculine (e.g., Fletcher, 2006; Newkirk, 2002; Williams, 2004). Others are calling for critical interrogation of masculinity through which boys can challenge and redefine long-standing views on male literacy (e.g., Dutro, 2001; Harrison, 2010; Watson, Kehler, & Martino, 2010). One underlying argument seems to be that many boys’ literate choices are influenced by strong tensions related to the
differential socialization of conflicting expectations regarding what counts as acceptable manifestations of gender (e.g., Sprung, Froschl, & Gropper, 2010; Williams, 2006). Some contest or qualify this argument though, pointing to boys who are successfully literate (Skelton & Francis, 2011), to girls who are reluctant (Watson, 2011), and to larger patterns of difference by gender around the world (e.g., Marks, 2008; Sullivan, 2009). Others extend this argument to students in the LGBT community who are also impacted by dichotomous conceptions of gender (Blackburn, 2003, 2005). The question put forth is becoming more a question of which boys and which girls are impacted by gendered tensions (Scholes, 2010, 2011; Watson, 2011). Yet, several case studies on boys have highlighted instances where reading reluctance or resistance resulted from tension between the boys’ socialized literacy practices and those expected at school (e.g., Hicks, 2001, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 1995). In addition, the literature on boys and literacy indicates that boys often prefer nonlinear texts, popular culture, and parody to traditional narrative stories (Moss, 2007; Newkirk, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

One alternative to the traditional narrative story that fits this description is the postmodern picturebook. Postmodern picturebooks tend to be less linear as well as multiperspectival, intertextual, and divergent in other ways from the standard conventions of traditional story books (Anstey & Bull, 2009). The literature on postmodern picturebooks indicates that they offer rich opportunities for critical conversations (Anstey, 2008; O’Neil, 2010), suggesting that postmodern picturebooks could serve as a powerful vehicle for creating a context in which views of masculinity could be challenged, contested, and redefined. Readers across the elementary grades have been shown to wrestle with and generate meaning from postmodern picturebooks both with (e.g., Pantaleo, 2007, 2008, 2010) and without (e.g., McGuire, Belfatti, & Ghiso, 2008; Swaggerty, 2009) direct instruction. Most of the research on
student response to postmodern picturebooks has been conducted without reference to the degree of inclination or disinclination toward reading claimed by the reader, or to gender comparisons or contrasts (e.g., Pantaleo, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). A better understanding of the reading experience of males who are disinclined toward reading, whatever the reason, is needed. It is necessary to add their voices to the research on postmodern picturebooks and to explore what potential these books may hold for addressing part of the problem of male disengagement.

In the course of my professional life, I have met several boys whose strong disinclination toward reading intrigued me deeply and caused me concern for their futures. Would they disengage altogether at some point, and if so, what impact would it have on their lives? As a disinclined reader myself, I could relate to parts of their experience in a visceral way, but while I had never really enjoyed reading, and certainly did not choose it as a recreational pastime, I also never really hated reading or tried to actively resist it. Some of the boys I had met resisted vehemently. I found myself pondering this and other aspects of their experience, wondering about the social and societal issues embedded within it, caring about the potential impact on the future lives of these children, and feeling compelled to try to influence positive change. While exploring multimodal semiotics and postmodern picturebooks, another interest of mine, I came to notice a promising theoretical connection between postmodern picturebooks and the problem of male disengagement, noticing that perhaps engagement with postmodern picturebooks could inspire shifts in conceptions of literacy and gender. This possibility energized me and fueled my interest in doing the research described in this dissertation.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to construct a deeper understanding of the experience of one boy who is disinclined toward reading – his overall experience of reading, his experience of
reading traditional picture books, and most importantly, his experience of reading postmodern picturebooks. My intent was both to add a new voice to the conversation on postmodern picturebooks and to explore a new area of inquiry at the intersection of postmodern picturebooks and male relationships with literacy. The research questions for this study were the following:

- What has the experience of reading been like for this boy?
- What is the experience of reading traditional picture books like for this boy?
- What is the experience of reading postmodern picturebooks like for this boy?

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I share the theoretical connections that prompted me to design this study. The framework presented below connects the socialization of conceptions of literacy from birth with the social shaping of participation in literate activity through interactions across contexts, and the potential for change that may be found in postmodern picturebooks. In the sub-sections to follow, I discuss cognitive apprenticeship and the socialization of literacy, social fields and the shaping of literate participation, and radical change and the power of postmodern text features.

Cognitive apprenticeship and the socialization of literacy.

According to Rogoff (1990, 1995), children learn much of what they learn through a process of cognitive apprenticeship and guided participation. The process she describes involves the gradual acquisition of skills and knowledge through authentic experiences embedded within real-world contexts of social interaction. That interaction allows for direct instruction and guidance from more experienced individuals or groups and creates a space for the learner to make attempts at participation and receive feedback that guides further learning and participation while actively engaging in the activity to be learned. Eventually, the child becomes an independent participant and may even be instrumental in guiding the learning of others (e.g.,
Lenters, 2007). Many literate practices are socialized from infancy through the daily routines of children’s lives in which literate activity is authentically embedded (Rosenkoetter & Knapp-Philo, 2006) and can lead to lifestyles in which literacy is fully integral (e.g., Lenters, 2007) or only cursory (e.g., Purcell-Gates, 1995). In her ground breaking research, Heath (1983, 1996) noted that different sets of literacy practices and values had been fostered within the children of three different communities. She discussed how the socialized practices helped or hindered the children as they faced the social pressures resulting from mismatched expectations for literate behavior at school.

**Social fields and the shaping of literate participation.**

Acceptance and success at school, or within any social context, are largely dependent on the socialized practices children bring to the context that will serve as the basis for membership and participation. In his discussion of social fields, Bourdieu (1980) describes this foundation for membership and participation within a social context as “habitus” – a set of discourses, practices, and dispositions that have been socialized in young children through repeated embodied interactions and become what one might refer to as second nature. The degree to which habitus matches the expectations of the social context is the degree to which it serves as capital to promote access, acceptance, and agency within that context (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bernstein (1986) and Giddens (1984) discuss the nature of such expectations in terms of roles and discourses as well as embodied practices. What counts as capital depends on the expectations of the social context. The concept of capital could certainly be extended to many boys’ navigation of gender and literacy. Boys who develop conceptions of masculinity and literacy that fit with social expectations for literacy have capital for successfully navigating those expectations (e.g., Lenters, 2007); boys who develop concepts that differ from those expected
may find that unavoidable tensions emerge (e.g., Purcell-Gates, 1995). The habitus they bring to school does not serve as capital for earning acceptance, but rather serves to highlight difference, spark conflict, and influence participation in reading activities. This struggle is evident in some boys (e.g., Bausch, 2007; Scholes, 2010, 2011) and wields the power to shape their choices, much like a kindergarten boy described by Dutro (2001) whose actions were sharply and swiftly changed by the jeers of his peer who intimated that the choice of reading material was not in compliance with what would be expected and acceptable for a boy.

**Radical change and the power of postmodern text features.**

Critical examination of socio-historically fostered conceptions and norms is thought to be promoted by postmodern picturebooks (Anstey, 2008; Dresang, 2008; O’Neil, 2010). The unique features of postmodern texts, metafictive devices, underscore the constructedness of texts and challenge taken-for-granted conventions (Pantaleo, 2007, 2010). Radical Change features, another term associated with the features of postmodern picturebooks, refers to a theoretical explanation of the power of such features (Dresang, 2008). According to Dresang’s discussion of Radical Change Theory, a theory that emerged to explain the changes in children and children’s books brought about by technological advances of the digital age, these features can be categorized by their function – “changing forms and formats, changing perspectives, and changing boundaries” (p. 41). She further explains that the key principles underlying the power and purpose of these features are interactivity, connectivity and access:

- **Interactivity** refers to dynamic, user-controlled, nonlinear, nonsequential, complex information behavior and representation in or related to books and other media.
- **Connectivity** refers to the sense of community or construction of social worlds that emerge from changing perspectives and to expanded associations in the real world or in
books and other resources. Access refers to the breaking of long-standing information barriers, bringing entrée to a wide diversity of formerly inaccessible opinion and opportunity. (p. 41)

These three principles work together to create a context conducive to critical examination of ideas and active participation with texts.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This introduction is followed by a review of extant literature, a discussion of phenomenology and the specific methods utilized in this study, two chapters on the findings, and a discussion of the contribution and implications of this research.

The literature review highlights the extant literature related to male disengagement from literacy, literacy in the lives of boys, key tensions related to some male definitions of literacy, additional tensions associated with reading difficulties, and the literature on postmodern picturebooks. Throughout this review connections between the literature on boys and literacy and the literature on postmodern picturebooks are made as are connections to the overall theoretical framework for this dissertation.

The chapter on methodology and methods provides an overview of phenomenology as a methodology that serves as the basis for better understanding the methodological choices made in this study. I then explain my methodological choices including key philosophical positions and desired outcomes. Finally, I detail the methods employed in the research including limitations and reflexive commentary where appropriate to both mitigate potential researcher bias and to present the study transparently.

The findings chapters present and discuss data in relation to the three research questions outlined above. Each chapter presents raw excerpts of data from across the data sources, as a
venue for the voices of my participants, in order to convey a greater sense of the data sets to assist readers in determining the degree to which this study may or may not relate to another circumstance. Each chapter includes detailed descriptive interpretations of the data based on specific constructs of phenomenology as described in Chapter 3, then closes with a brief synopsis of each phenomenon of interest. Chapter 4 addresses the first research question and Chapter 5 addresses the second and third. The last two questions are addressed together because they are integrally connected and conceptually similar.

The final chapter contains the general discussion of the study. In it, I return to the theoretical framework, connecting the study to the extant literature in the fields of inquiry and noting how the data reflects and/or refutes the framework. I go on to discuss the results of this study as a contribution to the related fields of inquiry, delineating an insight revealed when the results of the analysis as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 were taken together, and suggesting ways in which this dissertation can further future research, theory, and practice.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

As indicated in the previous chapter, this dissertation connects the research on student response to postmodern picturebooks with the research on gender and literacy, specifically male literacy, through a theoretical pathway including Cognitive Apprenticeship, Social Field Theory, and Radical Change Theory. As in the previous chapter, I begin with the broader topic of male literacy, then address the specific area of inquiry related to postmodern picturebooks and their potential. Throughout, I outline the connections between the topical literature and the theoretical framework.

Male Disengagement from Literacy

The literature on boys and literacy highlights a long-standing gap in literacy outcomes by gender (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009; Sullivan, 2009; Williams, 2007), a gap that begins early in schooling and grows larger over time (Klecker, 2006; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Sprung et al., 2010). The problem of differential gender outcomes is often referred to controversially as the “boy crisis” (Sadowski, 2010; Smith, 2003; Williams, 2007) and includes essentialist and sociocultural perspectives (Gurian, 2001; Marks, 2008; Newkirk, 2002; Raider-Roth, Albert, Bircann-Barkey, Gidseg, & Murray, 2008; Sax, 2007; Scholes, 2010; Sprung et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2010) as well as debates on whether or not gender factors are universal or apply only to specific subgroups of boys and girls (Nichols & Cormack, 2009; Skelton & Francis, 2011; Sokal et al., 2005; Watson, 2011). Nevertheless, the fact remains that rates of enrollment and graduation from college are higher for girls (Fletcher, 2006; Newkirk, 2002; Trelease, 2006). Rates of drop-out, unemployment, incarceration, suicide, and injury are higher for boys as are rates for diagnosis of learning disability, placement in special educational programs and/or grade level retention (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, & Pagani, 2009;
Kleinfeld, 2009; Sullivan, 2009). Drop-out rates are associated with disengagement from literate activity in school:

Prior to dropping out, many youth report a gradual psychosocial disengagement process from school-related activities and demands. This process begins in early schooling and evolves over the years in response to the transaction between the individual and the environment. When some students become alienated by school, they withdraw and eventually drop out. In such cases, dropout represents the absolute sign of a misfit between student needs and expectations and school demands and benefits. [footnote superscripts from the original text have been removed to avoid confusion] (Archambault et al., 2009, p. 409)

Studies have shown that boys sometimes do disengage and/or resist schooling because of the mismatch between their lived worlds and the expectations of schooling systems (Hicks, 2002; Moss, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Solsken, 1993; Tatum, 2014; Willis, 1977).

The literature on boys also highlights certain characteristics that seem to be present in boys across various age ranges (Fletcher, 2006; Moss, 2007; Newkirk, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002) and that evidence of disinterest and/or disengagement can be noted in the youngest of students (Hicks, 2001, 2002; Lever-Chain, 2008; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Many literate practices are socialized through the daily routines of children’s lives in which literate activity is authentically embedded (Heath, 1983, 1996; Rogoff, 1990, 1995; Rosenkoetter & Knapp-Philo, 2006) and that socialization begins in infancy (Makin, 2006; Rosenkoetter & Knapp-Philo, 2006; Whitehead, 2002) and can lead to lifestyles in which literacy is fully integral or only cursory (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Lenters, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Mismatches between boys’ lived experience with literacy and school expectations for literacy can lead to life changing struggles
and tensions (Hicks, 2001, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Williams, 2006; Tatum, 2015; Willis, 1977). Some researchers argue that male disengagement with regard to literacy is the result of navigating tensions and beliefs related to masculinity and gendered ideations of work (Bialostok 2002; Davis & Pearce, 2007; Solsken, 1993).

Many argue that educators must respond to these gendered needs and provide instructional environments and opportunities that address them (Bialostok, 2004; Elish-Piper & Tatum, 2006; Fletcher, 2006; Newkirk, 2002; Williams, 2004; Zambo & Hansen, 2011). Several studies have examined various potentials for promoting engagement with literacy with varying results - potentials such as male teachers and role models, technology, boy-friendly books, book clubs, free-writing journals, dialogic strategies, social configurations, and the use of newspapers as reading material (Beattie, 2007; Boldt, 2009; Graham, 2001; Hansen & Zambo, 2010; Huebner & Payne, 2010; Kotaman, 2008; Mitchell, Murphy, & Peters, 2008; Sargent, Mwavita, & Smith, 2009; Sokal & Katz, 2008; Sokal et al., 2005; Wasik, 2010). Clearly, we as an educational community must continue to identify and examine powerful learning spaces for boys. A better understanding of boys and the tensions they face is needed to identify and provide responsive learning spaces that encourage boys to respond to literate activity.

**Boys and Literacy**

An understanding of boys’ relationships with literacy is essential to studying learning practices and contexts that can facilitate and encourage the development of literacy in boys. Classroom studies, case studies, and ethnographies examining gendered aspects of literacy have been conducted across the age ranges from birth to well into adolescence and have provided a wealth of information about boys’ relationships with literate activity and how these relationships develop (Boldt, 2009; Hicks, 2001; Lelters, 2007; Lever-Chain, 2008; Moss, 2007; Newkirk,
2002; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Solsken, 1993; Sprung et al., 2010; Whitehead, 2002; Willis, 1977). Taken together these studies highlight some commonalities across boys of any age while at the same time underscore the highly individual nature of each boy’s relationship with literacy and the choices he makes about it.

According to my analysis of the corpus of work provided by Sprung et al. (2010) on boys preK through third grade, Moss (2007) on boys in the middle elementary grades, Newkirk (2002) on boys in the upper elementary grades, and Smith and Wilhelm (2002) on adolescents, several characteristics seem to apply to a wide range of boys and seem to be surprisingly stable attributes across these school-age years. Some argue that these traits are the result of innate features and cite various genetic studies, cross-cultural studies, disability studies, and brain-based research (e.g., Gurian, 2001; Sax, 2007) in support of that position. Others argue for sociocultural explanations relying on counterexamples, case studies, and ethnographic research to support their arguments (e.g., Hicks, 2001, 2002; Scholes, 2010; Watson, 2011). I espouse the position that there is an intricate interplay between the biological features of children and sociocultural factors that better explains both the general commonalities seen across groups as well as the unique characteristics of individuals within those groups. As this debate is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will leave it to the stipulation that some broad sets of commonalities have been noted and may be informative in exploring options for better supporting the literate development of many boys.

In their studies of boys, Moss (2007), Newkirk (2002), Smith and Wilhelm (2002), and Sprung et al. (2010) found strikingly similar results regarding boys’ preferences in reading material, modes of interaction, and purposes or goals for participation in literacy. The majority
of these researchers found that boys have a tendency to gravitate toward non-fiction and visual non-linear texts (those with free-standing items and graphic features to reference), humor in many forms, fast-paced action and adventure stories, fantasy, science fiction, suspense, and horror, including stories with violent or crude episodes. Smith and Wilhelm also noted that the older boys they studied enjoyed varied formats for their reading materials such as magazines, newspapers, and electronic texts. As for modes of interaction, these studies showed that boys across the school age years tended to prefer conversational contexts and social literacy experiences, including acting out scenes from stories, dramatic representations, and drawing as part of the process. As for the boys’ goals and purposes for engaging in literacy experiences, many revolve around the social positioning of themselves and their peers, entertaining peers, saving face, and/or protecting their perceived status as a reader. These purposes underscore the important role literacy plays in the boys’ social world and also the important role the social world can play in the development of interaction styles and preferences related to literacy.

The literature on individual boys and their literacy development suggests that boys’ literate development is a function of social relationships and identifications surrounding literacy. For example, “Max,” a third grade boy from an affluent neighborhood, incorporated a wide range of literacy practices into his life by simply engaging with his parents in literate activities as they facilitated his successful participation; he then succeeded in incorporating those practices into his areas of interest with less and less assistance from his parents, eventually applying those practices within his own spheres of influence and sharing them with his peers: “the practice of storybook reading undoubtedly has provided a means for younger family members to expand family literate practice into wider community literate practices with peers” (Lenters, 2007, p. 126). For Max, literacy was simply an integral component of his authentic life experiences that

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1 Moss (2007) cites some studies in which this was not found to be the case.
held meaning and utility within his social contexts of family and friendship. Participation in literate activity was an expected and essential part of Max’s experiences and afforded Max a desired acceptance within those social spheres. Max identified with family and friends as a valued member of those communities, one who could teach, as well as learn, within their shared social interactions.

For Max, the interaction between literacy and his social worlds led to a lifestyle in which literate activity was not only integral, but also extremely enjoyable and satisfying (Lenters, 2007); however, the interaction between literacy and society can also bring tension and conflict. In their case studies of young boys struggling to acquire literacy, Hicks (2001, 2002) and Purcell-Gates (1995) describe the tension and conflict experienced by “Jake” and “Donny” respectively as they struggled to maintain their social identifications within their new social contexts of school literacy. According to Hicks, Jake’s father was a self-taught contractor who hadn’t finished school. Jake’s family valued literacy and engaged in many literate practices within their work and recreation habits, but Jake was an active boy who did not enjoy sedentary school-based reading activities. Jake was however able to become engaged in literate activity when it made sense to him or fell within one of his areas of interest, but otherwise, he became disinterested and resisted the work. For Jake, the interaction between literacy and his social worlds led to conflict and discomfort. Jake chose to focus on his out-of-school worlds “for as much as Jake wanted his teachers to love and accept him as a young boy, he even more strongly embraced the identifications and practices he lived at home” (Hicks, 2001, p. 225).

Identifications associated with a child’s family context can be powerful influences on the choices they make with regard to literacy. For example, Donny (Purcell-Gates, 1995) chose to focus on a lifestyle similar to his father’s, a lifestyle in which literacy was of little to no value.
Donny was the child of non-literate parents in an Appalachian community. He had no real experience with literacy and no urgent need for literacy in his daily life. He and his mother needed to be taught the purposes and functions of literate materials and tools – that postcards hold messages, that street signs help people navigate the community, and so forth. Naturally, the highly literate world of school was full of unfamiliar activities and associated tensions for Donny. He and his mother faced many conflicts with school surrounding literacy. While Donny was able to become literate, and his mother clearly wanted them both to practice literate behaviors, he showed little interest because “his identity was increasingly tied to his father, who had repeatedly announced his lack of desire to learn to read” (p. 150). Donny’s choices relative to participation in literate activity were influenced by the social contexts of school and family, and the identifications he made, or didn’t make, within them.

Understanding the Lived Experience of Boys

For many boys the choice to disengage from literacy may be the result of a struggle to navigate three specific tensions related to gendered ideations of reading and masculinity as they are experienced by boys in their social worlds, both the out-of-school world of family and friends and that within school. When taken as a whole, the corpus of research seems to support that many males define literacy as feminine\(^2\) (something a girl/woman would do), schoolish\(^3\) (something imposed by adults at school that is arbitrary and contrived), and isolating (something done when alone) (Bausch, 2007; Dutro, 2001; Fletcher, 2006; Frederick, 2006; Millard, 1997; Moss, 2007; Newkirk, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Sprung et al., 2010; Solsken, 1993; Watson et al., 2010). Defining literacy in this way creates tension for boys as they struggle to

\(^2\) May and Ollila (1981) share results showing the opposite in preschool children – that is, that reading was viewed as masculine by the children in their study at that time.

\(^3\) Hicks (2004) shares results showing that girls, like boys, also preferred reading to be meaningful and authentic, rather than offered in schoolish ways.
construct themselves as young males who fit with the gendered ideations and identifications of their lived experience. This corpus of research suggests that many boys must struggle with conceptions of masculine activity, social positioning relative to authority, and male social interaction patterns that are at odds with the ways in which schools present and define literate activity. As Williams (2006) “noted in an earlier column (Williams, 2005), the literacy identities that are accepted as legitimate in school often conflict with the lives and communities students inhabit once they leave the classroom” (p. 151). As seen in the cases of Jake (Hicks, 2001, 2002) and Donny (Purcell-Gates, 1995), this conflict may require boys to choose between identification with their lived worlds and identification with literate expectations of school; there is little room for spanning both worlds.

For boys who define literacy as feminine, participation in certain literate activities is at odds with their developing sense of masculinity and their attempts to be recognized as masculine, creating a situation in which the boys must choose between two worlds rather than choose both worlds. In their work with young boys, Dutro (2001), Solsken (1993), and Sprung et al. (2010) found evidence of such tension between ideations of gender and literacy. Activities in the young boys’ social worlds, such as choice of books, were clearly viewed as activities that applied to boys or ones that applied to girls, as judged by a socially constructed and generally accepted “boy code.” Sprung et al. state that “boys of all ages are keenly aware of the strict behavioral boundaries set by the masculine ideal and the high price that is exacted from them for playing ‘out of bounds’” (p. 18). Frederick (2006), Millard (1997), and Smith and Wilhelm (2002) found this to be true of middle school and high school boys as well; concern with appearing masculine was evident in the adolescents they studied. Millard argues that the social

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4 According to Sprung et al. (2010), “Pollack (1998) has coined the phrase ‘the boy code’ to express the constraints on boys’ emotional development and the resulting inner emotional pain that many boys carry around under the façade of being ‘normal’ and ‘fine’” (p. 17).
consequences of crossing these socially constructed gender lines could be very detrimental to the
boys who live by these dichotomous gendered definitions of literacy.

A similar potentially detrimental tension exists for boys who define literacy as schoolish. Compliance with the authority imposed by school-sanctioned literate activity is at odds with their struggle to become manly as defined by their out-of-school social contexts. In its extreme, this conflict may manifest as active disruption and subversion of school authority on the part of boys relative to school and self-destructive choices on their part relative to long term life goals (Millard, 1997; Willis, 1977). Schools tend to ban and devalue the kinds of literacy valued by boys, including, not only violence, but also parody and crude humor (Newkirk, 2002). Low brow humor and parody act as equalizers in a world where boys are under more critical observation and stress than ever before and seem to need spaces to escape the pressure of authority imposed upon them (Newkirk, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Boys’ interest in these topics and related genres are viewed by some as a harmless pushing-of-the-boundaries, the creation of an imaginary space in which “boys can be bigger, braver, and – most important – in more control than in a world where adults are still very much in charge” (Williams, 2004, p. 513). Resistance to authority and compliance with authority are not generally compatible stances, so boys who view literacy as schoolish must find ways to navigate the power conflict, often resulting in disengagement from literacy.

Disengagement is also a risk for boys who define literacy as isolating. For them, participation in the more sedentary and individual school-based literacy activities is in conflict with their struggle to identify themselves socially with their peers in ways that are consistent with their preferred interactional patterns, including such behaviors as talking over one another and physically demonstrating, miming, or sketching the point they hope to make (Fletcher,
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2006). The literature on elementary school boys and their relationships with literacy suggests two key underlying but related themes: the first, a focus on friendships and social networks; the second, a focus on self-esteem and face-saving (Fletcher, 2006; Moss, 2007; Newkirk, 2002). For example, both Fletcher and Newkirk discuss the ways in which boys express their affection for one another through humorous and/or violent writings in which their friends are characters; these pieces serve to create and affirm affinities and position each other in social hierarchies within friendships (Zacher, 2008). Fletcher notes that the boys’ goal is to “make your friends laugh out loud” (p. 102). Dutro (2001) and Moss found that children’s book choices often served as conversation starters for social engagement with peers and were influenced by their peers’ reactions to their choices. Moss (2000, 2007) found that some boys choose non-linear, non-fiction texts and other image-laden formats as a means of masking reading difficulties from their peers to maintain their social standing. The physical and social nature of boys’ interactions and conversational styles, as well as the use of literacy to jockey for social position, are at odds with the more subdued and individual behaviors expected in much of school literacy instruction, creating once again the need to choose between two sets of social expectations.

There are a few studies that are illustrative of boys’ navigation of such social positioning and peer conflicts. In her doctoral research surveying the interests of nearly 300 students ages eight through ten, Scholes (2010) identified six categories of readers, two of which were male dominated and lower achieving. One group she named “Bored and Banal”; the other she named “Clandestine Readers.” The primary difference between these two groups of boys, besides the extremity of the Bored and Banal boys’ responses, was their position on whether or not they liked reading. The Clandestine Readers reported an enjoyment of reading that exceeded all other groups including those that were girl dominated, but also a very unsupportive social climate
among their male peers. Scholes reported that “for these students their every day school social setting involved peer groups who typically expressed anti-school and anti-reading cultures and that popularity was not associated with doing the right thing at school” (p. 445). Popularity was a critical social factor in Skelton and Francis’s (2011) study as well, but in their study of high-achieving boys, popularity offered the boys an opportunity to engage in literacy without having to hide it from their peers. Because they were popular, these twelve and thirteen year old boys could cross the gender expectation boundaries without punishment. For “Dave,” a third-grade boy studied by Bausch (2007), finessing the boundaries was an art. He engaged in classroom book discussions differently depending on the make-up of the group within which he happened to be placed. Bausch describes Dave’s behavior within three different groups – as one of two boys, as one of a group of boys, and as the only boy in a group of girls. She notes that his seemingly aloof, avoidant, and disruptive interactions actually demonstrate skilled interaction with text as well as strategic co-opting of the literacy event to socially position himself amongst his peers, “revamp[ing] the book talk into something more useful and manageable for himself as a reader, a book talk participant, and a boy” (p. 213). Clearly, boys’ interactions with books are far more complicated and nuanced than might be expected and better understanding of the forces at play would benefit both researchers and practitioners in education.

At this juncture, it is important to take a moment to discuss the statement made on the previous page that some boys make choices about their reading activity to mask their reading difficulties from their peers (Moss, 2000, 2007). Reading difficulties complicate the experience of reading as a boy navigating gendered perspectives on reading; such difficulties, when they persist, add another layer of social shaping to the experience. Students with reading difficulties may enact behaviors that serve to promote or maintain a desired social position even when they
recognize that engaging in those behaviors impedes their chances for academic growth (Hall, 2010). Students can be positioned by teachers and peers as this kind of learner/reader or that kind of learner/reader through models and moments in learning contexts where models, various sets of norms and expected behaviors, serve as criteria for identifying individuals in specific ways, and where moments within the learning context are repeatedly viewed by others as instances of one model or another; this is referred to as “thickening” of identification (Collins, 2011; Wortham, 2006). It is an assignment and solidification of an ascribed or imposed identification – one the student may choose to take up or resist. Students who experience reading difficulties are more likely to be at risk for such positioning as their sets of abilities and difficulties will likely be viewed against the models held by their teachers and peers for what it means to be a good reader or a bad reader. Such views as well as conceptions of disability are often cultural constructions that create positions relative to the construct, positions of relative success and failure, positions that create disability and ability relative to the practices and discourses of that culture (McDermott & Varenne, 1995):

This approach takes up the possibility that every culture, as an historically evolved pattern of institutions, teaches people what to aspire to and hope for and marks off those who are to be noticed, handled, mistreated, and remediated as falling short. (p. 336)

This is not to say that disability is entirely a social construction. Supporters of this viewpoint are careful to recognize the extreme difficulty faced by some whose individual traits influence their experience of reading in significant ways (Dudley-Marling, 2004; McDermott & Varenne, 1995). It is well known that individuals who struggle with reading often have difficulty in specific aspects of reading including phonological awareness, word identification, comprehension monitoring, and/or making inferences; these difficulties can lead to a focus on words at the
expense of meaning construction (Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005). It is also known that children whose parents have experienced reading difficulty and been diagnosed with reading disability are more likely to present with phonological difficulties and be diagnosed with a reading disability as well (Carroll & Snowling, 2004; Nation, 2006). In either case, studies have shown that instructional opportunities offered to students with reading difficulties tend to be constrained and often include worksheets and less challenging reading materials (Hall, 2012; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012) and that positive change can be affected by eliminating the good/bad dichotomy in the language used with these students and by teachers supporting students as they critically examine and re-define what it means to be a reader (Dudley-Marling, 2004; Hall, 2016).

**Connecting with the Theoretical Framework**

Thinking about boys like Dave (Bausch, 2007) and the Clandestine Readers (Scholes, 2010), along with Max (Lenters, 2007), Jake (Hicks, 2001, 2002) and Donny (Purcell-Gates, 1995) is helpful in better understanding the forces involved in boys’ decision-making relative to participation in literate activity. In discussing Max, Lenters framed her findings within Rogoff’s theoretical work on cognitive apprenticeship and guided participation. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Rogoff (1990, 1995) explains the process by which young children learn various things, including literacy, as a process involving the gradual acquisition of skills and knowledge through authentic experiences engaged within real-world social contexts. The process is not a vertically structured learning hierarchy of teacher over child, or parent over child, but rather a more horizontal, side-by-side participation in real events that helps the learner move from observer to independent participant over time. In this way, children learn various practices and are socialized from birth by their families into the ways of speaking and interacting with print that
are valued and utilized within that family, much like Max was apprenticed into the literate practices of his parents.

In her research, Shirley Brice Heath (1983, 1996) provided a detailed account of how children from three unique communities were socialized into specific literacy practices within their families and how those socialized practices helped or hindered the children when they attended school in the primary grades. Heath identified different sets of literacy practices and values that were instilled in the children of three communities. The unique sets of practices socialized in within each of the communities formed the basis for membership and participation within the children’s home communities, a basis for interacting with literacy that would either match later school expectations or not. For the children from one community, the match with school literacy expectations was good and the children fared well. For the children of the other two communities, the fit was not as good resulting in either initial fit followed by later difficulties or initial difficulties followed by later disinterest. The children in Heath’s study are similar to Jake (Hicks, 2001, 2002) and Donny (Purcell-Gates, 1995) because their socialized literacy practices did not provide a good match for school literacy expectations either, especially for Donny whose non-literate family lifestyle provided very little preparation for success and acceptance at school.

Acceptance and success at school are largely dependent on the socialized practices children develop prior to school that serve as the basis for their membership and participation within the school community. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Bourdieu (1980) describes this set of socialized practices, discourses, and dispositions as habitus. Boys are socialized into a specific habitus of literacy by their families; parents influence their children’s development of gender ideations throughout the socialization process (Bialostok, 2002, 2004; Davis & Pearce, 2007).
According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), the degree of compatibility between the habitus of the individual and the expectations of the social environment in which he/she participates determines how much success he/she will experience when interacting within that social field. Donny and his mother (Purcell-Gates, 1995) serve as an example of the struggles faced when habitus leaves people unprepared for interacting within the expectations of the social field. Donny and his mother consistently ran into communication problems, issues of access, and an inability to effect change on their own behalf. They lacked understanding of, and familiarity with, the roles, discourses and practices needed to take productive action. According to Ahearn (2001), this kind of situation is the result of the restrictions imposed by a limited or incompatible habitus on one’s ability to exercise agency within the social constraints of a field. Bourdieu and Passeron would say that Donny and his mother did not have the capital needed to gain access, acceptance, and agency within the social field of their local school.

The concept of capital applies to boys’ navigation of gender and the choices they make about literacy. Boys like Max (Lenters, 2007) whose practices match school expectations have the needed capital for successful participation in the literate environment at school. Boys like Jake (Hicks, 2001, 2002) and Donny (Purcell-Gates, 1995) whose practices do not match school expectations experience more difficulty fitting in and navigating the differences between the expectations of their home literacies and school literacies. This difficulty is evident in boys like Dave (Bausch, 2007) and the Clandestine Readers (Scholes, 2010) who are influenced by, and struggle with, their relationships with teachers and peers. For the Clandestine Readers, the choice is to hide their enjoyment of reading and resent their peers; for Dave, the choice is to adjust his interactional style to try to be acceptable to both his teacher and his peers. In this way,

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6 Insights on peer influences can be found in Dutro (2001), Henkin (1995), Maloch (2005), and Zacher (2008).
Dave and other boys like him use their interactions with literacy to position themselves amongst peers.

**Connecting Male Literacy with Postmodern Picturebooks**

In order to address the tensions boys face in school with regard to literacy, it is necessary to identify and provide learning contexts that allow a wide range of boys, and girls, to explore different perspectives on literacy and gender. Several researchers have called for widening the definition of literacy in schools, valuing a wider range of literacy practices, expanding what counts as literacy far beyond a narrow set of standards based on white middle-class norms, and opening up spaces for critical thinking about literacy (Bialostok, 2004; Dutro, 2001; Elish-Piper & Tatum, 2006; Fletcher, 2006; Hicks, 2001; Moss, 2000; Newkirk, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Sullivan, 2009; Watson et al., 2010; Zambo & Hansen, 2011). By chance, Dutro once observed peer harassment of a kindergarten boy whose book choice was considered to be too feminine by another boy nearby:

The boy standing behind him spotted the book in his friend’s hands and began making gagging noises…. and taunting, “Ha, ha, he’s a girl, he’s a girl.” The accused quickly slipped out of line, ran to a nearby shelf, and exchanged his book. (p.376)

Dutro later studied a group of fifth graders and found that fifth grade boys were able to adjust their thinking about what is appropriate reading material for boys, and/or girls, simply by engaging in conversations surrounding books. Harrison (2010) found that middle school and high school boys demonstrated altered perspectives on masculinity through literature studies. Tatum (2014) argues that “meaningful literacy exchange[s]… initiate or shape decisions significant to one’s wellbeing” (p. 36) and recommends providing “enabling text[s] [emphasis in the original]” (Tatum, 2015, p. 2). Providing learning contexts for boys within which they can
investigate and interrogate conceptions of masculinity and/or literacy may address part of the problem of male disengagement from literacy. An opportunity to challenge thinking about many topics including literacy and masculinity may be found in books designed to challenge taken-for-granted ideas that are reproduced in society. These books are called postmodern picturebooks.

**Potential Power of Reading Postmodern Picturebooks**

The reading of postmodern picturebooks may provide a powerful learning context for boys to examine their assumptions and conceptions about literacy. Postmodern picturebooks have specific features that allow for varied interpretations and interactions surrounding texts, features that highlight the constructed nature of books and promote the critical examination of traditional conventions and taken-for-granted ideations (Anstey, 2008; Goldstone, 2008; Pantaleo, 2009). *Postmodernism* is a philosophical term that refers, not only to a period of time in which critical examination of societal values has taken place, but also to the underlying stance of critical examination and challenge of the status quo (Butler, 2002). Such a stance requires distancing oneself from the discourses and practices of society in order to examine and interrogate the traditional conventions and ideations that have evolved over time. Postmodern picturebooks offer many unique attributes over traditional picture books, attributes that encourage critical examination.\(^7\)

Understanding the unique features of postmodern picturebooks and how they differ from traditional picture books underscores the potential they hold for critical analysis and challenge of ideas. Traditional picture books are illustrated texts that tend to tell one chronologically

\(^7\) It may have become apparent that I use the term “picturebook” to refer to postmodern books and the term “picture book” to refer to traditional picture books. This is intentional. The two terms do differ in that the term “picturebook” with no space between its root words is itself a multimodal sign indicating that not only are there images and text in the book, but there is also a synergistic relationship between them, one that requires each to enhance the other in such a way as to be constitutive of a new whole rather than simply illustrative of its parts. Discussion of this term and Mitchell’s term “image text” can be found in Christensen (2010), Evans (2009), Nikolajeva (2008), and Pantaleo (2008).
organized story from one perspective to a reader who is a spectator (Smith, 2009). Postmodern picturebooks, on the other hand, may carry more than one story line and/or be told from multiple perspectives; they can be organized through non-sequential, visual features that break from the conventions of traditional picture books (Anstey & Bull, 2009), including positioning the reader as a partner or participant through demands and direct addresses. Demands are an aspect of visual grammar that creates a direct connection with the reader usually through the gaze of a character looking out of the book into the eyes of the reader (Kress & vanLeeuwen, 2006). Demands utilize space outside of the book to engage the reader; other postmodern uses of space include characters stepping off the page, out of frames, full page bleeds (illustrations that span the entire page edge to edge), and excessive white space (Goldstone, 2008). Other features and devices are specific to postmodern picturebooks.

There are two overlapping categorizations of postmodern features and devices. Some research refers to metafictive devices (Evans, 2009; Pantaleo, 2008; Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008) and other research refers to Radical Change features (Dresang, 2008; Pantaleo, 2008, 2009). These are not mutually exclusive taxonomies, but rather related classifications. Metafictive devices refers to the set of techniques used to underscore the constructedness of texts and challenge taken-for-granted conventions, whereas Radical Change features refers to a theoretical explanation of the power of such features. Metafictive devices include experimentation with fonts and text placement, non-traditional illustration styles and framing choices, contradiction between text and image, indeterminacy in the storyline, unresolved endings, unexpected points of view, mixed genres, references within a text to itself as a text, revelation of the creator’s constructive process, and references to other texts, artwork, and popular culture phenomena. Radical Change features are groupings by function – “changing forms and formats, changing
perspectives, and changing boundaries” (Dresang, 2008, p. 41). As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Dresang, the key principles underlying the power and purpose of these features are interactivity, connectivity and access. These three explanatory principles align with the three gendered tensions noted in the literature on male literacy. Interactivity aligns with masculine preferences about texts and boys’ interaction with them; connectivity aligns with how boys view themselves in the world and how they position themselves and peers within it; access aligns with agency and critical examination of authority and/or long-standing ideations.

To date, the research on postmodern picturebooks has not specifically examined boys’ responses to picturebooks in terms of gendered tensions and the type of book. Much of the research on student response to postmodern picturebooks is focused on semiotic analysis of the books and/or discussion of specific postmodern features (Beckett, 2010; Bellorin & Silva-Diaz, 2010; Druker, 2010; Goldstone, 2008; Mackey, 2008; McCallum, 2008; Nikolajeva, 2008, 2010; Scott, 2010; Sipe & McGuire, 2009; Zaparain, 2010), students’ literary understanding and their process of meaning making (Arizpe, 2010; Masaki, 2010; McGuire et al., 2008; Sipe, 2000, 2002, 2008; Sipe & Brightman, 2009; Styles & Noble, 2009), and students’ ability to respond to instruction on metafictive devices, using them to construct deeper meaning of texts and to produce their own postmodern pieces (Pantaleo, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012; Pantaleo & Bomphray, 2011).

As a whole, this body of literature highlights both the ability of children from first grade through high school to respond to the metafictive features of postmodern texts in ways that promote deeper meaning and nuanced dialogue. While this body of literature is insightful and serves as a strong foundation for investigating boys’ responses to postmodern picturebooks, it does not actually contain any studies that specifically address the question of how gendered
tensions may be expressed and examined by boys through interaction with postmodern picturebooks or how their interactions with books may differ by subgenre (i.e., traditional and postmodern). Only one study on postmodern picturebooks began to address my interest in the gendered aspects of literacy and masculinity; Lehr (2008) underscores that ideations and values about gender are embedded within the books children read, even some postmodern picturebooks, stating that gender stereotypes are “so deeply embedded within our culture that we are often unaware of its existence and therefore rarely examine its underpinnings” (Lehr, “Beauty, Brains, and Brawn,” 11)” (p. 174). Lehr’s study addresses the reading material but not the boys’ interactions with the books and/or the issues related to gendered tensions. One study in the field of gender and literacy noted the presence of gendered ideations of masculinity in the book group interactions of boys stating that “even though these boys were only in preschool they had already developed gender schemas. They believed boys should act in certain ways” (Hansen & Zambo, 2010, p. 52). Hansen and Zambo’s study focuses on the impact of male archetypes on the boys’ responses. Most importantly, none of these studies have explored the responses of boys who dislike reading and are disinclined to participate in reading activity. This dissertation does and contributes helpful understandings to both the field of postmodern picturebook research and the literature on boys and literacy.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

This doctoral study was designed to be an initial qualitative exploration of human experience. It takes place at the intersection of the research on postmodern picturebooks and the research on gender and literacy, opening a new area of inquiry at that intersection while also adding a new voice to the related extant literature on postmodern picturebooks. My intent was to contribute to a deeper understanding of how a boy who is disinclined toward reading actually experiences reading, more specifically the reading of postmodern picturebooks, so I designed and conducted the study as a phenomenological inquiry because phenomenology results in a comprehensive descriptive account of the experience or phenomenon that is the focus of the inquiry. Below, I first discuss the methodology of phenomenology and its variations, then I detail and describe the methods I designed and implemented for this research.

About Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a methodological approach to qualitative human science research that focuses on deepening our understanding of lived experiences. Some phenomenologists prefer the term “approach” to “methodology” to underscore the flexibility and creativity possible in phenomenological research (Vagle, 2014; Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008); I too prefer the term “approach” and have incorporated creative methods into my research. Different approaches to phenomenological research exist including transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, and post-intentional phenomenology. Each approach is distinguished by the philosophical perspectives and assumptions espoused to guide the research, but all focus on a phenomenon of interest as the unit of analysis. The approach usually involves conducting long interviews with several people, but according to Vagle, it is acceptable to conduct phenomenological research on a single participant’s experience of the phenomenon as I
have done in this study. Below, I outline some of the relevant philosophical considerations for phenomenological research, what is meant by a phenomenon of interest, and methodological considerations for designing a phenomenological approach.

**Philosophical considerations.**

The key philosophical constructs discussed across the literature (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 1990) and put forth by key individuals in the field over time involve perspectives about (1) knowledge and meaning, (2) relationships with the phenomenon, (3) influences of previous understandings and/or roles relative to the phenomenon, and (4) desired outcomes of the research. Vagle adds a specific commitment to post-structural philosophy, i.e., the interrogation of the researcher’s perspectives and the search for multiplicity. When he refers to post-intentional phenomenology, he refers to the post-structural or postmodern stance with which one engages in the research. Below I explain these philosophical perspectives in turn.

**Knowledge and meaning.**

The first philosophical consideration concerns knowledge and meaning. The related arguments point to ontological and epistemological considerations about the nature of knowledge and how meaning comes to be respectively. *Ontological* questions surrounding knowledge focus on whether or not the phenomenon consists of a universal essence, or an essence with invariant structures, or if variation and multiplicity is possible (Vagle, 2014). Vagle’s commitment to post-structural philosophy necessitates a more tentative, multiple, and unfinished view of knowledge. *Epistemological* questions include views on objective scientific method alongside discussions of rigor and the “scientific attitude” in human science research (Dahlberg et al., 2008). By “scientific attitude,” Dahlberg and colleagues are referring to a research stance that
reflectively interrogates how meanings are constructed by remaining open throughout, managing personal history and beliefs, and exercising caution when incorporating theory into the research. The goal is to construct meaning in a mindful way that avoids simply reproducing one’s prior knowledge and personal assumptions. An important and related epistemological question centers on whether the knowledge constructed as a result of phenomenological research must be based solely on the data itself, or if theory and other literature can be influential resources as well in the process.

**Relationships with the phenomenon.**

The second philosophical consideration involves the way the researcher views the meaning relationship with the phenomenon. Vagle (2014) provides an historical explanation of three different perspectives taken by key individuals in the field. One view, as described by Vagle, is that the meaning relationship is that of a conscious thought or perception of an object stemming from meanings brought to the object by the individual; another view is that the relationship is one of in-ness or what the experience of interacting within a specific state of being is like; and yet another view is that of a journey through something, noticing movement, change, and multiple or complex meaning potentials. I provide the following illustration to help clarify the difference between these perspectives. Consider the following phrases: to love someone or something (of), to be in love (in), and to experience evolutions of love (through). In the first phrase, the individual bestows a feeling on or toward someone based on some intrapersonal cognition; in the second phrase, the individual experiences characteristics of a shared stated of being common to the human experience; in the third, the individual experiences multiple and varied states of being, degrees or kinds of love, and the fluidity between them. The researcher’s perspective on the relationship with a phenomenon impacts the design of the study.
Influences of previous understandings and/or roles relative to the phenomenon.

The third philosophical perspective to consider involves managing the assumptions, traditions, and pre-understandings researchers bring to their research. Early phenomenological research addressed this issue through a process of *bracketing* – also referred to as the *epoche* (eh-pooh-kay) – and this practice continues in transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The goal of the epoche is to identify and set aside the researcher’s previous experiences, beliefs, assumptions, and traditions relative to the phenomenon to be studied in order to prevent these ideas and experiences from influencing the research inadvertently. However, Dahlberg et al. (2008) argue that bracketing is not sufficient and offer the concept of *bridling*. In bridling, the researcher is constantly examining his/her pre-understandings, prejudices, beliefs, and traditions (i.e., socio-historical understandings reproduced over time and no longer consciously examined) as well as his/her roles and reactions throughout the research. Vagle (2014) agrees and recommends practicing bridling in the form of *reflexion* throughout the study – that is, continual critical examination of one’s role(s) in the research and one’s relationship with the phenomenon being studied to mitigate potential influences on the meanings constructed through the research. This philosophical consideration speaks to the epistemological questions on how meanings come to be and how they can be viewed as valid or trustworthy.

Desired outcome of the research.

The fourth philosophical perspective to consider relates to the desired outcomes of the research – that is, deciding whether the result will consist of purely descriptive accounts of the data or if it will also include interpretations that incorporate theory and other literature. The researcher must also determine how much content from his/her own reflexion process to include and what form the textual construction will take. Vagle (2014) and van Manen (1990) suggest
that literary forms can be appropriate for the presentation of data, whereas Moustakas (1994) and Dalhberg and colleagues (2008) seem to prefer specific phenomenological products – either textural descriptions, structural descriptions, and essences (Moustakas, 1994) or tentative interpretations, a main interpretation, and a comprehensive understanding (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Each of these sets of phenomenological products differs and holds implications for the design of the study. The first set as described by Moustakas focuses on a descriptive account of the phenomenon that aims to promote an understanding of invariant structures that define the phenomenon; the second set as described by Dahlberg and colleagues focuses on an interpretive account that aims to provide a deeper, more powerful understanding of lived experience.

**Phenomenon of interest.**

Understanding what is meant by phenomenon of interest is of great importance in phenomenological research. According to Dahlberg et al. (2008), a “phenomenon can then be understood as an object, a matter, a ‘thing’ or a ‘part’ of the world, as it presents itself to, or, as it is experienced by, a subject” (pp. 32-33). In phenomenological research, the phenomenon of interest is neither person nor object, but the experience or relationship, the space within which people interact with others or objects or situations (Vagle, 2014). It is a set of associations, sensations, interactions, and reactions involved in the lived experience between humans or between humans and objects; this is referred to in the literature as the intentional relationship or intentionality (e.g., Dahlberg et al., 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 1990). This term does not imply intent in the sense of purposeful, planned, goal-directed action, but instead as interconnectedness, interdependence, interaction, or interweaving. Note that I have chosen descriptors beginning with the prefix “inter,” purposefully indexing a space and relationship between people and other people, objects, and/or circumstances. This is the
intentional relationship. It is what conveys the experience; it answers the question, “What is it like to _____?” The focus is on some aspect(s), characteristic(s), and/or experience(s) that index it as unmistakably an example of the phenomenon of interest. This intentionality is the phenomenon and therefore is the unit of analysis and focus of the inquiry.

Methodological considerations.

Data collection.

Phenomenologists usually try to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon by conducting a long interview with each of several people who have lived within, or through, the experience of the phenomenon. Creswell (2007) indicates that phenomenological studies have been conducted with as few as one participant or as many as several hundred. According to Dahlberg et al. (2008), the rationale for selecting several participants is to ensure variation in the data for a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon; they state, “[T]he question of variation is more important than the question of number” (p. 175). According to Vagle (2014), the decision of how many participants to include depends on the research question and the circumstances surrounding the study; he suggests deciding both the number of participants as well as the kinds of data collection activities based on the uniqueness of the inquiry. He advocates for greater flexibility and creativity in the investigative approach, suggesting that not only the traditional long interviews would be appropriate but also more creative data gathering techniques. He states, “I think, it is critical to remain open to all sorts of possible ways to gather data … literally any source of data has the potential to help open a phenomenon of interest” (p.78).

Data analysis.

Approaches to phenomenological analysis may vary somewhat, but common threads include moving between wholes and parts within the data, remaining open to meaning potentials,
and seeking to rigorously explore and account for all of the study data in a way that is mindful of personal influences that could impact the analysis (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 1990). Depending on the philosophical decisions made for the study, the researcher might begin with an epoche, then focus the analysis solely on the data using specific processes with the intent to produce specific descriptive accounts (Moustakas, 1994) or he/she might develop analytical products that include some reference to theory, other research, or even literary works (van Manen, 1990). Alternatively, the researcher might choose to engage in bridling throughout the study and focus the analysis on other analytical products that allow for less definitive, potentially partial, multiple meaning potentials (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Vagle, 2014). Vagle’s post-intentional phenomenology and Dahlberg et al.’s reflective lifeworld research are more contemporary approaches to phenomenological research that seem to allow for the most flexibility, including the encouragement to follow “lines of flight” (Vagle, 2014, p. 118) that could open up new meaning potentials to explore. In any case, the researcher will examine the data both as a corpus and as separate sub-sections:

When analyzing a text for meaning, it is imperative that each part is understood in terms of the whole, but also that the whole is understood in terms of its parts. It is always a question of seeing the relationships in the text and carrying on a dialogue with it. Openness in terms of sensitivity to the text thus means to be able to follow its movements, allowing the analysis to conclude in a harmonic whole.” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 236)

**Textual construction.**

The ultimate goal of phenomenological research is to bring the experience of the participant(s) to the reader in a powerful way. Dahlberg and colleagues (2008) try to create an
“aha” moment; van Manen (1990) refers to Buятendijk’s “phenomenological nod” (p. 27); both are suggesting that the result be an experience for the reader, an epiphany perhaps, or maybe simply a felt acknowledgement or validation. This result can be achieved through the crafting of specific textual products or through less conventional textual constructions. Moustakas (1994) would focus on a textural description that describes the unique elements of the phenomenon, a structural description that explains a framework or structure constructed about the phenomenon, and an essence that captures the core defining aspects of the phenomenon. Dahlberg et al. focus on generating tentative interpretations stemming from within the data set, identifying a main interpretation to which all else connects, and a comprehensive understanding that describes how the interpretations connect in an intentional relationship. Vagle (2014), however, encourages flexibility with form, as he does with data sources, stating that “the text can take many forms as long as it reads coherently, includes the identified tentative manifestations in some way, draws on philosophical conversation(s), is situated in the identified scholarly conversation(s) within particular fields, and reflects your post-reflexive work” (p. 137).

**Trustworthiness.**

In phenomenology, like all qualitative research, attention to quality and credibility of the research is essential. Merriam (1998) suggests that in addressing the quality of a qualitative study, one should focus on how well the findings “show that the author’s conclusion ‘makes sense’ [Firestone, 1987] (p. 19)” (p. 199), “identifying critical elements and wringing plausible interpretations” (p. 201). To that end she suggests the following criteria: (1) “whether the results are consistent with the data collected [emphasis in the original]” (p. 206); (2) the presentation of “people’s constructions of reality – how they understand the world” (p. 203), and (3) the degree to which the researcher has “provide[d] enough detailed description of the study’s context to
enable readers to compare the ‘fit’ with their situations” (p. 211), that is “user generalizability [emphasis in the original]” (p. 211). In phenomenology, these criteria are met through mindful maintenance of a phenomenological or scientific attitude as opposed to relying on the natural attitude. The natural attitude refers to the experience of a phenomenon in the moment it is actually experienced – that is, a pre-reflective experience, whereas the phenomenological or scientific attitude represents a distanced reflection (analytical examination of data) and reflexion (critical examination of one’s roles and prior understandings) relative to the phenomenon (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Vagle, 2014). A phenomenologist remains open to the phenomenon through a stance of openness, holding previous understandings at bay through epoche and/or bridling activity, staying close to the data when generating descriptions and interpretations, and engaging in specific validity checking of interpretations against the data. Dahlberg et al. state that “the principle of openness requires order, a systematicality that differentiates the scientific and rigorous work from the un-reflected approach that we have in the natural attitude” (p. 277). They add that “[r]esearchers want to see something new or in a new way rather than confirm what is already known or what one wants to see” (p. 280). It is the primacy of systematically understanding the participants’ lived experiences and the researcher’s reflexivity that ensures trustworthiness.

**Research Design**

The doctoral study described in this dissertation was designed to be an initial qualitative exploration into a new area of inquiry. The extant literature led me to wonder how boys who were disinclined toward reading might respond differentially to postmodern picturebooks as compared to more traditional picture books. It seemed as though there was real potential for engagement with postmodern picturebooks to play a role in disrupting disinclination for some
male readers, and I needed to know how at least one such boy was experiencing both kinds of books and reading in general. The study was designed and conducted as a single participant, phenomenological exploration conducted over time with the inclusion of historical and multi-perspectival retrospective components. My decision to study one primary participant was two-fold. First, even one target participant, a boy who is disinclined toward reading, would be difficult to recruit and sustain for an extended period of data collection given that the area of inquiry is something such a boy would usually avoid. Second, the single participant design I created allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participant’s experience in a way that included the variation desired for phenomenological research. There were six perspectives on his experience of reading across contexts, six observable instances of his experience of reading traditional picture books, and five observable instances of reading postmodern picturebooks. The design was reviewed by the University at Albany’s Institutional Review Board and approved as meeting ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

For the purposes of this study, I selected three units of analysis and the following philosophical perspectives. Each unit of analysis is a phenomenon of interest that aligns with one of the three questions for the study – my participant’s experience of reading across contexts, his experience of reading traditional picture books, and his experience of reading postmodern picturebooks. Taken together, they address the overarching purpose for this inquiry and are discussed in Chapter 6. To remain open to each phenomenon, I chose to engage in both the epoche and bridling, viewing the epoche as my initial reflexion and the bridling as my on-going reflexive interrogation of previous understandings, personal history, and roles within the study. I decided to view the relationship with each phenomenon as a through relationship and knowledge therefore as partial, fluid, and complex with multiple meaning potentials. For each phenomenon,
I decided to present samplings of data and descriptive interpretations of the intentionalities. The descriptive interpretations rely solely on data and take the form of comprehensive understandings consisting of tentative interpretations that connect to a main interpretation; theory and other literature are reserved for the discussion. To gather the necessary data, I chose to include the long interview approach, but administered it in parts over the data collection sessions; I also chose to employ a few other creative and varied data collection activities as shown in Table 1. Table 1 aligns the data sources with their respective research questions and overall purpose of the study. Procedures for the study are detailed in the sections immediately following the table.

**Table 1. Alignment of Data Sources with Research Questions and Research Purpose**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question/Purpose</th>
<th>Data Sources and Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What has the experience of reading been like for this boy?</td>
<td>interviews with participant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interviews with family members</td>
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<td>field notes</td>
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<td>school records</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tutoring records</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the experience of reading traditional picture books like for this boy?</td>
<td>think-aloud readings with survey prompts</td>
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<td>book sort</td>
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<td>field notes</td>
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<td>text analyses</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the experience of reading postmodern picturebooks like for this boy?</td>
<td>think-aloud readings with survey prompts</td>
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<td>text analyses</td>
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The purpose of this study was to construct a deeper understanding of the experience of one boy who is disinclined toward reading, not only his experience of reading postmodern picturebooks as contrasted with that of reading traditional picture books, but also his overall experience of reading.

Participant recruitment and pseudonym selection.

Recruiting the participant for the study was rather straightforward. I had decided to focus the study on an in-depth exploration of one boy’s experience, a boy I had tutored previously, a boy who often indicated his disinclination toward reading. Having served as his tutor for over three years while he was in elementary school, I already had a good relationship with him from which to request access to his thoughts. He was already comfortable with me and knew that he could express himself freely with me. Even though he self-identifies as strongly disinclined toward reading, he was willing to consider serving as the focal participant for my research. After reviewing and explaining the informed consent materials with him and his mother, I took questions. I then read the participant assent aloud to him and shared the list of decisions points from the parent permission form as well as the questions that would be asked of family and former teachers in their interviews. I also shared the Student Confirmation Letter that would be provided to family members and teachers as part of their consent materials. I told him that, while these were not required parts of his form, I wanted to be sure he was aware of
everything about the study. I provided a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of the paperwork when they had had a chance to think it over.

While recruitment of this participant was relatively easy, deciding on a pseudonym was not. Because of my focus on reflection throughout the study, I realized that the pseudonym I chose could prompt my readers to draw upon their own personal histories and previous understandings influencing their meaning construction relative to the research. I could have chosen any name as the pseudonym: DeShawn … Enrique … Winston … Jianwei … Billy-Bob … Habib … Stanislav … Matthew. However, it is likely that each of these possibilities, or any others for that matter, would bring to mind some pre-existing assumptions about what could be influencing the reading experience of the participant. Whether we like it or not, some names bring thoughts to mind about socioeconomic status, cultural stereotypes, assumed values, etc… and all before we view any data! Noticing and managing these thoughts is part of a phenomenological approach that strives to remain open and bridle these potential subconscious influences. Nevertheless, a pseudonym was needed and I have chosen Mike.

Mike’s tutoring relationship with me started during the summers after his first and second grade years; then, we met regularly throughout his third, fourth, and fifth grade years (2009-2012). This relationship existed before his participation in this doctoral study. Mike was on summer break between seventh and eighth grade at the time of the data collection activities (2014), and he was at the end of eighth grade when he participated in the member check interview (2015). Mike was a small-framed Caucasian boy and the younger of two children in his family. He lived in a suburban town with his sister and his parents. Mike enjoyed sports, yard work, video games, and spending time with his friends. He also had an elaborate play village set up throughout his home and often would start our sessions by introducing me to a new
toy for the village. He seemed knowledgeable about large trucks and construction equipment and expressed an interest in driving a snow plow someday. While it was not a specific selection criteria for this study, it is relevant that Mike struggled with reading throughout elementary school and was eventually classified as a student with a Learning Disability. He had received Speech and Language Services beginning in preschool; Academic Intervention Services were provided as early as first grade; Resource Room Services replaced the Academic Intervention Services beginning sometime during his second grade year and persisted throughout his third, fourth, and fifth grade years. At some point during sixth or seventh grade, Mike was provided with assistive technology to accommodate his reading difficulties. The technology was referred to as an e-reader and seems to be some sort of books on tape or text to speech technology that allows him to listen to the reading and follow along rather than decode directly.

Preparatory activities.

Preparation for the study included activities to increase my own degree of openness and promote the necessary reflexivity for the phenomenological approach to this inquiry. These activities, described below, included the selection and vetting of the reading materials, generation of comprehensive text analyses of the chosen books, and compilation of the epoche.

Text selection, vetting, and sequencing.

The books selected for this study were intended to be catalysts for commentary; the goal was to make my participant’s thinking about reading and reading materials visible. The set of books selected had to be adequate to promote a wide range of comments in order to address the research questions as well as the extant literature as comprehensively as possible, and it needed to minimize any inadvertent biases based on content or focus. To that end, I choose a set of fourteen books that, as a set, met the following guidelines: (1) included books that represent a
varied degree of traditional and postmodern characteristics; (2) included books for a variety of ages across the elementary school grades; (3) included at least one book with a male main character and one book with a female main character; (4) included at least one book that could be viewed as stereotypically boy-friendly and one book that could be viewed as stereotypically girl-friendly; (5) included a variety of intertextual references (i.e., references to other textual works, popular culture, or well known figures); and (6) included storylines that were expected to promote exploration of points of view and/or challenge taken-for-granted norms and ideations. In addition, the book selections I made included sets of similar pairs in order to ensure an appropriate balance between the traditional and the postmodern book sets, thus minimizing the potential influence of topical interests rather than textual aspects. For example, two books about taking action to save a tree were included – one more traditional in design (e.g., The Family Tree by McPhail (2012)) and the other more postmodern (e.g., Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From? by Child (2001/2010)).

Once I had selected the books, they were vetted by two other literacy professionals who regularly work with children’s literature; they were current or former classroom teachers who were also doctoral students of reading education. The entire set of books was assessed by each of these professionals individually using a checklist outlining some defining features of traditional and postmodern books as well as the guidelines I had used to select the initial set of books (see Appendix A). Each book was assessed for its relative status as traditional or postmodern, and the set of books as a whole was assessed relative to meeting the desired selection guidelines outlined above. After the individual ratings were completed, the two vettors compared their ratings; initial ratings were in agreement for 10 of the 14 books. After briefly discussing their thinking, the vettors came to consensus on the other four books as well; their
ratings were consistent with mine. When asked to pair the books by commonality, the vetters’ pairs matched mine for five of the seven pairings. Their reasoning for the other two pairings demonstrated appropriate balance between traditional and postmodern selections as well. The pair of gender books posed some difficulty as neither was strongly postmodern, but the vetters agreed that the degree of difference between the two books was adequate to serve the needs of the study well. At a later date, I decided to eliminate one of the gender themed books because of a potentially offensive term within the text, opting to use only the one that was neither strongly traditional nor strongly postmodern.

Before the data collection activities began, I sequenced the books for the think-aloud readings using a quasi-random process to avoid adding any personal bias to the ordering. I decided to place the gender themed book in the fifth think-aloud position to try to ensure its inclusion after some practice with the think-aloud protocol and before participant fatigue. I then wrote the remaining 12 titles on slips of paper and sorted them into two piles – postmodern and traditional as per the vetting results. I then drew the order for each pile and wrote it down. I then created a sequence chart so that the presentation would alternate between traditional and postmodern selections. This order was adjusted slightly during data collection to ensure alternation of which kind of book would be presented as the first of the two think-aloud readings for the session. The actual order of presentation as well as the initial sequencing results and vetting ratings is provided in Appendix B.

Text analyses.

Prior to using the selected texts within the study, I generated a comprehensive text analysis for each of the books. In doing so, I became increasingly open to meaning potentials and influences that I hadn’t noticed before; this was in fact a fundamental purpose for engaging
in the process. Before I explain my text analysis procedures, I will share an excerpt from my reflexive work as it reveals relevant aspects of my position relative to the study. It’s a piece I felt would be important moving forward, a piece that generated great excitement for me both as a researcher and as a disinclined reader myself, a piece that I would need to be mindful of as I interacted with Mike and as I analyzed his data. As I reflexed\(^8\) on the experience of generating the text analyses, I noted that I was changing. I was becoming increasingly tolerant of the uncertainty and indeterminacy embedded within the postmodern texts, and I was becoming more deeply aware of what a fictional reading experience could be like for me and how it could shift my own disinclination toward recreational reading:

I come away feeling like there are many more potentials than I found on my first read; I feel like I have succeeded in opening up my mind to multiple potentials for the book and achieved what the phenomenologists might consider an epoche relative to the texts – a bracketing of preconceived notions in such a way as to make it more likely that alternate reactions and interpretations will be accepted and accommodated into my own sense of the book. The experience I have of analyzing the postmodern books is itself a postmodern experience challenging notions of certainty and achieving greater tolerance of uncertainty. I think it is showing me what I have been missing in the fictional reading experience – this deep inspection and deeper noticing of nuances and meaning potentials… I wonder if this will happen for the boys.

\(^8\) The term “reflexed” refers to having engaged in reflexion as described earlier in this chapter in the discussion of phenomenology as a methodology. I believe I may have created this term as well as “reflexing” to refer to engaging in the reflexion process described by my sources. It may have been influenced by Vagle’s (2014) use of the term “post-reflex” on page 132:

As we post-reflex through a study it is important to document, wonder about and question our connections/discussions, assumptions of what we take to be normal, bottom lines, and moments we are shocked…. we must constantly interrogate our pre-understandings and developing understandings of the phenomenon.
This exciting question energized my inquiry and validated the extended time invested in the text analysis process.

The text analyses were generated using a text analysis framework I compiled based on several theoretical frameworks and discussions including: Fisher, Frey and Lapp (2012) on text complexity; Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) on visual grammar; Dresang (2008) on Radical Change features and functions; and, Anstey (2008) on analyzing postmodern picturebooks through an “archeological dig.” The purpose of the Text Complexity section was to describe the degree of textual challenge offered by the book, to deepen understanding of the way language is used to construct/convey the story, and to promote understanding of the content requirements for making meaning. The purpose of the Visual Grammar section was to describe the visual representations employed within the book, to deepen understanding of the way image and layout are used to construct/convey the story, and to demonstrate how visual aspects impact meaning potentials. The purpose of the Radical Change Features sections was to note postmodern features present within the book that relate specifically to (1) the form and format of the book, (2) boundaries and breaks from conventions, and (3) perspectives and points of view, in order to examine how these features might relate to the reading experience of the participant. The purpose of the “Dig” for Deeper Significance section was to identify constructs and ideations presented or implied within the book, to consider societal influences on those meaning potentials, and to consider implications for gender and literacy. The definitions I utilized in thinking about the text types and postmodern features represented a synthesis of discussions in the following sources: Anstey and Bull (2009), Colomer et al. (2010), Evans, (2009), McCallum (1996), Pantaleo (2008), Sipe (2008), Sipe and Pantaleo (2008), and Smith (2009). The text analysis framework was designed to generate an intimate understanding of each book and its
design from multiple viewpoints for use in the analysis as appropriate and to promote openness more broadly.

**The epoche.**

The final preparation activity was the important initial step toward establishing on-going openness and reflexivity - the epoche. I chose to engage in several activities aimed at gathering and examining as many of my thoughts and experiences relative to reading as I could. I began the process as a stream of consciousness, typing out as many memories and ideas as I could – no order, no plan, just whatever came to mind. I returned to the document repeatedly to add details, additional information, and some organization. Next, I gathered and reviewed other recent documents I had created in which I examined my reading life - my PhD application, a paper for a course, and my research vision statement. Then, I gathered my report cards from elementary school and created a file containing all of the narrative commentary teachers had included, color-coding relevant comments. Finally, I decided to answer all of the interview questions I had planned for the study. As I both reflected (analytically examined data) and reflexed (critically examined my roles and prior understandings) about the epoche in its entirety, I realized that engaging in these activities brought some important big ideas to my conscious awareness and allowed me to see the influence of my own experience of reading on my life more broadly:

I came to realize how much of an influence my view of myself as a reader had on my life choices – on how much time I spent on homework, on how I felt about my abilities (and perceived lack thereof), on which college I would dare to apply to, on which major I chose.... I began to see the influence of accepting and espousing an ascribed reader identity.…. I also realized the real lack of place and importance libraries have had in my life.…. My reading and my conceptions of reading changed as a result of my learning
about reading in college and grad school along the way…. Reading for me was always part of the work experience, done alone, out of assignment, need, or utility; it was never a social experience, nor a source of discussion, nor an escape or entertainment venue…. Family influences and social class played a role too…. This process seems to be re-writing my history or at least my interpretation of it to some degree.

These big ideas became a foundation for my reflexive work throughout the study as I both collected and analyzed data.

**Data collection activities.**

In order to gather the necessary data to examine each phenomenon of interest to the greatest extent feasible, while also maintaining my participant’s continued participation in the study through as many of the data collection protocols as possible, I chose to design several kinds of data gathering activities and to distribute them over several sessions. To examine Mike’s experience of reading postmodern picturebooks and more traditional picture books, I designed protocols for a book sort and think-aloud readings, including specific prompts to ask following the readings. To better understand Mike’s experience of reading across contexts and time, I interviewed him and his family members, and I reviewed records from his elementary school experience as well as the records from my tutoring relationship with him. Interviews with Mike’s former teachers were requested, but none were secured. Each of the data collection protocols is described briefly in the sections below and is provided in full in Appendix C.

**Book sort.**

The purpose of the book sorting activity was to attend to Mike’s experience of selecting reading material. I noted his choices about the books and how he made his decisions, noticing his interactions with the books as well as his stated ideas. The goal was to make Mike’s thinking
visible. Mike was provided the full set of pre-selected and vetted books to look through and sort into three piles – “would have read,” “would not have read,” and “don’t know.” This activity had been a beneficial tool in my professional practice as a means of learning the reading preferences of individual students and it was a productive protocol for my research as well allowing me to better understand Mike’s experience. As Mike examined the books and sorted them, I took observational notes and recorded the sorting classifications on the Book Sort Note Sheet (see Appendix D). As Mike explained his sort, describing why each book had been placed in each pile, I jotted notes in the comment column. During his commentary, I used neutral prompts, as per the approved protocol (see Appendix C), to probe Mike to further elaborate on his comments. The book sort was video and audio recorded, then transcribed with both audio and video data included.

*Think-aloud readings and survey prompts.*

The purpose of the think-aloud readings was to observe how Mike engaged with each of the books and to hear his ideas about the book and the experience of reading it. Think-aloud protocols have been used in other reading research to help make participant thoughts “visible” (Scott & Dreher, 2016, pp. 288-289, 292-293); for example, think-alouds have been used to study cognitive processes utilized during reading (e.g., Clinton et al., 2014; Janssen, Braaksma, & Rijlaarsdam, 2006), to assess student strengths and weaknesses for instructional planning purposes (e.g., Oster, 2001; Sprainger, Sandral, & Ferrari, 2011), and to model or test metacognitive strategies for students to adopt (e.g., Kymes, 2005; Laing & Kamhi, 2002). In their 1995 meta-analysis, Pressley and Afflerbach used the results of over 60 think-aloud studies to identify several practices of “good readers” (Pressley, 2006, pp. 56-59). In her discussion of think-aloud methods for qualitative research, Charters (2003) highlights several important
considerations for using think-aloud methods including selection of tasks that require an appropriate degree of verbal cognition, prompts that avoid unduly influencing the participant’s responses, openness, and inclusion of additional data sources such as nonverbal observation, retrospective questioning, and member checking. She concludes that “the literature of think-aloud research shows its strong theoretical foundation and confirms its value as a way of exploring individuals’ thought processes” (p. 80).

For this study, the think-aloud readings were intended to provide access to Mike’s otherwise invisible thoughts and experiences as he read two specific kinds of books. At most of the sessions, Mike completed two think-aloud readings – one postmodern and one traditional. As per the protocol (see Appendix C), I prompted him to read the book, look at the pictures, and tell me what he was thinking about the book. I provided a brief introduction to the book consisting of only the title and author, then I facilitated his commentary as needed using neutral prompts. While I sometimes felt the desire to shift to more conversational dialogue with Mike and had to restrain myself from doing so, I believe the decision to use neutral prompts instead was beneficial to the study as indicated in my reflexions:

I found myself nodding sometimes and wanting to jump into a conversation with him and share my thoughts. However, I am glad that I didn’t, because he came out with some gems … I really do think that if I share my thoughts in a two-sided dialogic conversation with him as a partner that I will miss out on insights like those he shared today and I might actually steer his thinking inadvertently or interrupt his thoughts ... I think I am happy with the choice I’ve made overall; while a more dialogic approach like we used in tutoring is valuable and shaped and yielded different information, this non-dialogic approach is allowing him to demonstrate thought patterns and insights that hadn’t been
visible in dialog [during tutoring]. It’s been fun and surprising to hear his thoughts.

(field notes and reflective comments log, 6/29/2014)

I had been told by Michael Smith (personal correspondence, January 23, 2012) that data collected through a think-aloud protocol would be uniquely interesting, and it was. This protocol was inspired by his work (Smith, 1991) and also the work of Vivienne Smith (2009); both successfully utilized think-aloud protocols to gather data on the in-process reading of boys. Before Mike’s first think-aloud reading, I modeled the process I wanted him to follow; at subsequent sessions, I offered to model the process again. In order to gather more insight into Mike’s experience of reading, I included several survey-like prompts at the completion of each think-aloud reading; these prompts were vetted by professional educators. Mike completed 11 think-aloud readings over six sessions. At the start of the sixth session, when it seemed as though Mike was beginning to show signs of tiring with the sessions, I offered him some options for reducing the seven scheduled data collection sessions to six and gave him the choice of how he wanted to proceed. All of these sessions were video and audio recorded, then transcribed without delay. The transcripts contain audio and video data.

**Interviews with the participant.**

The purpose of the interview questions was to better understand Mike’s unique perspective and experience of reading - his unique thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about reading. At all but one of our sessions, I asked Mike some questions from the master list in the interview protocol (see Appendix C). While I generated the questions for this protocol without making direct reference to any other work, I was likely influenced and inspired by wide reading and previous study of protocols shared in the following works, each of which also explored student experiences of reading: Cochran-Smith (1984), Harrison (2010), Love and
Hamston (2004), May and Ollila (1981), and Smith and Wilhelm (2002). My questions were designed to elicit comments in four areas: perceptions of story reading, views on reading and its relative importance in life, perceptions of boys’ and girls’ ideas on reading, and decisions about which books to read. The master list of questions was vetted by professional educators. Mike was permitted to pass any question at any time. Questions answered or passed were noted on the master list and some were revisited at subsequent sessions. At the final data collection session, as per the protocol, I asked Mike a different set of questions related to some theoretical potentials in the extant literature. After data analysis, I met with Mike one more time to share my thinking about his reading experiences and to gather his feedback on my thinking. This interview served the purpose of deepening my understanding of Mike’s unique experience and afforded him the opportunity to provide additional information, confirm or refute my thinking, and clarify his views. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed without delay.

**Interviews with family members.**

The purpose of the interviews with family members was to generate a more complete understanding of Mike’s reading experiences. The multi-perspectival, retrospective viewpoints added depth and new insights into Mike’s overall experience of reading across contexts and over time. They served as a point of reference for deepening and substantiating my understanding of Mike’s interview responses. I first obtained the informed consents for the interviews from Mike’s mother, father, and older sister. I provided the consent forms, allowed them to read them to themselves, and asked if there were any questions I could address for them. There were no questions. Mike’s mother asked his sister directly if she had any questions. She did not. At their own initiation, the three of them chose to sign and return the forms before I left instead of using the self-addressed, stamped envelopes I had brought for them. Each interview was
conducted individually; I asked each of Mike’s family members the same two broad, open-ended questions as per the protocol (see Appendix C). Neutral prompts were utilized to probe their responses further. These interviews took 20-40 minutes each and were audio recorded. Transcripts were generated without delay.

**Historical records from school and tutoring.**

The purpose of the historical records from Mike’s school and tutoring experiences was similar to that of the family interviews – to generate a more complete understanding of Mike’s experience of reading across contexts and time. Copies of various school records spanning first through fifth grade were provided by Mike’s mother including progress reports, evaluations, and IEPs. These records provided detailed accounts of Mike’s progress, abilities, challenges, and experiences in elementary school. I generated copies of my tutoring records from the time I had spent with Mike including notes, informal assessments, emails, and other reports. These records provided various accounts of Mike’s reading development as well as a road map of his tutoring instruction over time. Records were not gathered for Mike’s middle school experience because my interest was primarily centered on the time frame in which traditional picture books and postmodern picturebooks are more likely to be leveraged for instructional purposes and/or interventions. All historical records were de-identified and the names of any individuals or potentially identifiable entities were removed and replaced by role such as mother, teacher, and district. In total, these historical records consisted of several hundred pages of data, ranging from short phrases jotted in a small note book to charts, assessments, and detailed reports.

**Approach to analysis.**

Analysis of the large body of data gathered in the procedures described above consisted of steps to ensure alignment with key commonalities across phenomenological perspectives as
mentioned earlier in this chapter – i.e., moving between wholes and parts within the data, remaining open to meaning potentials, and seeking to rigorously explore and account for all of the study data in a way that is mindful of personal influences that could impact interpretations (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 1990). My analysis process was influenced by discussions of qualitative research in Creswell (2008) and Merriam (1998) focused on constant comparative processes as well as guidelines in Vagle (2014) and Dahlberg et al. (2008) on phenomenological analysis. The phenomenologists emphasize the necessity of grounding analysis in the data, moving between wholes and parts, cycling through the data throughout the analysis, “dwelling” with the data at times, and returning to both the data and the participant to check emerging interpretations - all while being mindful of one’s own perspectives and bridling them throughout. Methods used by non-phenomenological qualitative researchers such as Creswell and Merriam offer useful tools for ensuring a more scientific attitude toward the analysis by focusing on noting meaningful moments in the data, coding meaning units, creating categories from codes, returning to the data to assign categories, visualizing connections and interrelationships between categories, speculating about potential explanations, and checking such potentials against the corpus of data (Creswell, 2008, pp.251-252; Merriam, 1998, pp.185-192). The steps in my analysis are outlined below and provided in more detail in Appendix E:

1. *I engaged in two initial readings of the entire corpus of data – the first to become familiar with the data and the second to code the data line-by-line and note other commentary in the margins.* Other commentary included questions spawned by the data, analytical reflections in which I noted connections across the data and to the extant literature, and reflexions in which I bridled such things as my personal experience with reading and my different roles in Mike’s life.
2. I reviewed and sorted the codes and comments on the book sort and think aloud reading transcripts in order to generate analysis summaries for each of these transcripts. This step included grouping codes into categories, returning to the code lists to assign the categories, tallying and analyzing nuances within each of the categories for each of the think-aloud readings, compiling comparative charts containing data from all of the think-aloud readings, and noting patterns or trends in the charts. After the sixth book, there was a sharp drop in new categories, and those new categories tended to be related to, or expansions of, earlier categories. The analysis summaries generated for each think-aloud reading included the following sections: “Salient Descriptions and Quotes,” “Analytic Categories and Statements,” and “Bridling – Reflections and Reflexions.” To create each of the summaries, I reviewed the video, field notes, code list, tally chart, text analysis, and sometimes the transcript and/or the children’s book itself.

3. I reviewed the coding and comments on the retrospective and historical data sets then created an analysis summary for each of the four data sets – participant interviews, family interviews, school records, and tutoring records. This step included clustering codes from the retrospective data sets into general categories to examine and exploring additional insights from the historical data. I identified salient quotes and recorded reflective and reflexive commentary to generate each of the four analysis summaries.

4. I examined the analysis summaries to identify potential tentative interpretations and possible main interpretations, then shared my thinking with Mike for his feedback. This step included reviewing the analyses and tally charts for the postmodern think-aloud readings as a set, the analyses and tally charts for the traditional think-aloud readings as another set, and the analysis summaries for the retrospective and historical data as a third
set. Each set addresses one of the research questions. I extracted several potential tentative interpretations from the data and a few possible main interpretations that connected them to each other. I met with Mike, shared the interpretations with him, and sought his input to confirm, refute, and/or clarify the interpretations; this was the member check interview noted in Table 1 and described in the section on participant interviews.

5. *I revised the interpretations and mapped out the three focal intentional relationships for this study, then crafted comprehensive understandings to describe each of them.* This step included checking the interpretations against the data again in light of Mike’s feedback and creating summaries of the sets of summaries created earlier in the analysis, setting them up side-by-side to note distinguishing and salient aspects. It also included mapping out substantive connections between the tentative interpretations for each unit of analysis, identifying a main interpretation to which all others connect, and crafting an explanation of those connections – that is, the comprehensive understanding.

6. *I completed a final reading of the original data to ensure that each comprehensive understanding represented the data and that all data had been accounted for.*

**Study timeline.**

The majority of the study was conducted over a time period of almost two years, beginning in September 2013, including the preparatory activities described above, the required institutional approval of the study design, the recruitment and collection of data from Mike, the recruitment and collection of data from Mike’s family, the attempted recruitment of some of Mike’s former teachers, the detailed analysis of the varied data sources, the generation of tentative and main interpretations, and the member check interview with Mike. Table 2 outlines the timeline of activity.
Table 2. Study Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epoche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2014 – May 2014</td>
<td>Final design and approval of the study plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>Recruitment of the one participant for the single participant design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acquisition and de-identification of historical records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014 – Aug. 2014</td>
<td>Data collection sessions with the participant, generation of related field notes, and transcription of the data recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2014</td>
<td>Recruitment of the family interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family member interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2015 – June 2015</td>
<td>Initial data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Member check interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trustworthiness of the design.**

The research described in this dissertation was designed to ensure a high degree of rigor and credibility. Throughout the study, I strove to maintain a scientific or phenomenological attitude grounded in openness and reflexivity. As a result, managing my two relationships with Mike, that of former tutor and that of current researcher, presented no significant difficulties, and managing the influence of my own reading history and perceptions added transparency and dimension to this research. Guiding philosophical perspectives for the research have been explained. Data collection focused on gathering a variety of data designed to make my
participant’s lived experience of each phenomenon of interest more visible including several perspectives on Mike’s overall experience of reading, several examples of his experience of reading more traditional picture books, and several examples of his experience of reading postmodern picturebooks. Data analysis included methods that adhered to key principles of phenomenological analysis and qualitative constant comparison. Data presentations in Chapters 4 and 5 consist of data excerpts that help to provide additional context as well as the descriptive interpretations resulting from the analysis. The extant literature and relevant theoretical perspectives situate the study and explore the broader conversations within which the study resides. This research therefore meets the criteria for trustworthiness discussed earlier in this chapter.
Chapter 4: The Phenomenon of Reading

This chapter presents a descriptive interpretation of Mike’s experience of the phenomenon of reading. The account presented in this chapter addresses the first research question for this dissertation:

- What has the experience of reading been like for this boy?

My analysis suggests that Mike’s experience of reading can be described, not as effortless deployment of an internalized tool for self-actualization, but as submission to an invasive focus on learning how to read proficiently, a focus that influenced Mike in several ways, shaping or constraining his life activities, influencing his relationships, complicating his understanding of his potential for proficiency, and shaping his overall approach to reading texts. In this chapter, I first present selected excerpts from the data yielding the floor to the voices of the multiple perspectives collected on Mike’s experience of reading. Then, I describe Mike’s experience in terms of the influences the focus on learning to read proficiently has had across contexts in his life. I close this chapter with a brief summary of his experience of the phenomenon of reading across contexts.

Data Presentation

The following presentation of data is intended to provide a selected sampling of the multi-voiced data set on Mike’s experience of the phenomenon of reading. It includes excerpts from the interview transcripts and the historical records from Mike’s school and tutoring history. Note that even though this section is comprised of direct quotes, this sampling is not completely free of influence. I have selected these excerpts over others; I have sequenced them purposefully; I have also edited these excerpts for overall ease of reading, eliminating instances of “uh,” “like,” and pauses of varying lengths as well as self-affirming “yeah” statements. The
result of this editing is that Mike’s articulations seem to flow easily when in reality they were peppered with hesitations as he searched for the words he wanted and checked that he was certain of his ideas. I have organized the excerpts into the following tables aligned with the data sources from which they were collected and entitled them as follows:

- Mike’s perspectives,
- the perspectives of Mike’s family members,
- the perspective of the school records, and
- the perspective of the tutoring records.

Note that in the tables presenting data from the historical records, I have compiled sets of selected data extractions from across the records for each grade level. While this form of presentation may seem a little disjointed at times due to the lack of contextual support, it is an efficient way to provide a concise yet comprehensive sense of these large sets of data.

**Table 3. Mike’s Perspectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/19/14</td>
<td>“I was pretty mad that I had to read [fiction], but it was better than having to read nonfiction.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/6/14</td>
<td>“I just got mad ‘cuz I didn’t want to read them [fiction books] and mostly don’t like them because a lot of times they go really crazy… random and crazy stuff… I don’t really like that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/21/14</td>
<td>“[O]nly when I have to read, so if I have to read stuff for school or to build certain things or something like that, I’ll read; and when I get older, I’m probably gonna have to do that more…. I’ll have to read manuals and stuff…. You have to be able to read that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/29/14</td>
<td>“The point of reading… could be to learn factual information about something or someone, or it could be just to again hear a story that an author made up, or maybe part story, part realistic things so you get information but in a story form.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/6/14</td>
<td>“[M]ore girls enjoy reading than boys…. I know a lot more boys that don’t like reading and a lot more girls that do, so that’s kinda what I’m basing it off of.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/6/14</td>
<td>“[W]ell I think girls might feel like it’s a way to get away… and boys think that’s something that we just HAVE to do instead of playing sports or something or video games.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/21/14</td>
<td>“I think the kids should be able to decide what books they get to read because if people let them decide then they’ll probably pick books that they really like, and then they’ll understand what’s going on in it more because they’ll be interested in it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/29/14</td>
<td>“[A]n interesting book would probably be a book… you’re interested in the topic or you want to learn about the topic, or it’s about something you like to do… anything you can relate to, and a boring book would be something that you either never heard of or you don’t like doing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/21/14</td>
<td>“[Y]ou let me pick out the books, so I like that because then they were books that I wanted to read, not books that I had to read.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/19/14</td>
<td>“I remember the <em>Pony Express</em> [a book from tutoring]. I like this one… I don’t know if it actually is realistic fiction but if it’s not, it felt like it, ‘cuz there’s a lot of facts about the Pony Express.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6/29/14  “[R]ealistic fiction books… just an easy way to give people factual information but not have to just be listing facts… put facts into a story.”

7/19/14  “[The feeling of reading realistic fiction is] not just all facts, but it’s not just a random story, you have facts and added on story to it…. I’m not really sure why, but I just like it better with facts and a story.”

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**Table 4. The Perspectives of Mike’s Family Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Member</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>“I guess half of the world is visual… but the other half would be making connections in your head… being able to put that together and then read it out is difficult for him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>“[I]t’s nice to see when he does enjoy and relate to a book. I think that helps him out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>“[School district personnel] came up with a list of sight words that they’re supposed to know, and even though he saw them multiple times, he would still not know them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>“[I]t’s hard for me to understand what he goes through…. The same goes with the general population. They don’t understand what he’s doing… what he goes through.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>“[R]eading something and comprehending what it said, it took me a couple times…. not necessarily not knowing what the words were or anything, but putting them together, so I probably have a learning disability myself.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Father  “I can go through articles in magazines where, that would hold my interest, articles in newspapers, but I don’t know, 100 pages of something, especially if it’s fake (chuckle). I don’t slip into that fantasy world. I rather read something that’s, I don’t know, real, relatable…. rather read a section on say a sports star than an autobiography of the same guy.”

Mother  “[W]e talked about the fact that he went to resource room and some people just have a harder time learning…. [T]hat doesn’t mean that you can’t do or be anything that you want to because there’s plenty of technology and whatnot out there that can assist you…. [M]y talking with him about it, I think helped him just kind of be more comfortable with where he’s at and who he is as far as reading is concerned.”

Mother  “[C]learly they could see too that the books he was choosing were not the same books that people were reading…. [I]f he tried to pick something like that [similar to what peers were reading], it was just a struggle and he’d really never get anything out of it besides struggling.”

Sister  “[W]ith his learning disability, this [assistive technology] is how he needs to read. So, I guess he’s accepted that this is his form of reading.”

Sister  “I don’t think he takes it personally, honestly, he knows that he has trouble reading…. [S]o you can’t let it bother you.”

Mother  “[A] couple times he just expressed that kids were reading chapter books or series that he couldn’t read…. I don’t think that it’s ever really bothered him that much. If it has, he’s never really expressed that.”
Mother: “How could I tell that he was frustrated? Just ‘cuz he would make multiple attempts at the word and just kind of give up…. just look at the book, look at the word for a really, really long time without asking for help… but really just couldn’t continue reading either.”

Mother: “Actually one year, we had the tutor for the summer because I think I was a little worried about regression, and he started school and he started resource room, and he actually came to me and said ‘… can we have the tutor come because I feel like I’m learning more; I’m getting more out of the sessions with the tutor.’”

Mother: “[H]e’s a boy who doesn’t like to read and he likes being outside and particularly if his friends are or were around, he would clearly much rather be outside with them as opposed to inside reading books or practicing anything to do with reading.”

Table 5. The Perspectives of the School Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Multi-Voiced Data Excerpts from Across the Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>“[Mike] needs to make better use of different reading strategies…. gets stuck on beginning sound…. eager participant…. clearly gets enjoyment from reading…. uses picture cues…. counted on to follow directions and try his best…. impacted by articulation needs…. works hard…. continued to need extra teacher support.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>“[W]illingness to share his thoughts and ideas in a large group setting…. some articulation difficulties…. benefits from an adult or peer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
correctly pronouncing the word…. friendly, kind, polite…. many friends…. shy…. self-conscious or anxious…. excellent listener…. making progress…. needs a little prompting on some unfamiliar words but the need is decreasing."

| Third Grade | “[Mike] does well with reading vowel sounds in isolation, but requires prompting and reminders when in context…. consistently identifies characters, settings, and events…. identifying problem and retelling events in sequence require prompting…. kind and cooperative…. worked very hard to become a better reader and his effort has paid off…. uses many strategies…. chose to read in a small group with other classmates who were at a similar reading level…. confidence appeared to be boosted by this peer support and often he was the one giving the most support…. good understanding of when to ask for help and when he can do it on his own…[his grade] reflects that sometimes he hasn’t read for 100 minutes [which is] a third grade expectation.” |

| Fourth Grade | “[R]eading achievement is significantly below average for his age…. hard worker who tries…. listening skills, language comprehension and language use are observed to be generally age-appropriate…. through modeling and repeated practice, he learns strategies…. needs to continue to apply phonetic word attack strategies and to expand his sight word vocabulary…. struggles most specifically with identifying vowel phonemes…. most successful when the teacher assists him with segmenting…. needs to develop better comprehension…. interacts well
with both peers and adults…. initially shy and reticent…. needs individualized reading instruction…. worked hard to apply what he learned about choosing a just right book…. post it note strategy to record his thinking and make meaning…. continues to progress…. long pauses…. often struggled to recall the exact name for items…. word-finding difficulties that negatively impact his academic performance.”

Fifth Grade  “[Mike] chooses to observe in new situations…. appears to learn best when visual models and tangible materials accompany…. reading achievement is below average…. standardized tests are not reflective of the struggle…. decoding difficulties affect comprehension…. will attempt these strategies independently…. works hard to decode…. rereads to make meaning…. can verbally produce vowel sounds when asked, but continues to need support to transfer this skill to his reading…. able to use this visual to support his [segmenting]…. needs support and monitoring from his classroom teacher to ensure continued growth in developing his reading ability…. learning disability affects his academic skills of reading…. age appropriate communication skills…. will ask questions…. is monitoring for meaning.”

Table 6. The Perspectives of the Tutoring Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Data Excerpts from Across the Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>“[Mike] requested more tutoring…. development of oral language became a goal once he opened up…. lengthy conversations with me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
about his play life at home and with friends…. he does use [resources created in tutoring the previous summers]…. [Mike] chose to mix [vowel team cards] together…. blending better…. still confuses b, p, d, t [and] still inserts t, r, n sometimes…. still needs continued practice with all sounds [and] their spellings until no clues/colors are needed…. able to maintain focus on the main idea of the story…. not aware of the key info in chapter this time…. wants to read short, true books on weather, snow especially…. not sure about comprehension – seems okay but not sure it’s detailed in the big picture.”

| Fourth Grade | “[W]ithout complaint…. never showed frustration…. sometimes looked a little disappointed…. stayed with it in most cases…. confusion of sight words…. slowness of reading…. sounding out the beginning…. looking all the way through…. reading past and returning…. vowel patterns were a challenge…. very enthusiastic and interested in learning…. I [as tutor] wanted to be sure that I didn’t underestimate him…. knowing [Mike]’s reading, I was confident that it would not be a frustration level passage…. [Mike] and I decided together…. most miscues were very similar to the text (i.e., kid for kids) and did not change the meaning significantly…. able to provide the gist…. unable to fully explain…. more mistakes on explicit comprehension questions than implicit ones…. decoding difficulties that may be interfering with his ability to rely more on the text itself while constructing meaning…. liking reading more than when we started tutoring…. he turned the page to peek at
what was coming up next…. the words more often pop into his head without having to really think about them…. his reading was smoother and he self-corrects often…. finds contrived names to be difficult…. the first miscue puts him on a path of miscues that try to justify the first mistake…. discussion time is spent on real world connections and [Mike’s] ideas, so he tends to take the lead there (with some prompting)…. prompting in a facilitative manner, scaffolding his thinking…. quick, non-intrusive, but genuine feedback…. real conversations…. sense of equality between us…. very long wait times…. difficult for him to collect his thoughts and find the words to express them…. sometimes looks a little disappointed when he experiences difficulty puzzling through a particularly tough word.”

Fifth Grade

“Discussed problem with reading at home – conflicts with playtime with friends…. [Mike] agreed to read 10 minutes first thing in the morning before friends are out…. Is motivation becoming an issue? seems to be ‘doing time’ when it comes to reading…. less intentional effort…. better at discussing story by telling things that happened rather than broad themes…. seems more engaged and interested with challenge.”

Descriptive Interpretation

The goal of the descriptive interpretation to follow is to proffer an account of Mike’s experience of the phenomenon of reading. The intent is to construct a descriptive representation of his experience based on the data gathered for this study from the varied viewpoints of Mike
himself, his family members, and historical records from school and tutoring. The representation conveys my conceptualization of the intentional relationship suggested by the analysis. In the subsections below, Mike’s intentional relationship is described as submission to an invasive focus on learning how to read proficiently, a focus that influenced Mike in several ways. The influences suggested by the analysis include shaping or constraining Mike’s life activities, influencing his relationships, complicating his understanding of his potential for proficiency, and shaping his overall approach to reading texts. This section closes with a concise summary of Mike’s experience of the phenomenon of reading.

**Reading as shaping or constraining Mike’s life activities.**

Mike’s difficulty with reading resulted in a focus on learning to read proficiently. When asked about Mike’s experience of reading, his father stated that “[Mike’s] experience is trying to get him to learn how to read” (interview transcript, 8/23/2014). Much of Mike’s time was spent participating in interventions aimed at improving his reading. The focus on facilitating his acquisition of reading proficiency included interventions at home and school – targeted instruction, specialized education services, and tutoring. These efforts impacted his school life, his home life, and his social life as participation in the interventions took time away from other life experiences and/or altered those experiences. For example, going to the Resource Room at school for 45 minutes a day meant leaving the classroom and its activity behind to go to another physical location in the school where targeted instruction could be provided to facilitate his development of reading proficiency.

According to the school records, Mike’s instructional program often included a focus on the development of skills such as “a variety of decoding and comprehension strategies” (second grade school records, 2008-2009) as well as “vowel phoneme sounds and patterns…. sight
words…. segmenting” (fourth grade school records, 2010-2011). Modeling and repeated practice were noted as helpful strategies for working with Mike. Other comments implied some focus on comprehension as well such as the notation that Mike tended to be “successful with identifying basic story elements, but struggles when required to make an inference” (fourth grade school records, 2010-2011). Mike’s mother described the basic characteristics of the instruction provided to him in the Resource Room and shared Mike’s reaction to it:

[W]hile the teacher was working with other students, it would be, read by yourself for 10 or 15 minutes, and once in a while there were group activities where they might read a play out loud and people would take turns, or they might play some sort of games that had to do with phonics or sight words, or something like that, but he never ever liked it. He really didn’t think it was helpful. (interview transcript, 8/20/2014)

Much of Mike’s elementary school experience included daily Resource Room services and/or other interventions in support of his reading development. His mother also explained that “after a couple years… he kind of just got resigned and used to the fact that he had to go” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014).

She reported a similar resignation or submission to participation in intervention when Mike started the home tutoring sessions that were provided to further foster his reading growth:

I think he had mixed feelings about the tutoring. I don’t think that he really was very happy about it in the beginning, but as time went on, I think that he kind of just got used to it and accepted that it was something that he needed to do. (interview transcript, 8/20/2014)

Tutoring sessions at home meant spending time reading, writing, and working on skills related to reading while friends were out playing. Sometimes Mike’s friends would stop by during the
sessions to invite him out to play. When asked about this part of his experience, Mike said, “[W]hen my friends were over, came over to ask me out to play, it was kind of distracting, ‘cuz then I was thinking about going outside” (member check transcript, 6/20/2015). Tutoring activities, even those related to his play life and interests, competed with his actual play life which was unavoidably curtailed by the time needed for the tutoring sessions. Mike and I (in my previous role as his tutor) sometimes negotiated plans to reduce the impact on his play life. Mike’s mother and I also planned breaks from tutoring and adjusted the tutoring schedule from time to time to allow Mike more time for other aspects of his life:

    [Mike] is again at the point where he is burning out quickly- he frequently complains about school and the tutoring sessions. I know a big part of that is him feeling like it cuts into his playing time now that the weather is getting nicer, but I also know that the school year itself takes a toll. (tutoring email, 4/11/2012)

Nevertheless, his tutoring sessions generally took place one to three times per week for 30, 45, or 60 minutes over a period of more than three years including summers (tutoring records, 2009-2012). The interventions focused on fostering Mike’s development of reading proficiency consumed large portions of his day at school and at home, sometimes shaping the qualities of those experiences and constraining the time available for other life activities.

**Reading as influencing Mike’s relationships.**

The focus on learning to read that infiltrated key areas in Mike’s life, influencing his life activities, sometimes also influenced his relationships. For example, classmates observed him leaving class to go to Resource Room every day. According to both his mother and his sister, on at least one occasion, one of Mike’s peers, a friend from the neighborhood, teased him because of his participation in Resource Room services (interview transcripts, 8/20/2014). His
mother indicated that there were at least “a few kids who teased him about the fact that he went to Resource Room, said that he was stupid because of that,” and she noted important mitigating factors as well:

[H]e’s very kind and he was very athletic, and so a lot of the children were drawn to him, which is what I was told by the teachers, so in a way I think that that may have saved him from a lot of teasing. (interview transcript, 8/20/2014)

Mike’s participation in interventions to support his reading development led to at least some teasing as part of his relationship with peers, but his athleticism and personality fostered some acceptance and inclusion as well.

The focus on interventions to support Mike’s growth as a reader not only influenced his relationships with peers but may have also influenced interactions with his teachers. I experienced something intriguing during the data collection, something I find relevant and illuminating:

While engaging in the think aloud for The Orange Shoes (and I use engaging loosely here), I found myself losing my focus and not being able to follow the story with him. He seemed rather bored or tired throughout this book, just reading the text and turning to the next page often without spending time on the illustrations. I felt an infectious boredom; I feel I caught it from his relative lack of energy and engagement; I wonder if other teachers feel and catch this infectious boredom as well when working with struggling readers; is that perhaps a factor? Is it a fluke, impact of being woken, or something about this book and/or the reading process? This book has more words than many of the picture books chosen for this study – many a little unfamiliar in that they include older words not used as much today – “fretted” for example…. He seems to be
more actively engaged in the book when he is actively thinking and generating meaning potentials rather than focusing on saying the words on the page; at those times, I felt more energized too. (field notes and reflective comments log, 7/19/2014)

Perhaps, like me, his teachers experienced an energized feeling at times, or more importantly, an infectious boredom that may have impacted their interactions with Mike and the instruction they provided as a result. This study can provide no description on that potential part of Mike’s experience of the phenomenon of reading because the inability to interview Mike’s former teachers has limited the study in that regard. From the school records however, it was evident that Mike’s experience of reading included a “reliance on adult assistance” as late as fourth grade (fourth grade school records, 2010-2011), indexing a degree of dependence within his relationships with teachers.

Not only did Mike’s relationships at school include extra assistance with reading, his relationships at home did as well. His mother and sister both reported helping him when he was reading. His sister shared that sometimes “he might not be able to read a bigger word, so I’ll just read it for him or give him a hint” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014). His mother did this too:

[W]ell I always rescued him. I would say, “Do you not know the word?” And he would say, “No, I do not know the word.” And I would say, “Okay, it’s such and such.” And I might help him try to pronounce it or look at the letters to help him figure it out more easily. (interview transcript, 8/20/2014)

Often these moments of assistance were related to trying to complete homework. According to Mike’s mother “for many years, part of the homework was reading for thirty minutes every night…. a reading log that had to be signed and initialed” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014). The reading log was a source of tension between home and school, infiltrating the relationships in
both contexts. As his tutor, concerned with promoting a positive affect toward reading and avoiding harm to Mike’s relationships, I responded to his mother regarding the benefits and drawbacks of the reading log in his case, twice suggesting that modification of his instructional program at school be considered during the IEP planning process (tutoring emails, 9/18/2010, 9/14/2011). Then, and still today, interactions between Mike and his mother were/are sometimes focused on book selection for school related reading. His mother explained:

I still do a lot of research to try to find the most interesting book that I feel I can for him to make reading the book as pleasurable and easy for him as possible…. I put a lot of time and I get multiple books from the library and then I sort of let him thumb through and he likes to choose books based on the size of the text, usually me reading him the description from the back of what the book is about, sometimes what’s on the cover may play a part… the size of the book, how many pages are in it are definitely a factor.

(interview transcript, 8/20/14)

Mike’s mother played an active role in his experience of reading, assisting with book selection and facilitating his decoding efforts. Their interactions included this focus on learning to read. Mike’s relationship with his father did not include this sort of activity. His father stated that “[Mike’s mother] deals with this more…. I’m more of a by-stander as far as what’s going on and her getting him the books and books on tape” (interview transcript, 8/23/2014). Key relationships in Mike’s life were influenced by the focus on learning to read such as the silence between him and his father surrounding book choices, the dependence on, and/or submission to, assistance from others in his effort to read, instances of teasing or name-calling by peers, and perhaps at times a shared boredom with instructors while working to decode and understand books.
Reading as complicating Mike’s understanding of his potential for proficiency.

Mike’s experience of reading included the influences described above on his activities and relationships, but also some complication of his understanding of his potential for proficiency. Mike’s experience consisted of shifts between motivation to work hard toward proficiency, confidence in himself regarding reading, waiting to be rescued, navigation of mixed messages, and submission to external supports. One example is noted in Mike’s mother’s reflection on his reading experience, specifically the experience of selecting free reading books at school:

I think it was clear to him that he was not at the same level as most of the other kids in the class, and I think that motivated him for quite a while to really try hard in Resource Room and his tutoring sessions to get better and get as good as everybody else, but then I also think that there was a point when he realized that that just wasn’t going to happen.

(interview transcript, 8/20/2014)

Noticing the difference between his reading selections and those of his classmates served initially as a motivator for Mike to persist in his efforts to learn to read proficiently. While his mother’s comment also indicated an eventual realization of defeat, I had noted and shared with her previously in my role as Mike’s fifth grade tutor, that he “indicated that he hasn’t given up on reading, that he thinks he can be successful” (tutoring email, 9/27/2011). Mike’s experience of trying to learn to read proficiently included motivation, defeat, and persistence. In the tutoring records from fourth grade, I reported that “[i]n one instance, when I began to offer a scaffold, he stopped me and said, ‘I’ve got it,’ and he did in fact get it” (tutoring records, 2010-2011). Mike’s experience of trying to learn to read proficiently included motivation, defeat, and persistence. In the tutoring records from fourth grade, I reported that “[i]n one instance, when I began to offer a scaffold, he stopped me and said, ‘I’ve got it,’ and he did in fact get it” (tutoring records, 2010-2011). In that moment, Mike displayed confidence in his growing abilities; yet at other times, according to his mother, Mike appeared to be waiting for help; she said, “[H]e would just say ‘I don’t know what
that word is’…. just kind of look at the book… without asking for help… maybe waiting to be rescued, hoping that I would provide the answer” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014). It was evident from these examples that Mike’s confidence and persistence varied.

Another varied aspect of Mike’s reading life involved encountering and navigating mixed messages about his reading proficiency potential. The messages provided at school, at home, and through me as his tutor were not always consistent in content. All demonstrated care and concern for Mike’s well-being, but each expressed different expectations for the development of proficiency. His mother pointed this out during data collection and indicated her role as a “counterbalance” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014):

I understand trying to be positive for a child and how you don’t want to have them to have bad self-esteem… but I don’t think that pretending, in my opinion, that “everything’s just gonna be fine” and “you’re just gonna go to Resource Room and you’ll just pick it all up” is the right approach. I think that a conversation … with the teacher about “gosh, you may not ever quite get this and reading might always be hard for you” would have been more appropriate, and that’s the conversation that I would have.

In addition to the two perspectives indicated in this excerpt – that he would just “pick it all up” or that it “might always be hard” – I provided yet another. I recall conversations with Mike in which I commented that he might never come to engage in reading as an enjoyable pastime like his mother, that that would be okay, that he would need to be able to engage in reading for work and life in general at times, that I would like to make sure reading was not miserable for him, and that his efforts would help him get better at it.

Still, another message was present in Mike’s experience – that of the peers who teased him for needing external assistance. As mentioned earlier, at least one friend called him “stupid”
because he attended Resource Room services (interview transcripts, 8/20/2014). School records often indicated the continued need for external support and adult assistance, or alternatively the degree of independence displayed, as rulers by which Mike was measured. Eventually, during middle school, Mike was provided assistive technology and the focus on learning to read proficiently shifted to acceptance of what his sister referred to as his “alternative” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014); she stated, “I think he wants to learn. I think he’d prefer to read them obviously instead of listen to it, but he’s accepted that he can’t always read everything” and “I guess he’s accepted that this [assistive technology] is his form of reading.”

**Reading as shaping Mike’s overall approach to reading texts.**

Thinking of assistive technology as a form of reading in contrast to decoding for himself brings this descriptive interpretation of Mike’s intentional relationship to his overall approach to reading. During the member check interview, Mike stated, “Well I think that the technology is helping…. I don’t have to focus on every word, so I can understand the whole point of the book more” (member check transcript, 6/20/2015). Mike’s insight points to competing efforts embedded within his approach to reading, those of trying to decipher words and trying to construct meanings. His mother described his typical approach to decoding and constructing meaning in the following way:

[H]e also skipped over words a lot, small words like ‘the’ ‘and’ - those type of words - almost like he would be guessing at what the sentence said, or what he thought it was going to say, what he expected it might say, and he wouldn’t actually read the words on the page. (interview transcript, 8/20/2014)

Mike’s sister talked about the difficulty he had with what she described as the two halves of reading – the visual component and the connections made in his head; she indicated that “being
able to put that together and then read it out is difficult for him” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014).

Similarly, Mike also talked about the reading of words in two ways – one as knowing which word it is and the other as knowing what it means. For example, when talking about degrees of ease with reading, he stated that “what makes it easy, medium or hard is mostly the vocab and just word comprehension” then he defined vocabulary as “the words, how big the words are” and comprehension as “doesn’t really matter how long or short, but understanding” (interview transcript, 8/6/2014). Tutoring records from fourth grade included a notation that illustrated this insight; the records noted that Mike found a particular reading to be “‘medium’ to read, but ‘easy’ to understand” (tutoring records, 2010-2011). In a reflective comment in the tutoring records from the same year, I wrote that “[i]t’s difficult to determine if the dysfluency he experiences when reading is a sign of a text that is too difficult since he seems to experience this difficulty with nearly any text” (tutoring records, 2010-2011). This included simple decodable readers, chapter books, and short novels. For example, at one point in that year, Mike equated the ease of reading a novel leveled in the fifth grade range with the Magic Tree House Mysteries by Mary Pope Osborne which are leveled throughout the early second grade through late third grade range. Mike tended to struggle with the decoding aspects more than the comprehension aspects and frequently assessed reading materials as harder to read than to understand.

Mike found understanding reading material easier when there was a story to follow and expressed a preference for realistic fiction:

I don’t just wanna read facts. I also want a story to follow, I guess… I like fiction books, but as long as they’re not really crazy fiction books… as long as… most things could probably happen in the story. (interview transcript, 7/19/2014)
Later in the same interview, Mike stated that he liked the *Pony Express* by Darice Bailer (2003), a book from tutoring, because it felt like realistic fiction due to the large amount of factual information in the book. He also expressed a tendency toward reading for the purpose of learning, yet not a gravitation toward nonfiction:

> [I]f it [reading at school] was a fictional book or a nonfictional book… then I didn’t want to read it, and wasn’t happy about reading it, but if it was a realistic fiction, then I still probably wasn’t happy about reading it, but it was a little bit easier to read. (interview transcript, 8/6/2014)

Mike often cited the ease of reading in his comments. For example, when talking about what it is like when he does enjoy a book, he stated that “they’re mainly easier to read… I can relate and understand things that are happening” (interview transcript, 8/6/2014). Mike also indicated that he liked opportunities to exercise agency while reading; he stated, “I like choosing your way… being able to decide what you want to do in a story is just, it’s fun ‘cuz you just get to decide what you would do” (interview transcript, 7/19/2014). Comments such as these along with his sister’s assertion, “I don’t know, I wouldn’t say he doesn’t like reading. I’d say, if anything, he does like reading, it’s just difficult for him” (interview transcript, 8/20/2014) contrast with Mike’s own assertion, “I really don’t like to read anything” (interview transcript, 8/6/2014).

**Summing up Mike’s intentional relationship.**

The phenomenon of reading as experienced by Mike can be described as submission to an invasive focus on learning to read proficiently, a focus that influenced his life activities, his relationships, his sense of potential for proficiency, and his overall approach to the reading. Interventions were a large part of Mike’s everyday experience both at school and at home. The interventions took him away from the instructional activities of the classroom at school and
prevented him from joining play activities with friends at home. Instead, he worked on reading skills and engaged in reading practice that he did not find helpful and/or did not enjoy for the most part. He experienced a resignation to the circumstance of having to participate in interventions and the impact they had on his life activities and relationships. The visibility of his participation in interventions and the need for assistance from others led to some teasing by peers and shifts in his family relationships. His mother took on an active role in his reading life, as did his sister to some degree, but his father became a bystander. Homework related to reading became a source of stress between school and home. Conversations surrounding his progress toward developing proficiency consisted of mixed messages that led to a variety of responses, including increased motivation at times, a sense of defeat at other times, occasional displays of confidence and/or persistence of effort, submission to external supports, and an eventual resignation to assistive technology. The technology created space for Mike to focus more on understanding the story than figuring out the words. The competing efforts of deciphering words and constructing meanings were a large part of this intentional relationship. Ease of reading distinguished enjoyable books from others for Mike. His preference for realistic fiction was connected to a desire to have a story to follow to make reading and understanding easier. His stated purpose for reading tended to be utilitarian yet he didn’t gravitate toward nonfiction. Having to read made Mike feel mad or unhappy; he just did not like to read anything.
Chapter 5: The Phenomena of Reading Traditional Picture Books and Postmodern Picturebooks

This chapter presents a descriptive interpretation of Mike’s experience of the phenomena of reading traditional picture books and postmodern picturebooks as observed during this study. It addresses the second and third research questions for this dissertation:

- What is the experience of reading traditional picture books like for this boy?
- What is the experience of reading postmodern picturebooks like for this boy?

My analysis suggests that Mike’s experience of reading either traditional picture books or postmodern picturebooks can be described as competing efforts to “follow the story,” efforts including (1) reading for a certain/explicit meaning or for agentive/imaginative meaning potentials, (2) balancing deciphering words with constructing meaning, and (3) interacting with books in disparate ways. In this chapter, I first present a sampling of selected excerpts of data in Mike’s own words. Then, I describe Mike’s experience in terms of the tensions embedded in his efforts to “follow the story” including brief summaries of the two intentional relationships. I close with subtle shifts in Mike’s reading behavior during the study.

Data Presentation

The following presentation of data is intended to highlight some of Mike’s own comments as I strive to add his experience of the phenomenon of reading postmodern picturebooks to the broader conversation on postmodern picturebooks. As in the previous chapter, I have selected the excerpts, sequenced them, and edited them for overall ease of reading. This section is comprised of excerpts from the book sort, the think-aloud readings, and the participant interviews. I have organized the excerpts into the following tables aligned with the data sources from which they were collected and entitled them as follows:
• why Mike would have read books in the book sort set,
• why Mike would not have read books in the book sort set,
• why Mike didn’t know if he would read books in the book sort set,
• what Mike said while reading traditional picture books,
• what Mike said while reading postmodern picturebooks,
• what Mike did while reading traditional picture books,
• what Mike did while reading postmodern picturebooks,
• what Mike had to say about the traditional picture books, and
• what Mike had to say about the postmodern picturebooks.

Note that, in the tables below, the presence of quotation marks signifies that the excerpt provided is Mike’s original commentary as it appears in the transcripts, except for the edits mentioned above. Entries in Tables 12 and 13 do not include quotation marks indicating that the data provided represents my transcription of non-verbal information in the video recordings rather than quoted commentary.

Table 7. Why Mike Would Have Read Books in the Book Sort Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Text</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playing War</td>
<td>“I play war outside sometimes with my friends, so I kinda want to see how they did it and how they played war.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voices in the Park</td>
<td>“Well I would have read this ‘cuz it was weird how the people were like apes or monkeys, whatever they were, I’m thinking apes. But they still had pet dogs and stuff, like humans would, so I thought it would be interesting to read to see if it’s pretty much, if the apes pretty much act like humans except the way they look.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"[O]n each page you can definitely tell what’s going on.”

"[I]t looks like it has a lot of content…. It’s got a lot of pictures with it and it’s separated…. [I]t’s not just straight down the page – all words and some pictures at the bottom; it’s picture – words – picture – words – and then pictures with words in them.”

"I like the three little pigs, and I like this one because it, it’s like one of the original stories…. [I]t’s got a lot of pictures showing making the houses and then being blown down and, so I thought the drawings were, told a lot of what was happening.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. Why Mike Would Not Have Read Books in the Book Sort Set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related Text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Amazing Grace</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Orange Shoes</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. Why Mike Didn’t Know if he Would Have Read Books in the Book Sort Set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related Text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Family Tree</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Art & Max

“[Y]ou can easily understand what’s going on but I didn’t know because… it doesn’t have a big plot.”

The Three Pigs

“I like the story of the three pigs, but this one, I didn’t like some of the drawings – they didn’t look very realistic and I like realistic drawings.”

Table 10. What Mike Said While Reading Traditional Picture Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Text</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Family Tree</td>
<td>“I’m also wondering how the tree’s in the way of the road, ‘cuz if it was, I’d think the house would be too, because it’s kind of even with it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing War</td>
<td>“I think that Sammer [Sameer]… doesn’t want to play war…. because he only grabbed one pine cone and now he’s saying that he has to leave early today, which he might but I just don’t believe it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing War</td>
<td>“I’m wondering how old his little brother was that was not at school, if he was a baby… or if wherever they lived you were just pretty old before you went to school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing Grace</td>
<td>“I’m wondering if Aniss [Anansi], if Aniss the Spider is a real person…. [S]he’s doing gymnastics so… I’m wondering if that’s someone that’s good at gymnastics… or if it’s just a name she made for herself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing Grace</td>
<td>“I would just think it’s their Grandma because she’s obviously older.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Orange Shoes</td>
<td>“I’m wondering why she doesn’t get snow boots for the winter or some sort of boot.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Orange Shoes</td>
<td>“I think this is probably set in an older time when money was worth more, so I’m wondering what three dollars back then was worth today.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Across the Alley**  
“I’m wondering why they don’t play baseball with like these kids. They’re playing outside.”

**Across the Alley**  
“I think the grandpa’s gonna be mad at Abe talking to the boy across the alley.… [H]e’s letting him use the violin when he should be practicing for Tuesday.… Now I think that he’s actually gonna be happy because this boy’s made a friend.”

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**Table 11. What Mike Said While Reading Postmodern Picturebooks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Text</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Three Pigs</em></td>
<td>“I think the pig’s got out again because here he says ‘Come on. It’s safe out here.’ and they’re coming out of the story, and you could tell ‘cuz the part that’s out of the story looks more like a real pig.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Three Pigs</em></td>
<td>“[T]hey went into a bunch of stories… then eventually they all just went back to the brick house that the last pig made and… live there.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Art &amp; Max</em></td>
<td>“[W]ait there’s small paint brushes in there… why there’s such a big one, because if you’re painting on one of those canvases, that big one would fill up half the page probably, so you wouldn’t need that, and you’d probably want something small.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Art &amp; Max</em></td>
<td>“[H]e’s left being really empty, I guess…. all completely apart…. [N]ow they’re trying to form him again and put him back together.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?</em></td>
<td>“I’m wondering if there is anything that the project has to be about like a general thing it has to be about or if it’s just a project about anything.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?

“I’m just kinda wondering why they’re doing that ‘cuz the other people’s is just, usually just normal font, but hers is always, seems to be cursive.”

Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?

“I think that the people are gonna come soon to cut down the tree so then they’re really gonna have to start fighting.”

Table 12. What Mike Did While Reading Traditional Picture Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Text</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Family Tree</td>
<td>He [Mike] gestures near the far right edge of the book as he describes our possible orientation as the readers to the representation of the house and tree. He touches the left side of the opening as he says “sides.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing War</td>
<td>As soon as he finishes the text block, he turns the page and looks at the text block on the next opening, says “Oh” and returns to this page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing Grace</td>
<td>During the last two pauses he looks across the illustrations and shifts his position several times. He maintains his gaze on the illustration, then appears to shift to the gutter, then the space above the pages. His eyes scan back and forth across the text blocks again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. What Mike Did While Reading Postmodern Picturebooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Text</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Max</td>
<td>He reads the words aloud then looks at the illustration. He stays fixated on the lower frame then the whole far right of the page, then back to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
left side, then all around again, then fixates once more on the lower frame and the far right side of the opening. He touches the illustration where the water drips are located on Art’s chest.

**Archie’s War**

He looks at the margin material at the top of the page. He reads the text under the frames in the central comic aloud to me. He looks at the margin items at the bottom then those up the far right edge. He shifts his eyes to the right side of the opening. He rubs his thumb on his lip and his arm is resting on the bottom of the page on the right side of the opening. He begins reading the text under the frames in the central comic and yawns. He looks at each item in the margin at the bottom in turn, then also those along the far right side.

**Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?**

He lifts the corner then slides his hand up under the page to about the midway point, keeping his thumb under the edge as he looks at the illustrations some more before speaking.

**Table 14. What Mike Had to Say About the Traditional Picture Books**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Text</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Family Tree</em></td>
<td>“[I]f they have a swing or a tree that they like in their yard, they might be able to relate about how they feel, how they would feel if it was cut down, or was about to be cut down, and what they would do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Amazing Grace</em></td>
<td>“[J]ust looking at the cover and just flipping through the book, it looks like it’s not a boy’s kind of book…. [W]hen you look through you only see boys on a couple of pages.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Playing War  “[S]omething I think a lot of boys would like to read because I think a lot of boys play war with their friends and stuff.”

Table 15. What Mike Had to Say About the Postmodern Picturebooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Text</th>
<th>Data Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Three Pigs</td>
<td>“[The author] wanted to make his own spin-off of the three little pigs’ story I guess… and went into the out-of-the-book kind of feeling, so he wanted to make a three little pigs story but not a really basic one, a really different one.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Max</td>
<td>“[Kids] could talk about maybe why they think this guy is bigger and has horns and stuff…. [T]here’s a couple other guys besides Max that look like him and are smaller and have a more basic face, and Art seems to be the one that has spikes on his face and his face almost seems to be like a different shape too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarice Bean</td>
<td>“[I]t’s a good book when kids are first learning about the environment and stuff, and recycling.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planet Are You From?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie’s War</td>
<td>“This was more about why they were fighting and what people, what average people were feeling… what they had to go through.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Interpretation

The goal of the descriptive interpretation to follow is to proffer an account of Mike’s experience of two of the three phenomena of interest in this study – the phenomenon of reading
traditional picture books and the phenomenon of reading postmodern picturebooks. The intent is to construct a descriptive representation of his experience as observed throughout this study, a representation that conveys a framework for conceptualizing the intentional relationships suggested by the analysis. In the subsections below, Mike’s intentional relationships, the two phenomena, are described as competing efforts comprised of specific tensions navigated while trying to understand the story including: (1) reading for a certain/explicit meaning or for agentive/imaginative meaning potentials, (2) balancing deciphering words with constructing meaning, and (3) interacting with books in disparate ways. This section closes with brief summaries of Mike’s two intentional relationships.

**Reading for certain/explicit meaning or for agentive/imaginative potentials.**

An important aspect of Mike’s experience of the two focal phenomena for this chapter was revealed in the book sort data collected for this study. Mike exhibited some gravitation toward the more traditional books despite an initial tendency to examine the postmodern selections before the traditional selections. While he had chosen to preview the six postmodern books in the set within the first eight books he examined, Mike put only two of them in the “would have read” pile. Most of the books in that category were traditional picture books (four traditional and two postmodern). Mike placed the majority of the traditional books in the set in the “would have read” pile, whereas he split the postmodern selections evenly over the three piles – “would have read,” “would not have read,” and “don’t know.” He most often cited the ability to tell “what’s going on” (book sort transcript, 6/21/2014) in the book as a reason for his sorting decisions; the second most frequently cited reason for his choices was interest. This data suggests that when deciding which books he would have chosen to read, Mike’s desire to follow what’s happening in the story took precedence over his interest level in the postmodern books.
While reading *The Bored Book* by Slater (2009) as part of a think-aloud, Mike shared a thought that suggests a partial understanding of why traditional picture books would be perceived as preferable in Mike’s effort to follow what’s happening in a story. He explained his concept of a “normal story” (think-aloud transcript, 6/29/2014) revealing another important aspect of the two focal phenomena – the kind of effort expended to construct meaning. In reference to reading what he would call a normal story, Mike stated that “there’s just one way” and “you really just don’t have to think about it too much” (think-aloud transcript, 6/29/2014). The story in a traditional picture book tends to be singular and explicit; the need to imagine and construct meaning potentials is more limited. Mike noticed, “This one [a postmodern picturebook] you kinda gotta almost pick their path” (think-aloud transcript, 6/29/2014). He conjectured that the author of the *Bored Book* “wanted to have people really think and be able to take it totally different ways” (think-aloud transcript, 6/29/2014). Mike’s experience of reading postmodern picturebooks included more agentive thinking and meaning construction than his experience of reading traditional picture books. He noted that “it wouldn’t really make sense unless you try to fill in some of the blanks…. [T]he main book... I said it was about other books … but people could think it was just anything else really” (think-aloud transcript, 6/29/2014).

Mike seemed engaged by exploring the tentative thoughts and multiple meanings generated while reading the postmodern selections, but also sought certainty or confirmation of his meaning constructions at other times. For example, he noted his discomfort about not being told how the protest turned out in *Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?* (Child, 2001/2010):

[T]he only thing is, at least for me, they kinda leave the tree unanswered…. I just wanted to find out if the tree got cut down, or if they protested enough and they just kept the tree, or how much longer they stayed in the tree. (think-aloud transcript, 8/6/2014)
In this instance, Mike wanted to be told explicitly how that part of the story resolved; he was clearly uncomfortable with the indeterminacy in the ending of this story. This instance contrasts with the level of comfort and confidence displayed by Mike as he continuously revised his thinking about the children and the portal book the children were exploring in *The Bored Book* by Slater (2009):

I’m thinking that these [children], the boy and the girl, are fighting or playing, and also I think that they must be big readers because there are a lot of books around…. [N]ow I think that’s some sort of magical book… before it looked like it was just a book with a couple of pages in it, not like all these [images on an expandable page in the book in the illustration]…. [I]t’s almost everything in the world they could imagine is on one of them so they can go see it…. [W]ell she looks really confused like she doesn’t think it’s the same book, but he looks angry like maybe this guy [the older man in the chair in the illustration] did something to make the pictures go away, maybe he [the boy] wanted to keep looking at them…. [H]ere it shows… all different books, this is the one with the snow monster, the castle, the dragon, the pirates, and the octopus. So now they’re looking at all those different books, reading them…. [M]aybe the book that they had in the beginning was… just trying to sponsor a bunch of other books and had maybe little summaries about them, so then they were just looking at those and kinda going into those books [through the portal book], but then they’d end because there was just a little bit about them, and then they go to the next one, but now they actually found the whole books…. I think that maybe in the beginning they were just fighting, maybe they didn’t like to read, now they’re interested in this book [the portal book] so they’re gonna read them [the other books on the shelves]. (think-aloud transcript, 6/29/2014)
Note the language shifts in Mike’s commentary over the course of the book from a higher degree of certainty at the beginning in phrases such as “they must be big readers” to more tentative conclusions along the way as noted in phrases such as “now I think,” “before it looked like,” and “I think that maybe.” Mike came to view several ideas differently by the end of the book including the nature of the portal book as a “sponsor of a bunch of other books” and the reader status of the children in the story as perhaps not the avid readers he originally thought they were. For Mike, the experience of reading postmodern picturebooks included some tension between a desire for certainty, as offered by the more traditional picture books that tend to provide explicit story lines, and the creative effort engaged while actively constructing tentative meanings, as required by the postmodern selections where many interpretations might be possible but few directly stated.

**Balancing deciphering words with constructing meanings.**

Mike’s efforts to follow story lines were further complicated by the challenge of balancing his efforts to decipher words with his efforts to construct meanings. Often, his miscues involved small function words and words that were visually similar to the printed word such as “three” for “tree” while reading *The Family Tree* by McPhail (2012). He often self-corrected independently using appropriate word solving strategies, and many times, there appeared to be little to no impact on the overall meaning of the passage. Mike also exhibited a tendency to struggle with the decoding of names and other unfamiliar words, usually moving forward after a few attempts if efforts remained unsuccessful, but occasionally commenting about the word in question as well. In the example below from the think-aloud reading of *The Orange Shoes* by Noble (2007), the capitalized words represent Mike’s reading of the text from the book:
I LOVE THE FEEL OF OUR DIRT ROADS, OF OUR DIRT ROAD UNDER MY FEET; THE SANDY PLACES AND THE DR-, DRIED MUD PLACES AND THE SMOOTH PLACES AFTER THE ROAD SCR-APER (PAUSE) AFTER THE ROAD SCRAPPERS GONE THROUGH. I’m wondering what a road scrapper is. (think-aloud transcript, 7/19/2014)

When asked what it was like for him to puzzle through words that he didn’t immediately recognize as he read Amazing Grace by Hoffman (1991), Mike said the following:

It was pretty hard, but it helps with names ‘cuz you don’t actually have to have them perfect because you could pretty much go into any story and change all the names and it wouldn’t really change the story at all. (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014)

While Mike made a good point about names in general, he sometimes did miss nuances or was unable to benefit from additional meaning provided through intertextual references; for example, when reading Across the Alley by Michelson (2006), Mike struggled unsuccessfully to decode the names Sandy Koufax and Satchel Paige. He could not possibly access any additional information he might have possessed about either of the two legendary baseball pitchers, information that could have highlighted the theme of racial and ethnic divide that was present in the story. The analogy drawn in the book was simply not available to him for discovery.

For Mike, the struggle to decipher words was more prevalent and problematic in the traditional selections than the postmodern selections. His reading of traditional picture books included more unaddressed miscues and/or unresolved puzzling over word identification than his reading of the postmodern picturebooks, and his efforts to self-correct tended to diminish toward the end of the longer texts. With the exception of Archies’ War by Williams (2007), which had far more text than any other selection in the book set for this study, the traditional books tended
to have substantially more text to read, necessitating that more effort be expended on deciphering text, leaving less available to expend on meaning construction.

When it came to meaning construction, Mike exhibited two notable tendencies as part of his experience of the two phenomena of interest. The first tendency was to note important details but miss the bigger meaning or symbolism associated with them. While reading *Art & Max* by Wiesner (2010), Mike noticed several important details related to one possible interpretation of the book; some were details I hadn’t noticed myself even though I had previously conducted an extensive text analysis on the book. For example, Mike noted some characteristics of the physical features drawn to represent the characters in the book stating that “they’re a lot littler and none of them have these pointy things around their face… all the littler ones could just be babies or kids that haven’t grown the things on their face yet” (think-aloud transcript, 7/19/2014). These details relate to one potential symbolic interpretation of the book, that of a commentary on the field of artistic expression where older and newer forms of art were at odds initially – one being an older, well-developed, but rigid form and the other being a newer, emergent, and innovative form. Each of which comes to see value in their differences, even appropriating practices from the other. Mike made no mention of this higher level message, but did repeatedly wonder about the purpose and meaning of the differences, especially the spikes. He noted such details in four of the books; two were traditional (i.e., *Across the Alley* and *Amazing Grace*) and two were postmodern (i.e., *Art & Max* and *The Bored Book*). In the traditional picture books, explicit information was provided to guide the reader toward the bigger message of the book, but in the postmodern picturebooks, the bigger ideas were not explicitly indicated and they were more symbolic or fantastical in character. Nevertheless, it was one of those that Mike had reasoned his way through as noted earlier in this chapter in the lengthy
excerpt about his shifting interpretations of the portal book from *The Bored Book* by Slater (2009).

Mike’s experience of reading both kinds of books included this tendency to notice important details but not to formulate the bigger messages in the books. Mike articulated more of the necessary reasoning to formulate such an understanding while reading the postmodern picturebooks than while reading the traditional selections; his articulations associated with those were concise life lessons or mantras rather than deep commentary on topics or themes. For example, he summarized Hoffman’s purpose in writing *Amazing Grace* (1991) as building up to the idea that “you could do anything if you put your mind to it” (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014) rather than making a statement about the race and gender beliefs at the root of comments made to Grace by her classmates at school. Mike tended to construct meanings from the books by trying to relate to them on a practical or empathetic level rather than a symbolic or societal level. This was the second tendency noted as part of Mike’s effort to construct meaning.

Mike’s attempts to follow the storylines by relating to them on pragmatic and empathetic levels were similar with both kinds of books in terms of commentary, but the distribution of comments tended more heavily toward the pragmatic and realistic when reading traditional picture books. For example, while reading *Amazing Grace* by Hoffman (1991), Mike wondered about the pragmatic aspects of Grace’s play acting, commenting about the logistics of “how she acts out all the parts because sometimes characters would probably meet up…. [S]he could only be one person at a time, so I don’t know how, if she’d just keep switching… and talking to herself” (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014). Here Mike was concerned with the logistics of Grace’s play activity; in other instances, his comments related to the motivations of the character or to the perceived experience of the character. While reading *Across the Alley* by Michelson
(2006), Mike projected that “he’s got his friend, his grandpa, and his friend’s dad all cheering him on, so now he’s got a reason he wants to win, he wants to make them all happy and proud” (think-aloud transcript, 7/27/2014). Comments of this sort requiring an empathetic stance, while present in the commentary shared during the think-aloud readings of both kinds of books, were more prevalent while reading the postmodern selections. Mike tended to articulate a greater number of empathetic comments than pragmatic ones while reading the postmodern selections.

Mike’s tendency toward an empathetic stance in his effort to follow the postmodern picturebooks and his tendency toward a focus on logistics or pragmatics while trying to relate to traditional picture books, while different in distribution, highlighted the value he placed on being able to relate to books in order to construct meaning. When responding to the post-reading survey prompts for each book, Mike often referred to the ability to relate to books as an important factor in matching books to readers making statements like “they’d still be able to relate” (think-aloud transcript, 6/21/2014) or “fifth graders could probably relate” (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014). It was clear that Mike thought it was important to be able to make connections with books as illustrated in his comments about Playing War by Beckwith (2005), when he stated that “if they’re younger they might not know as much about war and fighting and stuff like that, but in fourth grade they’ve probably played war with their friends and stuff, so they can make a connection to the book” (think-aloud transcript, 6/29/2014). Mike’s connection to the traditional picture books was on a more pragmatic level whereas his connection to the postmodern picturebooks was on a more empathetic level.

**Interacting with books in disparate ways.**

Not only did Mike relate to the books differentially as he strove to read and understand them, he also interacted with them differentially in terms of nonverbal aspects, attention to
postmodern features, and approach to the different kinds of text found in the books. Mike was observed to exhibit a greater amount of physical contact with the postmodern picturebooks than the traditional picture books. He rarely touched or manipulated the traditional books other than to turn the pages, whereas he was observed to touch, trace, tap, and gesture over, around, and toward the pages in the postmodern selections. He often touched the postmodern books to point out aspects about which he was commenting. It should be noted that Mike had a broken arm and was in a cast for much of the data collection period. Had this not been the case there may have been other physical manipulations of the books that would have been observed as part of his intentional relationships; nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the amount of physical contact differed for each group of books. Similar differences were observed in Mike’s eye movements. While reading the more traditional selections, the movements of his eyes tended to consist of mostly glances with occasional darting movements or fixations, whereas while reading the postmodern picturebooks, his eyes tended more toward darting and scanning the openings in a nonlinear fashion with some lengthy fixations on specific elements.

Some of Mike’s fixations involved specific postmodern features; his attention seemed to be drawn to these features. Mike commented on several postmodern devices including the more obvious disruptions of time and space, breaks in illustrative framing, and obtrusive narrators such as when the one pig looks out at the reader and comments on the presence of the reader in The Three Pigs by Wiesner (2001) at which time Mike commented that “he’s looking out of the page again saying ‘I think I see, I think someone’s out there’” (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014). While reading The Three Pigs, Mike also commented on some other breaks from more traditional illustrative conventions such as the degree of realism in the illustrative techniques and breaks in the conventions of layout and framing:
[T]hey’re coming out of the story, and you could tell ‘cuz the part that’s out of the story looks more like a real pig ‘cuz you can see all the fur, and then the part that’s in the story still looks like from before, smooth. (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014)

Mike noticed many but not all of the illustrative cues in the books. Sometimes Mike missed the more subtle postmodern aspects like when he noticed the use of a somewhat cursive font for the mother’s voice in *Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?* by Child (2001/2010) but did not notice that each character actually had his/her own font. The other characters’ fonts were not very different from standard text fonts and therefore were not as obvious.

Not only did Mike notice and comment on postmodern features like font manipulation, he also demonstrated a differential approach to the different kinds of text found in the books. Mike tended to read the prose text blocks aloud and the text found in the background or in speech bubbles silently. For example, the postmodern selection, *Archie’s War* by Williams (2007), is designed to be like a scrapbook with fold out letters, postcards, and other interactive elements. Most pages include a central comic strip surrounded by a variety of other materials posted in the margins along the outer edges of the page. Mike tended to read the comics aloud, but not the surrounding materials. He looked at them all and his eyes moved back and forth over the words, but he didn’t read them aloud. When asked about this reading behavior, Mike said:

> [J]ust reading what I think is kinda the main story line out loud… then all the other side things [that] just kinda add on to that to myself…. [A]ll you really need is these [central comics] to tell the story, but they’re adding in extra pictures and extra information on the side to help you understand it and add in littler things. (think-aloud transcript, 7/27/2014)

Mike assigned differential value to the central comic and the margin materials in terms of following the story although he clearly attended to and valued both. This preferential valuation
of the central comic aligned with principles of visual grammar in which the typical interpretation of central items is as more important than those in the margins. Mike commented positively though on the efficient provision of content made possible by the inclusion of margin items:

[I]t’s just a couple words to describe something or say something that might need a sentence or two to normally explain, if it didn’t have a bunch of side add-ons. So then, it would be less room for pictures, which they have a lot of in the book… there’d be probably an extra ten lines on each page if you didn’t have the thing, the borders, explaining things. (think-aloud transcript, 7/27/2014)

A similar differential approach was observed when Mike read books with text in the background or in speech bubbles. He cited similar reasons for not reading those words aloud although he reported that he was reading them to himself. Mike tended to rely on text when text was present to assist him in his efforts to follow the stories. When reading the more traditional picture books, Mike’s attention tended to focus more on the main text than other text or visual information in the illustrations. When reading the postmodern picturebooks, he relied more on the illustrations; in many cases, this was required as the text in the books did not provide the same information depicted visually and both were needed to construct the meaning potentials. As noted earlier within this subsection, Mike’s eye movements and physical interactions with the books were more active and more frequent while reading the postmodern selections than while reading the traditional selections where word counts tend to be higher and the illustrative information tends to mimic that provided in the text.

**Summing up Mike’s two intentional relationships.**

In the two brief subsections to follow, each of Mike’s intentional relationships will be condensed into a concise summary. Each phenomenon of interest will be described broadly as
competing efforts to follow the story, efforts that are comprised of specific tensions to navigate, but each phenomenon will be detailed regarding how those tensions presented themselves as part of each intentional relationship, or intentionality, observed. Note that these summaries are not as mutually exclusive as they might appear on paper; I trust that the descriptive interpretation provided above has already indicated more of an ebb and flow, or tug-of-war, characteristic to the tensions across the two kinds of books. Nevertheless, the brief summaries do highlight some important distinctions and convey substantially different reading experiences. I will begin with the phenomenon of reading traditional picture books and conclude with the phenomenon of reading postmodern picturebooks.

The phenomenon of reading traditional picture books.

The phenomenon of reading traditional picture books as experienced by Mike within this study can be described as competing efforts to follow the storyline, consisting of specific tensions to navigate as Mike strove to follow what was happening in the books. He exhibited a tendency to select the traditional books during the book sort, most often citing the perceived ability to follow the story as a deciding factor. For Mike, the experience of reading traditional picture books was expected to require little original thought since stories of this type are known to be predetermined by the author; the expectation he held for the reader’s activity was to follow along. Mike worked to follow the author’s story using a more certain, explicit reading of the books in accordance with this expectation. His experience of reading the traditional selections required balancing his efforts to decipher the many words in the books with his efforts to remain in touch with the author’s story. Unresolved puzzling over words and unaddressed miscues frequently interrupted the process. Attempts to relate to the traditional selections included more pragmatic, realistic, or logistical commentary than empathetic inference. When bigger meanings
were derived, they tended to be life lessons or mantras rather than insightful themes or social commentaries. Mike relied most on the text to indicate the storyline, glancing over to the illustrations occasionally and only rarely touching the books other than to turn the pages.

The phenomenon of reading postmodern picturebooks.

The phenomenon of reading postmodern picturebooks as experienced by Mike within this study can also be described as competing efforts to follow the storyline; consisting of similar tensions to navigate as he strove to make sense of what was happening in the books. Making sense of what was happening in the postmodern picturebooks required agentive, imaginative reading. Mike noted that without actively thinking to fill in the gaps left by the author, these books wouldn’t have made sense. The postmodern books drew his interest during the book sort, but initial confusion about how to follow the story influenced his sorting decisions. During data collection though, Mike reported that reading the books proved to be easier than expected. Most of the postmodern picturebooks had fewer words to indicate the storyline and Mike’s efforts to self-correct were largely successful leaving fewer unresolved miscues. Efforts expended to construct meaning included more empathetic inferences than pragmatic commentary. Mike’s experience of reading the postmodern picturebooks was one of generating potentials for the indeterminate aspects of the books and revising his ideas along the way. When bigger ideas were formulated, they represented insightful reasoning toward tentative conclusions and multiplicities as meaning potentials. Scanning and fixating on elements in the illustrations, as well as some physical contact with the illustrations, occurred frequently.

Shifts in Mike’s Reading Behavior During the Study

As noted in the previous section, Mike’s intentional relationships were not completely unique from one another; they included competing efforts on several key tensions. The degree to
which his experience gravitated toward one aspect of the tensions or another distinguished the
two intentionalities. This was not surprising as both are part of Mike’s experience of reading and
each differs due to differences in the features of the two kinds of books. It was surprising,
however, that a few subtle shifts within those relationships were noted across the data collection
period. Toward the end of data collection, Mike began to take some notice of the peri-textual
materials which he had been skipping in both kinds of books, and he began to increase his
attention to the illustrations in the traditional picture books. Mike never commented on these
shifts so it is not possible to determine to what extent this was a coincidence or somehow related
to his efforts to make sense of the first few postmodern picturebooks where more agentive,
imaginative reading was needed and a greater reliance on features other than text was noted.
Mike did, however, make a few comments that indicated some developing metacognition with
regard to his approach toward reading. For example, while responding to *The Three Pigs* by
Wiesner (2001), Mike commented on his differential approach to different kinds of text:

> [W]ell the word bubbles through the whole thing I was reading to myself, and then these
> pages [story book pages strewn about in the illustration], ‘cuz they were tilted and
> wrinkled up, I figured they were just part of the background, but I should probably read
> them to myself just in case. (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014)

In this comment, Mike demonstrated some emerging awareness of his reading process as well as
self-evaluation and pliability by suggesting a potential change in process to himself. Also noted
in Mike’s commentary was evidence of a pliable stance toward his beliefs or perceptions about
the books. Mike made a comment in this area stating that “if you’re just flipping through it’s
confusing…. [b]ut if you read it, it’s easy” (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/ 2014). This comment
indexes a potential shift in Mike’s view of the postmodern selections over his initial view of
them during the book sort protocol. At that time, he indicated that they seemed confusing to understand, but in this comment he notes that they are actually easy to comprehend.
Chapter 6: Discussion

The study presented in this dissertation emerged from a theoretical connection noted in the literature between the potential of postmodern picturebooks to affect change, the ways in which boys are socialized into literacy practices which could be complicated by reading difficulties, and the problem of male disengagement from literacy. It is an initial exploration of these connections focused on how one boy who self-identifies as disinclined toward reading experiences reading and the reading of traditional picture books as well as the reading of postmodern picturebooks. As such, this study adds a new voice to the extant literature. A phenomenological approach was designed for this initial exploration to ensure a rich and comprehensive description of this boy’s experiences to share in order to open and expand our understanding of the reading experience of boys like Mike and the role postmodern picturebooks might be able to play in disrupting the problem of male disengagement. In the discussion below, I return to the theoretical connections that led to this inquiry and discuss how Mike’s experiences reflect or refute those connections. Then, I present the results of this study as a contribution to the field and suggest potential implications for future research, theory, and practice.

Returning to the Theoretical Connections

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1, and expanded in Chapter 2, connects the socialization of conceptions of literacy from birth, with the social shaping of participation in literate activity through interactions across contexts, and the potential for change that may be found in postmodern picturebooks. These potentials for change as described in Radical Change Theory (Dresang, 2008) align with key ideas in the literature on boys and literacy – specifically conceptions held by some boys that literacy is feminine, schoolish, and isolating (Bausch, 2007; Dutro, 2001; Fletcher, 2006; Frederick, 2006; Millard, 1997; Moss, 2007; Newkirk, 2002; Smith
As will be shared in the subsections to follow, this study does provide additional insight on the theorized connections with gender even though they did not emerge as essential aspects in the descriptive interpretations presented in Chapters 4 and 5. A few of the quotes shared within the data tables touched on gender and literacy, but the descriptive interpretations did not; this is because analysis of the data collected in the book sort, think-aloud readings, interviews, and historical records resulted in tentative interpretations that were more heavily influenced by reading difficulties than gender. Even when gender was directly injected into the study by an author, such as when a classmate told Grace in *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991) that she couldn’t play Peter Pan in the play because she was a girl, Mike did not choose to comment. Nevertheless, gender and socialization experiences were not absent as factors in Mike’s experiences. Through the data collected during the theory interview, which prompted commentary relative to each of the theories, and the member check, which prompted commentary on the emerging interpretations, it was possible to see some of these connections as outlined below.

**Socialization through cognitive apprenticeship.**

Literacy practices are socialized in young children through interactions within their families through a process of observation and guided participation that leads to gradual appropriation of the practices of other family members (Rosenkoetter & Knapp-Philo, 2006). Rogoff (1990, 1995) refers to this process as Cognitive Apprenticeship. Diverse literate lives for boys have been shown to develop in this way (e.g., Heath, 1983, 1996; Lenters, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 1995). When asked what he thought about family influences on literacy development, Mike responded, “I don’t think that’s really true because I don’t really see my Dad read that much I don’t think, so I think I mainly learned how to read at school” (theory interview...
transcript, 8/6/2014). While on the surface this statement appears to contradict the theory, it could also support the theory. Mike noted his father’s lack of reading behavior, which his father had indicated as well, stating that he was a “bystander” in Mike’s literate life (interview transcript, 8/23/2014). However, the absence of modeling may actually serve as a model of a lack of reading in a significant male’s life. I should caution that this silent model is not necessarily gender based, as Mike’s father indicated that he too experienced difficulty with reading as a boy. Mike’s mother and sister also served as potential models within the family, but Mike was unable to articulate how they might have influenced him; he said that his mother enjoys reading then added, “I’m not really sure [about the influence] ‘cuz my sister… she doesn’t like reading that much, I’m pretty sure…. she’s a stronger reader, but she just doesn’t like reading” (member check transcript, 6/20/2015). Mike’s insights underscore the complexity of the set of influences on literate development in any given boy’s life. For Mike, as described in Chapter 4, difficulty learning to read rose to the top, infiltrating many areas of his life, but that was a little later when he reached school, which brings this discussion to the shaping of practice within social fields.

**Shaping of practice within social fields.**

Shaping of practices, including reading practices, occurs in social contexts when socialized practices coincide or conflict with the expectations of the social environment. Bourdieu (1980) explains these social dynamics in his discussion of social fields. The degree to which socialized practices match those of any given social field impacts the degree to which that person will experience tensions prompting conflict and/or change in perspectives and practices. This impact has been documented in several studies involving boys and literacy (e.g., Bausch, 2007; Dutro, 2001; Scholes, 2010, 2011). Mike noted the probable impact of his reading on his
relationships with peers stating, “I think almost all of my friends that are boys don’t want to read, like for fun” (member check transcript, 6/20/2015), although he didn’t agree with the idea that peers might influence a boy’s reading behaviors either toward or against reading stating, “I don’t think that’s true because I’ve never felt pressured to read or not read [by peers]” (theory interview transcript, 8/6/2014). Mike possessed mitigating social capital – personality and athleticism – that overshadowed his reading difficulties and is believed by his mother to have spared him from some teasing, social conflict, and peer pressure even though the need to participate in interventions inhibited his play activities with friends (interview transcript, 8/20/2014). Mike noted that physical activity and social time with friends were very important to him and his friends and that reading obligations caused some stress for him in that they required a lot of his time (member check transcript, 6/20/2015). It would appear that, for Mike, interacting within the social fields of his life with a lack of reading related capital and an abundance of physical and social capital resulted in peer relationships with other boys who, like him, did not like to read.

**Gender and literacy.**

Boys who do not like to read have been a focus of study over the years as part of the large body of research on gender and literacy (e.g., Hicks, 2001, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Willis, 1977). Other research has taken a broader look at gender and literacy noting tendencies in the literature that seem to apply for many boys and their relationships with reading (e.g., Moss, 2007; Newkirk, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Sprung et al., 2010) and also tendencies to view reading as feminine, schoolish, and isolating (e.g., Bausch, 2007; Dutro, 2001; Moss, 2000, 2007; Scholes, 2010; Solsken, 1993; Watson et al, 2010; Williams, 2004; Willis, 1977). Mike agreed with these findings stating, “I think that’s true… because I don’t think most boys like to
read” (theory interview transcript, 8/6/2014) and “not all boys dislike reading, but I think there’s a good portion that do, that do dislike it” (member check transcript, 6/20/2015). He explained that girls “might just have a better time reading” and that “maybe boys would rather just be outside instead of reading” (member check transcript, 6/20/2015). During data collection ten months earlier, Mike stated, “I think that’s how they [boys] feel, like we HAVE to read and girls WANT to read” (interview transcript, 8/6/2014). Note the shift from “they” to “we” within this statement indexing what Mike later confirmed, that the definition in the literature of literacy as feminine, schoolish, and isolating rang true for him (theory interview transcript, 8/6/2014).

Nevertheless, Mike made only a few comments along these lines during the book sort and think-aloud readings. Gendered comments included his thought on the book, *Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?* (Child, 2001/2010), as “more of a girls’ book than a boys’ book” because it looked like “her perspective on life as a girl” (book sort transcript, 6/21/2014) and his statement that the book, *Amazing Grace* by Hoffman (1991), looked like “not a boy’s kind of book” because “you only see boys on a couple of pages” (think-aloud transcript, 7/6/2014).

Comments related to schoolishness, or the tension between exercising agency and yielding to the authority in power, included the following comments Mike made while reading *The Family Tree* by McPhail (2012) in which Mike exposed his views on the broader power hierarchy of animal over man over child:

I’m wondering what the workers are gonna do to the boy.... if they’re gonna hafta actually move him, pick him up and move him away, or if they’re just gonna scare him away with the noise of the chainsaws and stuff…. I’m wondering what the animals are going to do to the workers, if they’re gonna attack them or just chase them away. (think-aloud transcript, 6/21/2014)
In his interviews, Mike made a few other comments underscoring the importance of agency in reading – to choose what to read (interview transcript, 6/21/2014) and to take a role in the reading (i.e., pick-your-own-path books) (interview transcript, 7/19/2014) – as well as the great importance of social and physical activity in life (interview transcript, 7/6/2014; member check transcript, 6/20/2015). While Mike did express these few ideas about reading that are consistent with the literature on gender and literacy, the visibility of these conceptions in his experience of the three phenomena of interest for this study was minimal, suggesting that the role they played in his reading life was secondary to the role played by his reading difficulties; alternatively, their role may have been insignificant or, on the contrary, so deeply embedded as to elude his conscious awareness and ability to articulate.

**Potential for radical change.**

Bringing ideas and conceptions to conscious awareness is one potential outcome of engagement with postmodern picturebooks as theorized and discussed by Dresang (2008) in her discussion of Radical Change Theory. She points to the potential for readers to challenge socio-historically reproduced conceptions and taken-for-granted notions while constructing new conceptions of worlds differing from their own, encouraging new perspectives and expanded viewpoints (p. 41). Researchers suggest that the features of postmodern picturebooks promote critical thinking, deeper meaning construction, and multiple interpretations (e.g., Anstey, 2008; Goldstone, 2008; Pantaleo, 2009, 2012; Styles & Noble, 2009). Pantaleo and Bomphray (2011) reported student expression of deeper understanding and empathy toward the immigrant experience through deliberate instructional focus on metafictive devices. Others have shown that students will draw upon their own resources and reason their way toward deeper meaning even without specific instruction (e.g., McGuire et al., 2008; Swaggerty, 2009). When asked what he
thought about the idea that books like these could help boys to think differently about reading, Mike said that he didn’t think so then stated, “I think these [the set of postmodern picturebooks] are all together because they have more scattered words and stuff than a normal book,” which he described as a book with “the words lined up,” then added that the postmodern picturebooks had “some words that are lined up but also, they’re a lot of scattered, extra information and things like that” (theory interview transcript, 8/6/2014). He concluded, “I just don’t think it makes it any easier.” In his statement, Mike highlighted the ease of reading, not the actual development and revision of meanings, ideas, or perspectives. While reading however, as discussed in Chapter 5, he was focused on making sense of things; he noticed and questioned postmodern features; he pondered and revised his thinking along the way; he did come to some new awareness of his own reading process and did begin to demonstrate slight shifts in his reading behaviors. During the member check interview, Mike confirmed that he liked the set of postmodern books more than the set of traditional books but he was not sure why; he then noted that he found them “more entertaining” because they kept his “attention” (member check transcript, 6/20/2015).

It seemed as though participating in this study was Mike’s first time really thinking about reading, likely due to the think-aloud protocol itself prompting thought. As indicated in Chapter 3, think-aloud protocols can permit teachers and researchers to observe specific cognitive strategies and other thought patterns that are usually unavailable for observation (Charters, 2003; Pressley, 2006; Scott & Dreher, 2016; Sprainger et al., 2011). Sprainger and colleagues indicate that “determin[ing] the extent of their metacognition, that is, their conscious awareness of sense making strategies and how these help them as a reader” as well as “[h]ow the student perceives themself [sic] as a reader” is one purpose for the use of think-aloud (pp. 33-34). Sprainger et al.
and Oster (2001) suggest that think-aloud methods can be instrumental in student development of metacognitive awareness. Oster states, “The teacher can guide students to see patterns in their own think-aloud comments…. This metacognitive awareness can help students as they develop specific reading strategies” (p. 69). My examination of the literature on think-aloud protocols did not reveal any indication of whether or not such metacognitive awareness could develop without teacher guidance, but in this study, Mike did make a couple of comments that demonstrated metacognition, and these comments did seem to represent new thoughts for him. While the presentation of these comments may have been due to the think-aloud prompting verbalization of thought, the content of the thoughts seemed to be the result of pondering postmodern features. It seemed as though there had been a lack of conscious awareness that was beginning to break down as he responded to the postmodern books and their features.

**Contributions to the Fields of Inquiry**

The emerging conscious awareness of process along with the subtle shifts noted in reading behavior may be one of the most compelling and surprising observations noted in this study. Another is the noted difference between the reading experiences associated with the two kinds of books. This research was designed to add a new voice to the literature on postmodern picturebooks as well as to join the field of postmodern picturebook research with that of gender and literacy. The intention was to explore what the experience of reading was like for one boy who is generally disinclined toward reading activities, specifically his experience of reading two kinds of books – traditional picture books and postmodern picturebooks– and how his experience might inform a deeper understanding that could influence future research, theory, and practice. The goal was to generate descriptive accounts of three intentional relationships, three phenomena, and to consider how those intentionalities, when taken together, might inform the
related fields of inquiry. Below I restate the three intentionalities briefly and discuss how they come together to reveal an insight of great interest. In a subsequent section, I share some of my thoughts and suggestions for future applications of this research.

**Reading as a focus on learning to read proficiently.**

The phenomenon of reading as experienced by Mike and discussed in this dissertation has been described as submission to an invasive focus on learning to read proficiently, influencing his life activities and relationships, his sense of potential for proficiency, and his overall approach to the reading of texts. For Mike, interventions meant removal from the instructional activities of the classroom at school, different targeted instruction both at school and at home, limited play activities with friends, and a resignation to required participation in interventions that impacted daily life. The visibility of difference and the need for assistance led to some teasing by peers and shifts in his family relationships. Homework related to reading became a source of stress. Conversations surrounding progress toward developing proficiency contained mixed messages that led to increased motivation at times, a sense of defeat at other times, occasional displays of confidence and/or persistence of effort, submission to external supports, and an eventual resignation to assistive technology. Assistive technology reportedly created space for Mike to focus more on understanding the text since figuring out the words became moot. Ease of reading distinguished enjoyable books from other books, and Mike articulated a preference for realistic fiction connected with his desire to have a story to follow to make reading and comprehending easier.

**Reading traditional picture books as a focus on following the story.**

The phenomenon of reading traditional picture books as experienced by Mike and discussed in this dissertation has been described as competing efforts to follow a storyline
consisting of specific tensions to navigate while trying to follow what was happening in the plot. Mike expected the experience of reading traditional picture books to require little original thought since stories of this type are known to be predetermined by the author; the expectation he held for the reader’s activity was to follow along. The tendency to select the traditional books over postmodern books was related to this perceived ability to follow an explicit story. The approach to reading was a more certain, explicit reading of the books in accordance with this expectation. For Mike, reading the traditional selections required balancing efforts to decipher the many words in the books with efforts to remain in touch with the author’s intended story. Unresolved puzzling over words and unaddressed miscues frequently interrupted the process. His attempts to relate to the traditional selections included more pragmatic, realistic, or logistical commentary than empathetic inference. When bigger meanings were derived, they tended to be concise, perhaps familiar, mantras or life lessons rather than insightful themes or social commentaries. Reliance on text to indicate the storyline took precedence over drawing meaning from illustrations and other features of the books.

Reading postmodern picturebooks as actively making sense of a story.

The phenomenon of reading postmodern picturebooks as experienced by Mike and discussed in this dissertation has been described as competing efforts to follow the storyline as well, but his efforts with these books consisted of specific tensions to navigate while striving to make sense of what was happening in the books. Making sense of what was happening in the postmodern picturebooks required agentive, imaginative reading. Without actively thinking to fill in the gaps left by the author, these books wouldn’t have made sense. For Mike, the postmodern books drew interest, but also initial confusion about how to follow the story. Most of the postmodern picturebooks had fewer words to indicate the storyline and Mike’s efforts to
self-correct were largely successful leaving fewer unresolved miscues. Reading the postmodern picturebooks proved to be easier than expected for him. The efforts he expended to construct meaning included more empathetic inferences than pragmatic commentary. His experience of reading the postmodern picturebooks was one of generating potentials for the indeterminate aspects of the books and revising those potentials along the way. When bigger ideas were formulated, they represented insightful reasoning toward tentative conclusions and multiplicities, sometimes leading to insights about reading.

**Insight on reading.**

Through this study, an insight about reading becomes apparent, one that ties these three intentionalities together in an illuminating manner. In this study, the reading difficulties experienced by Mike as a young boy resulted in a concerted focus on learning to read that infiltrated many key aspects of his life, influencing the characteristics of those aspects as well as the decisions made within them, from the kinds of instructional activities experienced to the choice of friends and life activities to the approach taken toward reading itself. The experience of reading took on an ever-present and invasive role in Mike’s life, instead of the facilitative role it takes in most people’s lives. Submission to interventions prevailed over agentive leveraging of reading capital within social fields, likely contributing to the shaping of conceptions about reading. The approach to reading he exhibited in this study consisted of a concern with the ease of reading, a reliance on having a story to follow, a desire for realistic relatable content, and two distinct views of reading – one as word identification and the other as comprehension. For Mike, reading a traditional book meant identifying the words, following an explicit storyline, and turning to the next page to read the text there, giving primacy for meaning making to textual information provided by the author-authority; this approach aligned with, and was illustrative of,
the approach to reading described above. Reading a postmodern picturebook meant actively making sense of unusual features, interacting with illustrations, and generating multiple, tentative meanings then revising them along the way; this approach diverged a little from the approach to reading described above and was found by Mike to be more entertaining and better for maintaining his attention. Changes in metacognitive awareness of his reading process appeared to be associated with the reading of postmodern picturebooks. Changes, albeit slight, in the approach taken toward both kinds of books were noted toward the end of the study. This suggests that experiencing postmodern picturebooks with a focus on think-aloud commentary may have provoked a shift in perspective about what it means to read – namely, the active construction of meaning from all features in the book (including gaps and indeterminacies), rather than a reliance on following an explicit, relatable, pre-determined story to reach a specific end. This occurred without dialogic conversation, social interaction with peers, or specific instruction.

Potential Limitations

As with any study, the findings above should be understood in light of potential limiting factors such as conducting the study without dialogic conversation, social interaction with peers, or specific instruction. It is important to keep in mind that this study is an exploration of one boy’s experiences of the focal phenomena, not several boys who self-identify as disinclined toward reading. Since reading difficulty, not gender, emerged most prominently in the descriptive accounts of the phenomena, findings from a sampling of both boys and girls who find reading difficult would likely inform the field in ways that this study cannot. It is also possible that protocols within the study may account for some of the findings; for example, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the think-aloud protocol itself likely contributed to the articulation of
insights as well as the pondering of postmodern features within the books. Similarly, teacher interviews, if they had been secured, could have broadened the school perspectives gathered from written records and may have illuminated different aspects of Mike’s reading experience and/or contributed important understandings to the findings related to shaping concepts of reading.

Johns (1978) studied student concepts of reading and reported on the results of interviews with nearly 700 children in elementary school indicating that they most often defined reading in terms of classroom instruction, then in terms of decoding, and finally, in terms of meaning. Johns wrote, “Less than one student in five associated meaning with reading” (p. 5). In previous preliminary studies on this topic, Johns (1971, 1974) reported correlation coefficients and chi-square values that demonstrated significant differences in how students answer the question, “What is reading?” In 1974, he concluded that students performing at least one year above or one year below grade level “differ[ed] significantly in their concepts of reading” (p. 59) but even still “less than half of the good readers gave responses which were judged as meaningful” (p. 60) – with meaningful defined as related to decoding, comprehending, or both (p. 58). As mentioned in Chapter 2, instruction provided to students with reading difficulties can be constrained and often includes worksheets and less challenging reading materials (Hall, 2012; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012). While the school records do provide a sense of Mike’s instructional experiences at school, interviews with Mike’s former teachers might have offered a more nuanced understanding from which to consider such aspects as the development of initial conceptions of reading through Cognitive Apprenticeship and the reshaping of those conceptions through participation in various social fields such as classroom instruction and /or targeted intervention. Nevertheless, it is clear that Mike’s experience of reading postmodern
picturebooks differed from that of reading traditional picture books and shifts in his reading behaviors were noted by the end of data collection.

**Potential Implications for Future Research, Theory and Practice**

The shift discussed above was unexpected and points to the potential to leverage postmodern picturebooks to reshape conceptions of reading in the minds of some boys, perhaps other boys like Mike who struggle with persistent reading difficulties. It is possible that the focus on helping these boys learn to read contributes inadvertently to counterproductive conceptions of reading as a struggle to identify words and follow a predetermined storyline rather than as active meaning construction for learning, enjoyment, and empowerment. It is possible that some efforts to remedy reading difficulties contribute to conceptions that foster disinterest or disengagement and are therefore part of the problem. Yet, as observed in this study, it is also possible that interaction with postmodern picturebooks could expose and encourage the more active reading experience desired, helping to shift conceptions of reading and reading behavior a little more toward agentive, attention-maintaining experiences and perhaps a little bit further away from conceptions that encourage disengagement. These potentials have implications for further research, theory development, and practice.

**Research.**

With regard to further research, it would be important to ascertain to what degree the experiences of other boys are similar to the intentionalities described in this dissertation. Since the discussion above points to gender as secondary to reading difficulties in these intentionalities, it would be prudent to explore the responses of similar girls as well. Perhaps incorporating think-aloud readings of postmodern picturebooks as part of intervention efforts with these boys and girls would offer researchers the opportunity to observe how the children respond to the
books and note whether or not any shifts in conceptions of reading or reading behaviors occur over time. In my research, the shifts noted occurred without instruction and with minimal interaction. Perhaps observations of if/how dialogic conversation, social interaction with peers, and/or specific facilitation either enhance or hinder noted effects could be documented. This sort of investigation could connect with the literature on reading difficulties and related intervention approaches. Since literacy development is multi-faceted and complex, designing a study to examine the three areas – gender, reading difficulties, and the potential of postmodern picturebooks – could prove especially illuminating. Perhaps it would be possible to tease out the combined and unique influences of gender and reading difficulties in the reading lives of children who self-identify as disinclined toward reading and note how postmodern books might help to reshape or counter those influences.

**Theory development.**

This dissertation describes pervasive influences from the focus on learning to read proficiently and the potential of postmodern picturebooks to disrupt those influences to some degree. If viewed as social fields that interact with other social fields, then intervention settings can be viewed as contexts for shaping the reading lives of children, reshaping expectations for reading behavior and, consequently, conceptions of reading. This shaping force would alter the child’s habitus relative to reading impacting participation in other social fields such as the primary classroom, the playground, and the home. Just as conceptions of gender impact literate behavior, conceptions of the act of reading can as well. If those conceptions lead to disinterest or disengagement, then the child’s habitus would be lacking the necessary reading capital to participate effectively in certain environments leading to the kinds of tensions described in this study. Interaction with postmodern picturebooks holds at least some potential for bringing
conceptions of reading to conscious awareness for critical examination and for promoting shifts in reading behavior that can alter the child’s habitus accordingly. Radical Change Theory delineates three change potentials – “changing forms and formats, changing perspectives, and changing boundaries” (Dresang, 2008, p. 41). In this study, it appeared that features within the postmodern picturebooks were the focus of the commentary that began to counter at least one of the inadvertent influences of the concerted focus on learning to read.

**Practice.**

A concerted focus on learning to read is common in the lives of children who struggle with reading. If this focus is contributing to incomplete conceptions of what reading can be, then perhaps instructors, be they classroom teachers, specialists, tutors, or parents, could specifically and intentionally promote development of a more well-rounded conception of reading. Inclusion of experiences with postmodern picturebooks could provide opportunities to foster a more active, agentive approach toward reading that could open children’s minds to new potentials and metacognitive awareness, perhaps influencing their reading behaviors and choices. Instructors could scaffold student thinking using prompts to help them reason out connections between the details they notice and the bigger meaning potentials present in the books. Perhaps children like Mike could be guided toward choosing more postmodern picturebooks when they select reading materials; maybe new criteria could be added to the guidelines on choosing appropriate books, criteria that suggests they select at least one book that appears confusing, looks different, or makes them wonder right away.

**Closing Thoughts**

In this study, Mike tended not to choose postmodern picturebooks during the book sort; yet, for all of them, he indicated that they were good books and later stated that the postmodern
selections were more entertaining. The analysis suggests that engaging with the postmodern selections prompted some self-awareness of his reading process and began to shift his approach with both kinds of books toward engaging in more active, imaginative meaning construction. Perhaps his tendency to gravitate toward predictable looking books that seemed easy to follow shifted as well; I don’t know. Perhaps more interaction with postmodern picturebooks would continue to reshape Mike’s conceptions of reading, draw his interest, and counter the impact of a reading life focused on learning how to read; I don’t know, but I’m hopeful. Mike’s sister may be right; maybe he would like reading if it wasn’t so hard for him. As for me, a fifty year old woman who is generally disinclined toward reading because it had always been laborious and utilitarian, engaging with postmodern picturebooks during the text analyses changed my conception of fictional reading and I now look forward to carving out time to engage in a satisfying recreational reading life. I leave you with these thoughts and close with Mike’s own words from the opening quote of this dissertation:

[I]f you’re just flipping through it’s confusing ‘cuz the whole book’s white, and then there’s a bunch of pages flying around… if you actually read through it, you understand why there’s the different things happening… if you read it, it’s easy.

(interview transcript, 7/6/2014)
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Appendix A: Guidance for Vetting the Books

Guidance for categorizing each of the books as traditional or postmodern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More traditional end of the spectrum</th>
<th>Postmodern end of the spectrum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• one story line</td>
<td>• multiple story lines or perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reader as spectator</td>
<td>• reader as participant or invited guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• chronological presentation</td>
<td>• non-linear presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses traditional story grammar and formatting</td>
<td>• breaks conventions of grammar and/or formatting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• determinate ending</td>
<td>• indeterminate endings, surprises or twists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• illustrations depict information presented in the text</td>
<td>• illustrations provide information not presented in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fosters longstanding ideations and norms</td>
<td>• challenges taken-for-granted ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Desired characteristics across the set of books:
  o include books that represent a varied degree of traditional and/or postmodern characteristics (some may even be hybrid)
  o include books for a variety of ages across the elementary school grades
  o include at least one book with a male main character and one with a female main character
  o include at least one book that is stereotypically boy-friendly and one that is stereotypically girl-friendly
  o include a variety of intertextual references - some familiar and some likely to be unfamiliar
  o include storylines that should promote exploration of identities and/or points of view and challenge taken-for-granted norms and ideations
  o pairing by similarities
Appendix B: Text Selections, Vetting Ratings, Sequencing, and Synopses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books Selected</th>
<th>Vetting Rating</th>
<th>Sequence as Drawn by Vetting Rating</th>
<th>Actual Order of Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Family Tree</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>drawn 1st</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bored Book</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>drawn 1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing War</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>drawn 2nd</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Pigs</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>drawn 2nd</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing Grace</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>not drawn (gender)</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Max</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>drawn 3rd</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Orange Shoes</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>drawn 3rd</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie’s War</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>drawn 4th</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Across the Alley</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>drawn 4th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarice Bean What Planet Are You From?</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>drawn 5th</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s My Jumbo</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>drawn 5th</td>
<td>11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voices in the Park</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>drawn 6th</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Little Pigs</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>drawn 6th</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A group of friends are planning their play activities and decide to play a game of war. While preparing for the game, one member of the group, Sameer, decides to leave, claiming to have to go home early. The next day, Sameer shares his recent personal history of losing his family in a war back in his home country when a bomb hit an unintended target, destroying his home and killing his entire family while he was at school. Luke, a main character, comes to a new understanding of his friend and suggests alternative plans for the group.


One day in a park is shared from four first-person perspectives – that of a wealthy woman, an unemployed man, the son of the woman, and the daughter of the man. While each experiences the park on the same day at the same time, each conveys a drastically different experience. The characters are anthropomorphized ape-like people and the illustrations contain various mysterious, abstract, symbolic elements that are difficult to interpret but important for meaning construction. Many interpretations are possible as much is left unsaid.

Clarice shares her account of a few days in her life in which she must complete a project for school but becomes involved in a protest in her neighborhood to save a tree. Her account includes humorous commentary about classmates, school personnel, and family members. She is a little cheeky and experiences conflicts with her teacher as a result. The book emphasizes recycling and taking care of the environment. The book itself is made of recycled materials and has unique characteristics such as cut outs in the cardstock cover, varied fonts, and nonlinear text placement. Background illustrations contain additional information to support meaning construction.


This wordless book depicts the story of siblings over the course of two days. The younger sibling has a stuffed toy that is the focus of her activities; the older brother seems jealous and tries to get the toy for himself. When his sister cries, he returns it to her, but later takes the toy while she is sleeping and goes to sleep with it himself. In the morning, she already has retrieved the toy but decides to share it with him. The illustrations are simple and easy to interpret. The message is a common life lesson on sharing.


Each of three pigs is pursued by a wolf who tries to destroy its home and eat it. The wolf successfully blows down the first two pigs’ homes and eats them. The third pig’s home is too well built to be blown down, so the wolf must try to trick the pig into coming out and going places with him. In each instance the third pig, outwit the wolf. The wolf becomes frustrated and tries to go down the chimney. The clever pig sets a pot boiling in the fireplace, captures the wolf, and eats it.

Grace is an imaginative young girl of Trinidadian descent; her skin is dark brown. She loves stories and loves to act them out. She wants to play the part of Peter Pan in a school play, but two of her peers suggest that that would be inappropriate citing her skin color and gender as reasons. Peter Pan is expected to be a white boy. She decides to audition and wins the part. One message stated in the book is that anything is possible with determination. Another message that is implied in the book is that race and gender should not be barriers. There are several intertextual references that do not have significant impact on meaning potentials.


Nameless characters from one family lineage are chronicled in an account of several generations. It begins with an early settler who builds himself a house, but spares one specific tree. Over the generations, changed is depicted as neighbors arrive and cars become plentiful, but the tree remained central and “witnessed” it all. Eventually, societal need for a roadway threatens the life of the tree. One descendent, a young boy, tries to protect the tree; animals come to protect the tree as well. The workmen come up with a compromise that allows for the roadway and spares the tree.


Two boys live across the alley from one another and become secret companions through shared interactions at their bedroom windows. It seems there is division in their community by race/ethnicity. One of the boys, Abe, is Jewish and plays violin; he secretly teaches violin to the other boy, Willie, who is one of the neighborhood boys his grandfather refers to prejudicially as Negro. Willie in turn teaches Abe how to throw a baseball. Eventually, the boys’ friendship is discovered and accepted by both Abe’s grandfather and Willie’s father. The four spend the day out together attending both a recital at which Willie plays Abe’s violin and a baseball game in which Abe pitches. Intertextual references underscore and deepen important information.

Set back in a time when radios, water pumps, and wood fired stoves were common, this book provides an account of one girl’s class related bullying. Delly’s father has to choose between buying tires for the truck and shoes for Delly who regularly goes barefoot. Knowing how much she loves a particular pair of shoes, he buys them for her when he learns that he can do with only two new tires for the truck. The wealthier girls at school, led by a bully named Prudy, stomp on and ruin Delly’s new shoes. However, Delly comes up with a great way to repair the shoes and ends up raising the most money at the school fundraiser due in part to her creativity.


This wordless book depicts a day in the life of two children who begin the day annoying one another and end it happily reading together. The boy and girl seem to be siblings. An older gentleman, perhaps their grandfather, points them toward the attic where they find a book with a pullout page of illustrated squares. The children are able to go into the illustrated squares to enter and exit adventures – a snow monster, pirates, sharks, castles, knights, dragons, and a huge octopus. They come to realize these adventures are from books on the bookshelves in the older gentleman’s library and begin to read together.


The story begins much like other versions of the three pigs in which a wolf blows down their houses and eats them up, but when the wolf blows down the first pig’s house, he actually blows the pig out of the story and appears confused. As the wolf moves on the next pig’s house, the results are similar. From there the story becomes one of the pigs’ adventure outside of their own story. They can manipulate the pages in their own story, notice the presence of the reader, and enter and exit other stories bringing characters with them. The story ends with the pigs rebuilding their own story and rewriting the ending. Intertextual references made do not impact the meaning potentials available within the book.

Art and Max are anthropomorphized reptilian creatures who are engaged in artistic painting. Art is a larger, earth-toned character with spikes who seems a bit set in his ways. Max is a smaller, colorful, energetic character who is eager to try to paint. His approach seems to bother Art who reluctantly allows him to paint. Max paints Art’s body, then tries to appease Art by blowing away the paint with a fan and dowsing him in water. Art is reduced to an outline sketch that is pulled apart into a pile of curved lines. Max rebuilds Art but cannot do it exactly the same way; nevertheless, he does succeed in recreating him, and both Art and Max try each other’s style of art. There are very few words and they are all part of the conversation between Art and Max.


Archie creates a scrapbook over time chronicling the lived experiences of the people in his community during the World War One. It depicts ordinary life as it evolves through differing perspectives, family conflicts, suspicion, and the grave realities, shifting from playing war to excluding friends based on heritage, watching the obituaries, enduring bombings, death of family members, the threat of conscription, making ends meet, moving out to the country, and other impacts on the lives of families left behind during the war. The book is laid out like a scrapbook with fold out letters, postcards, and other interactive elements included. Most of the openings have a central comic strip that tells the story and margin information that provides details, context, or tangentially connected information.
Appendix C: Data Collection Protocols

Book Sort Activity

Introductory Script: [Read this script after confirming that the student voluntarily agrees to participate and that audio/video recording is acceptable to him. Written parental consent and student assent will have already been obtained.] Today is (date) and I am here with (name of student) who has agreed to participate in a book sorting activity to help me understand more about the books he would choose to read or not to read. Are you ready to get started?

Initial Instructions: Today, I will share some of my books with you. You will have a chance to turn the pages and look through each one. Think about whether or not you would have wanted to read the book at some time during elementary school, then put it in one of these piles – would have read; would not have read; and don’t know. [Point out the pile indicators – “would have read”, “would not have read”, and “don’t know”.] In which pile will you put books you would want to read? Which pile is for books you wouldn’t want to read? And, which pile is for books you aren’t sure about? [Review if needed.]

Allow ten to fifteen minutes for sorting before asking for explanations.

Sample Prompts for Facilitating Students’ Book Sort Explanations:

Initial Prompt (for each book):
➢ Please tell me what you are thinking about this book and why you put it in this pile.

Follow-up Prompts (for additional information or clarification, if needed):
➢ Can you tell me more about that?
➢ What do you mean by ________________?
➢ I noticed you ____ (action)____. Can you tell me what you were thinking about?
➢ Is there anything else you want to tell me about this book?

Contingency Prompt (in the event that all books are sorted into the same category):
➢ If you had to choose only one of these books to read, which would it be and why?
Think-Aloud Readings

Initial Instructions: Today, I will give you one of my books to read. As you read this book, look at the pictures and tell me what you are thinking about the book. Please talk about the thoughts and ideas that you are having. I expect you to just talk as you notice things about the book and as thoughts come to mind. Your goal is to help me understand what you are thinking as you read this book. [At the first session, briefly model the expected process before beginning.] Today, you will read, discuss, and review (insert title) by (insert author).

[Allow the child to examine and discuss the book for up to 30 minutes.]

Sample Facilitative prompts to use if needed:
- What are you noticing?
- What are you thinking?
- Please tell me more about that.
- What do you mean by _____________? (or simply repeat what the child said)
- I noticed you ___(action)____. Can you tell me what you were thinking about?

Survey Prompts: [to be asked at the end of the think aloud]
- Would this be a good book to share with other kids in an elementary school? Explain.
- Which grade would this book be best for, and why?
- What kinds of things could kids talk about as they read this book?
- If you were the teacher, what kinds of questions would you ask the kids about this book?
- How would you describe this book to other boys?
- What do you think the author was thinking about when he/she wrote this book?
Open-Ended Interviews

*Interview questions:* [Choose questions from the pool below. Have a cumulative recording sheet available to keep track of the questions he has answered and/or passed.]

- How do you feel about reading and what do you think makes you feel that way?
- How do you feel about reading informational/non-fiction books? Why?
- How do you feel about reading fiction books (stories)? Why?
- How do you react when a teacher asks you to read a fiction book (story)?
- What do you think about reading and talking about books with friends at school?
  ***
- What is reading all about? What’s the point of doing it?
- How do use reading in your life? How do you expect to use reading as you grow older?
- What kinds of activities do you think are important in life? Why do think so?
- How should people decide which activities are important to them?
  ***
- Do you think boys and girls think the same way or differently about reading? How so?
- What do you think other boys and girls think about reading fiction books (stories)?
- Why do you think some kids don’t like to read, complain, and/or won’t read when asked?
  ***
- How/who should decide which books kids get to read?
- When you find books that you enjoy, what are those books like? When a book is not a “good fit” for you, what is that book like?
- What makes a book interesting or boring?
- **Tell me about a favorite book.** [Alternate prompt: If you don’t have a favorite book, then tell me about one that you didn’t mind reading.]
Additional Interview Questions for the Participant

Sample probing prompts: [Use when needed to elicit further comment on any of the questions.]

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you give me an example?
- You mentioned X; can you describe that?
- Repeat what the participant says, then wait for his elaboration.
- Is there anything more you’d like to share about that?
- What else can you tell me about your reading experiences?

Questions to ask during data collection sessions: [ask along with the original interview questions selected randomly]

1. What can you tell me about your reading experiences? What has it been like for you?
2. What do you remember about the reading materials and activities from our tutoring days? [Prompt about specific items (i.e., instructional materials, approaches, and/or reading materials) if they are not mentioned.]

Questions to ask at the last data collection session: (theory interview)

3. Some researchers think that boys learn about reading from their families, by seeing what they do and trying to be like them, especially the boys’ fathers. What do you think about that? Do you think this is true for you? Why or why not?
4. Some researchers think that boys are influenced by their friends and other kids. They think that sometimes boys feel pressure about participating in reading (or not). What do you think about that? Do you think this is true for you? Why or why not?
5. Some researchers think that some boys think that reading isn’t for boys, or that it’s too schoolish, or too isolating. What do you think about that? What do you think other kids think about that?
6. Some researchers think that books like (mention specific book titles from the study) would help boys to think differently about reading. What do you think about that?

Questions to ask some months later after analysis: (member check)

7. I want to show you what I have been thinking about your experience of reading and your responses to the books I shared with you. Tell me what you think about my ideas, and correct me if I have misunderstood.
Additional Interview Questions for Family Members

Introductory script: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed about (participant)’s reading experiences. I will ask only a few questions today as indicated on the consent form you signed. I may however need to ask some probing questions to seek further information or clarification from you such as [read some of the sample probing questions as examples].

Sample probing prompts: [Use when needed to elicit further comment on any of the questions.]

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you give me an example?
- You mentioned X; can you describe that?
- Repeat what he says, then wait for elaboration.
- Is there anything more you’d like to share about that?
- What else can you tell me about your/his reading experiences?

Questions:
1. What can you tell me about (participant)’s reading experiences? What has it been like for him?
2. How do (participant)’s reading experiences differ from your own?
Additional Interview Questions for Former Teachers

Introductory script: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed about (participant)’s reading experiences. I will ask only a few questions today as indicated on the consent form you signed. I may however need to ask some probing questions to seek further information or clarification from you such as [read some of the sample probing questions as examples].

Sample probing prompts: [Use when needed to elicit further comment on any of the questions.]

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you give me an example?
- You mentioned X; can you describe that?
- Repeat what he says, then wait for elaboration.
- Is there anything more you’d like to share about that?
- What else can you tell me about his reading experiences?

Questions:

1. What can you tell me about (participant)’s reading experiences?
2. What can you tell me about the materials and activities of your reading program from the year (participant) was in your class?
3. How did (participant) respond to these materials and activities?
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Appendix E: Steps in the Analysis

1. I completed the initial readings and first line-by-line readings for all of the data sources before going on to sorting of codes.
   a. During the initial readings, I simply read the transcripts and only highlighted things that struck me in some way.
   b. During the line-by-line readings, I recorded codes for all the data, and also included some initial comments, questions, reflections, and reflexions in the margins on the transcripts.
   c. I informally noted key ideas that struck me so I wouldn’t lose track of them (hand-written on separate paper and attached to the data sources).
   d. I then also added notations to an electronic file of pre-analysis notations, things I noted while creating transcripts. I created sections for each of the data source groupings – think aloud readings, book sort, family interviews, participant interviews, school records, and tutoring history.

2. I reviewed and sorted the coding and comments on the transcripts for the book sort and think aloud readings, then generated analysis summaries for each.
   a. I listed and grouped the codes in a notebook generating tallies for repeated codes. I used a separate opening in the notebook for each think aloud reading.
      i. I generated lists of unique codes by recording each once. If other codes were similar or saying the same thing, I did not record them separately again; I simply tallied them with the code already recorded in the notebook. These were separated by data source – video notes, commentary, and survey prompts.
      ii. I separated and listed the various comments, thoughts, and questions I had written in the transcript margins during the line-by-line readings. These would become, or be compared with, the reflections and reflexions.
   b. I revisited each of the code lists in the notebook to identify and assign overarching categories into which the data seemed to fall. These categories housed opposing
dimensions of the category and showed the depth and variability present in the data.

i. For each think aloud, I read through the list of unique codes in the notebook, then generated a list of groupings/categories within which the codes seem to cluster.

ii. I generated a cumulative list of categories across the think aloud readings by noting each category in a three column list – one column for each data source available for each think aloud reading (video notes, commentary, and survey prompts). To generate the cumulative list, the think aloud readings were reviewed in the order they had been conducted and any new codes were added to the appropriate columns on the list. After about the sixth book, there was a sharp drop in new categories; new categories tended to be related to or expansions of earlier categories. Each postmodern picturebook had different postmodern aspects resulting in the generation of additional unique categories; most were related to earlier categories as well, but a few also pointed to new insights. It is possible that others could have been elicited if different or additional postmodern picturebooks were included in the study.

iii. For each think aloud, I used the cumulative category list to label each code in the notebook with a category from the list.

c. I used copies of the cumulative category list to generate a tally of the frequency with which I used each category when labeling the codes for each of the think aloud readings. [This was not a systematic attempt to quantify the data, but rather a visual aid for generating comparisons, trends, and insights. A systematic quantification would require more structure and a different approach to the data.]

i. I compiled a cumulative tally chart (COUNTS) consisting of the tallies from each of the think aloud readings.

ii. Two versions of the cumulative tally chart were created:
   1. One version had the think aloud data columns in chronological order to look for trends over the course of the data collection
period such as potential fatigue, impact of the protocol, novelty, authentic reading process, etc…

2. The other version had the think aloud data columns grouped by vetting results (postmodern or traditional) to look for aspects that distinguished the two sets of data.

   iii. I added some analytical notations to both files.

   d. I generated the analysis summaries including the following sections – “salient descriptions and quotes,” “analytic categories and statements,” and “bridling – reflections and reflexions.”

      i. For each analysis summary, I reviewed the video for the think aloud reading, its field notes, its opening in the notebook, and its tally chart (as well as the original coded transcript if needed), then generated the analysis summary for that book.

      ii. I consulted the text analysis for the book (and reviewed the book itself if needed) to include any additional thoughts or potential connections.

3. I reviewed the coding and comments on the retrospective and historical data sets (participant interviews, family interviews, school records, and tutoring records) then created analysis summaries for each data set.

   a. For each of the retrospective data sets (participant interviews and family interviews), I reviewed the coding and comments on the interview transcripts then created the analysis summary for the data set. I worked through the participant interviews data set first, then I worked through the family interviews data set.

      i. I reviewed the coded transcripts and recorded the coded ideas on an opening in the notebook, grouping related ideas together into clusters as I did so. [For the family interviews data set, each code was marked to indicate which interviewee provided that data: (M) for mother, (F) for father, and (S) for sister.]

      ii. I identified salient quotes in the data and noted reflective/reflexive thoughts as well.

      iii. I generated an analysis summary for the set of participant interviews and another analysis summary for the set of family interviews.
b. For each of the historical data sets (school records and tutoring records), I reviewed the coding and comments on the de-identified records then created the analysis summary for the data set. I worked through the school records data first, then I worked through the tutoring records data.
   i. I reviewed the coded documents and the note sheets, grouping related ideas together, observing key ideas, and teasing out how they opened up or added to a better understanding of my participant’s experience of reading.
   ii. I identified salient quotes in the data and noted reflective and reflexive thoughts as well.
   iii. I generated an analysis summary for the set of school records data and another analysis summary for the set of tutoring records data.

4. I generated and sought participant feedback on some tentative interpretations and possible main interpretations to address the sub-questions of the research.
   a. I reviewed the analysis summaries and the cumulative tally charts on the think aloud readings and the book sort to generate tentative interpretations and possible main interpretations about the participant’s experience of reading the two kinds of books.
   b. I reviewed the analysis summaries on the interview data and the historical records to generate tentative interpretations and possible main interpretations about the participant’s overall experience of reading across time and contexts.
   c. I shared tentative interpretations and possible main interpretations with the participant at the member check interview, seeking my participant’s input and additional commentary to confirm, refute, and/or clarify.

5. I examined the member check interview transcript, the theory interview transcript, the tentative interpretations, and the possible main interpretations to revise and validate them, then I generated my comprehensive understanding to address the sub-questions of the research and the overarching research question.
   a. I checked the tentative interpretations against the data and the member check interview, looking for connections, contradictions, silences, powerful commentary, data that wasn’t addressed, and so forth.
b. I created summaries of the sets of analysis summaries generated earlier including a side-by-side chart for the summary of the set of postmodern picturebook analysis summaries and the set of traditional picture book summaries. This was similar to step 4a above, but went into more detail noting distinguishing aspects of each as well as shifts within them.

c. I mapped out the intentionality for each phenomenon using the tentative interpretations, identifying a main interpretation.

d. I crafted the comprehensive understanding of the main interpretation and tentative interpretations to represent and describe the intentionality.

6. I completed a final read through of the original data to ensure that each of my comprehensive understandings fit with the original data.