

Emotional Engagement: A Shared Journey to Self-Discovery

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Author Note

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## Abstract

Student engagement has been a key predictor of college completion rates, student achievement, and course withdrawals. The traditional model sees engagement consisting of three subcomponents—behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. This qualitative pilot study explores the ways in which college students experience emotional engagement in the classroom. Three in-depth interviews and six hours of participant observation were conducted in a Russian literature class at Syracuse University. The results indicate that students' emotional engagement is a way for students to explore and better understand themselves. Students do this by adopting several ideals and strategies: search for intellectual challenge, involvement in a friendly conversation, recognition of flowing power relations, transfer to the real life, and submission to inspiration. Word count: ~10,000. List of references: 62.

*Keywords:* student emotional engagement; sense of belonging; teacher–student communication; emotions.

## Predicting Students' Emotional Engagement in College Classrooms

### **Introduction**

Student engagement in higher education has been part of the scholarly conversation for the past 70 years (Groccia, 2018). More systematic study of student engagement started in the 1980s (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008), but until now no unanimous definition of this phenomenon has been devised. Conceptualizations of engagement vary across time frames such as in-the-moment or long-term (Fredricks, Filsecker, & Lawson, 2016) and contexts such as schools, classrooms, learning activities (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Traditionally, engagement has been viewed as a spectrum, in which the polar ends indicate complete engagement and complete disengagement (Lawson, 2017). However, recently some scholars have begun to distinguish engagement and disengagement as two separate constructs (Lawson, 2017; Wang, Chow, Hofkens, & Salmela-Aro, 2015). Interestingly, despite the lack of the common definition and perspective of student engagement, almost all scholars contend that student engagement is a robust predictor of successful learning and personal development (Groccia, 2018).

This is crucial, because all views of student engagement and the proliferation of research on student engagement in the past two decades (Lawson & Lawson, 2013) attempt to address the spectrum of student alienation: decreasing academic achievement, increasing rates of boredom and disaffection, increasing rates of class withdrawals and school dropouts (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Fredricks et al., 2016). As “far too many students are bored, unmotivated, and uninvolved” (Appleton et al., 2008, p. 369), the proportion of students at risk of disengagement is substantial. Disengagement and boredom are inversely correlated with educational attainment and leads to negative consequences such as frustration, substance abuse, feeling of disempowerment, truancy, dissatisfaction, and others. (Li & Lerner, 2011; Sharp, Hemmings, & Kay, 2016).

In addition to being the principal contributor to academic success as measured by grades, test scores, and graduation rates (Wang & Fredricks, 2014; Wang & Holcombe, 2010), student engagement is appealing for two more reasons. First, the concept of student engagement is “intuitive, observable, and easily understood by teachers as being important to learning” (Finn & Zimmer, 2012, p. 123). It is equally understandable by non-educator, too. Engagement is vaguely understood as student commitment to, or investment in, studying (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 61), which makes educators, policy makers, researchers, and the general public be approximately on the same page when discussing the topic of engagement.

Second, student engagement is thought to be malleable (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Rock, 1997; Fredricks et al., 2004). That is, student engagement can be adapted and modified to changing circumstances, provided those changes are carefully planned and implemented. This is a promising assumption, because it suggests a canny call to action—to develop interventions that can maximize student engagement. With evidence from scholarly literature that describes ways in which students engage in college, such interventions have a potential to produce incredible results on student learning, college completion rates, and life after graduation. However, we are far from this ideal.

College dropouts have been persistent in the U.S. in the past several years. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, 56.1% of the overall cohort of first-time students who enrolled in college in 2011 and 54.8% of those who enrolled in 2010 completed their degrees within six years (Shapiro et al., 2017). There is a multitude of reasons as to why students discontinue education. Still, there is compelling evidence that when students are disengaged, they are more likely to fail and drop out from college (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Kaplan, Peck, & Kaplan, 1997; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). It is important to remember that it is erroneous to claim direct causality between disengagement and student failure or attrition.

The problem of student engagement is not tied to dropping college exclusively. Before deciding to leave school, students may choose to withdraw from individual courses. By sheer numbers, we know that students drop online courses more often than face-to-face ones, despite the fact that online education has seen tremendous growth in popularity in the past 20 years (Cochran, Campbell, Baker, & Leeds, 2014). As yet, scholars have not fully explained this observation. Individual differences among students such as agreeableness and extraversion may partially account for it (Evans, 2017). By the same token, work-life balance, motivation, and impressions of instructor can also give insights into this issue (Castelló, Pardo, Sala-Bubaré, & Suñe-Soler, 2017; Reed, 1981). Some scholars proposed that “[e]ngaging students as early as possible and keeping them engaged is the key” to prevent withdrawal from online classes (Angelino, Williams, & Natvig, 2007, p. 9). Perhaps this plea is true for face-to-face environments as well.

The challenging and far-reaching desire to enhance student engagement is prevalent among the researchers of student engagement. Appleton, Christenson, Kim, and Reschly (2006) maintained that that “engagement provides a means both for understanding and intervening when early signs of students’ disconnection with school and learning are noted” (p. 428). Engaged students are less likely to be disruptive in class or drop out of college (Fredricks et al., 2004; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012). Strong student engagement is related to higher persistence and social integration into college life (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004). Student engagement can promote “school completion and demonstrate the usefulness of interventions targeting engagement” (Appleton et al., 2008, p. 373). While student engagement cannot address all possible factors that determine students’ behaviors, emotions, and choices (e.g., motivation, health, family, relocation, classroom experience, extracurricular experience), it can influence some of them with the purpose of preventing dropout and increasing student achievement.

Holistic understanding of student engagement can help improve the situation with college dropouts, withdrawal from classes, and low achievement scores in U.S. colleges. Students pay big money for their college experiences to get education and have enhanced career opportunities in life. We do not know whether students believe that they rightly invest their time and resources in obtaining college degrees. Neither do we know how students feel about their experiences of learning and social interactions in the classes they take. To find out, it will be useful to know if those feelings affect their sense of connectedness and belonging in college as well as to understand the ways in which they engage with peers and instructors while in the classroom. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore students' feelings and perceptions of their emotional engagement while they are in the classroom. The overarching research question for this study is as follows: *What is the experience of emotional engagement for students in college courses?*

It is important to study student engagement in order to illuminate different aspects of student alienation and prevent student failure. If students drop college or withdraw from a class, the consequences are at least threefold: (a) loss of opportunities, time, and money for students who withdraw, (b) damage to the prestige of the institution, and (c) reduction of opportunities for those students did not manage to enroll in the class or college (Cochran et al., 2014). However, no one can prescribe solutions unless student engagement is studied from a variety of angles. This study is original in that it focuses on understanding subjective students' perceptions without retreating to extracurricular interventions, grade reports, or pre-determined surveys. Students' relatedness to peers, instructors, and subject matter in face-to-face college classes were examined using students' own voices. Behind the stories of how students emotionally engage in classes lurks the reality of their daily journeys to self-discovery. It is my intention that by looking at this face of emotional engagement can educators consider additional ways of empowering and inspiring their students.

## Literature review

### What is engagement?

Student engagement is a multidimensional construct (Fredricks et al., 2016). Historically from the viewpoint of the socio-psychological tradition, it has been conceptualized as a tripartite metaconstruct—consisting of three separate yet interrelated components: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional/affective (Appleton et al., 2008, 2006; Fredricks et al., 2004; Groccia, 2018; Lawson, 2017; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Lovelace, Reschly, Appleton, & Lutz, 2014; Tovani & Moje, 2017). Those components overlap and interact with each other rather than represent clear-cut dimensions in understanding the phenomenon. Fredricks et al. (2004) noted, “In reality these factors are dynamically interrelated within the individual; they are not isolated processes” (p. 61). At the same time, understanding how the three components differ allows to describe how the phrase “emotional engagement” is used in this study. The construct of student engagement is complex and hard to measure. A 2011 report described 21 measures of student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2011). It means that the scholarly community is far from being unanimous as to what exactly student engagement is and what the best way is to operationalize it. Different scales attempt to tackle various aspects of student engagement and are constantly reworked and improved.

*Behavioral engagement* most commonly denotes instances of participation in academic settings and school-related activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). Examples include time spent on doing homework, class attendance, contribution to class discussions, act of asking questions, submission of assignment by due dates, prosocial conduct, participation in extracurricular activities, absence of instances of getting into undesirable or dangerous situations (Finn & Rock, 1997; Lawson & Lawson, 2013). In other words, behavioral engagement describes the rules which students follow in order to meet the standards and conventions of the class or college.

*Cognitive engagement* pertains to students' mental efforts that they put into studying (Finn & Zimmer, 2012) as well as persistence they exude when faced with academic challenges (Corno, 1993). Additionally, Newmann, Wehlage, and Lamborn (1992) defined student engagement in academic work as "student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (p. 12). This definition illustrates the understanding of cognitive engagement when student are involved in a learning activity and create meaning of the information they work with. The distinction between cognitive and emotional engagement can be blurry, and one way to think about it is by thinking about Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) concept of "flow experiences." Lawson and Lawson (2013) were first to find this parallel in literature: "When students experience states of flow, they become so intently engaged cognitively and emotionally, they lose awareness of time and space" (p. 436). Finally, another way for a student to be cognitively engaged is to "desire to go beyond the requirements" (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 63), to explore more than the class or reading offers.

*Emotional, or affective, engagement* relates to students' attitudes, sense of belonging, interest, curiosity (Appleton et al., 2008), positive and negative emotions in the classroom (happiness, sadness, enjoyment, frustration, anxiety, boredom), identification with school (Voelkl, 2012), and valuing the institution (Fredricks et al., 2004, 2016; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). Emotional engagement privileges students' feelings and emotional attachments (Lawson & Lawson, 2013), and those attachments have been shown to be related to higher motivations to complete tasks than as compared to the students without such emotional connections (Voelkl, 2012). Emotional engagement is usually measured by self-report surveys that ask students about their emotions, relations with instructors, dispositions to academic work (Fredricks et al., 2004).



In the past ten years, student engagement has started to expand. Some scholars describe components additional to the extant three described above. The new ones include motivational, cognitive-behavioral, social-behavioral (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012) and intellectual, physical, social, cultural (“Student engagement,” 2016). Generally, these additions accentuate nuances in understanding. For example, cognitive-behavioral engagement is different from behavioral or cognitive engagement in that it underlines the intentionality of efforts students channel into their learning (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012, p. 267). Indeed, behavioral engagement can be simply the result of learning the rules in the class; cognitive engagement can simply be automated mental processes occurring in our heads when we pay attention to something.

While all of these framings of engagement can prove relevant in particular settings, in this paper I will adhere to the more parsimonious and classical three-component student engagement model. Many of those additional facets of student engagement are not relevant in this study due to the specific focus and settings of the ethnography. For example, cultural engagement defined as the effort to help students with diverse cultural backgrounds feel welcome in a new culture (“Student engagement,” 2016) will not reap abundance of evidence, because (a) the overwhelming majority of the observed class was born and raised in the U.S., (b) the few international students in the class are sophomores or juniors and have already had their initial adjustment period in the U.S., (c) emotional engagement overlaps with, if not subsumes, cultural engagement in this study. Similar reasoning can be provided for other decisions to not use new models of engagement, which I exclude from this paper due to a page limit. Instead, I will focus on emotional engagement. Much is written about participation as a way to increase behavioral engagement (Angelino et al., 2007) and activities that promote cognitive engagement (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Barkley, 2010), yet emotional engagement has received significantly less attention (Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012).

**Sense of belonging**

According to Finn and Zimmer (2012), emotionally engaged students “feel included in the school community and that school is a significant part of their own lives” (p. 103). To be emotionally engaged is to feel connected to others. The sense of belonging is broadly defined as the subjective feeling of relatedness, membership, and connectedness (D’Eloia & Price, 2018). Similarly, Goodenow (1993) defined the sense of belonging as “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment” (p. 80). While both definitions imply that individual perceptions construct one’s sense of belongingness, Goodenow’s definition highlights the importance of social environments, with them—social interactions, that underlie those perceptions.

When the sense of belonging is experienced positively, people experience more positive emotions and feel uplifted (D’Eloia & Price, 2018). Conversely, people have negative experiences of the sense of belonging, they feel excluded and reluctant to participate (Hall, 2009). Negative experiences of the sense of belonging include being judged, disrespected, ignored, feeling like being a burden to others, whereas positive experiences include lack of fear to interact, feeling acknowledged and welcome in the community, acceptance and equal treatment (Hall, 2009).

A qualitative study of undergraduate students in New Zealand found that the sense of belonging is desirable and important (Kahu, 2014). In it, 19 students were asked to keep a weekly video diary and reflect on how their studies influenced their engagement. Prior to the beginning of the study, semi-structured family interviews were conducted and focused on motivations, preparation, and expectations. For most students, connection to their peers was crucial and was sought for in face-to-face classes. Classroom environments provided the only way to connect to the peers. In online classes, the students experienced fear of isolation and lack of connection.

A mixed-methods study of 212 undergraduate students in the U.S. revealed that the sense of belonging can be predicted from students' perceptions of instructor support through care and respect for students and the sense of belonging is related to students' motivation and beliefs about a course value (Zumbrunn, McKim, Buhs, & Hawley, 2014). It means that what the instructor does in class to create a positive environment is associated with students' sense of belonging. Small group work indicated that students could know each other better and eventually feel secure and supported in class. When instructors demonstrate enthusiasm and create supportive environment in class, students' sense of belonging and level of motivation are higher.

A cross-sectional survey study of 238 students in the U.S. found that when instruction is carefully designed and well implemented and when the instructor demonstrates warmth and organization, students' sense of belonging is improved (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007). Similar to the previous study, this study revealed that sense of belonging is strongly associated with students' motivations. However, the sense of belonging alone in a particular class does not transfer to the overall sense of belonging with the institution. This was a counter-intuitive finding, because the literature conceptualizes the sense of belonging with class and with an institution in the same way. To feel the sense of belonging with the school, additional factors are needed.

### **Role of emotions**

Emotions are quintessential in conceptualizing emotional engagement. Positive and negative emotions may enhance or inhibit our cognitive abilities. This is supported by findings from neuroscience, which suggest that learning experience for students is hardly rational alone and that cognition is shaped by our emotions (Immordino-Yang, 2011; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Our behaviors and thoughts begin with emotions. Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007) stated, "Emotions help to direct our reasoning into the sector of knowledge that is relevant to the current situation or problem" (p. 8). In other words, emotions have power to channel our focus in

certain ways. Emotions play a crucial role in how “we consolidate and access knowledge” (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007, p. 9). Emotions and thinking are intertwined, which means that emotional and cognitive engagement are also intertwined, which at least partially supports the classical three-component model of student engagement and may explain the robustness of the “flow experiences” mentioned earlier (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

Schuwirth (2013) argued that emotions play a decisive role in what students want to learn, dare to learn, want to forget, and do not want to forget (p. 15). There is good evidence that positive and negative emotions influence learning. Specifically, positive emotions (enjoyment, pride, hope, interest) facilitate cognitive processes such as attention and information processing, enhance memory and use of metacognitive strategies (Rowe, Fitness, & Wood, 2015).

A qualitative study conducted in South Africa found that positive emotional experiences in classes increase student emotional engagement (Naude, van den Bergh, & Kruger, 2014). Learning experiences in safe spaces that are authentic, provide peer interactions, ensure learner’s autonomy (when student’s personal growth is a priority) result in learning experiences with higher emotional engagement. When peer interactions provide social support, students are motivated for learning as well as aspire to transfer friendships beyond classroom (Naude et al., 2014, p. 222).

A qualitative study of 21 students and 15 faculty in Australia found that positive emotions are associated with increased motivation and self-efficacy—the perceived ability or inability to perform a task (Rowe et al., 2015). The sources of positive emotions for students were curricula that are relevant to their lives and spark their excitement, instructors who teach their course with genuine enthusiasm, and positive class environment, the process of learning itself, and some others (Rowe et al., 2015). In sum, positive emotions have a positive role on students.

**Teacher–student relationships**

Emotional engagement of students is considerable concern for teachers and universities (Grootenboer, 2010). Universities care about students' values, attitudes, emotions, and beliefs, which is evident in the university mission or program statements that focus on topics of ethics and justice. Teachers also care, in particular with students' having beliefs that are consistent with students' field of studies. Teachers know that deeply seated attitudes are hard to change, and that no amount of instruction can guarantee that, for example, students may learn best educational practices four years in college and then come to teach in public schools without using any of them (Grootenboer, 2010). Creating more emotionally engaging learning experiences may be one of the ways to address the issues of dearly held beliefs and dispositions.

Students care about their relationships with teachers. When students experience emotional support from teachers in classroom settings, they are more engaged in learning. A study of 346 undergraduate students in the U.S. confirmed that proposition (Mazer, 2017) and suggested that teachers' emotional support increases learners' interest in the subject matter, extending the time that learners give to the class by reflecting on it and thinking about the ways the subject matter applies in their everyday lives (i.e., knowledge transfer) (Mazer, 2017, p. 357).

Teacher–student communication is important, too (Reyes et al., 2012). The way a teacher communicates with a student can positively or negatively affect the student's emotional experience: Supportive communication, recognition of students' struggles are positively correlated with emotional engagement (Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010). Teacher's verbal and non-verbal behaviors may create a psychological sense of closeness for a student Teacher's vocal variety, movements, facial expressions, eye contact in the classroom may generate a student's sense of liking of the teacher and seek add to the overall positive classroom experience (Titsworth et al., 2010). Interactions between the teacher and students during a lecture are related to higher self-

reports of student engagement (Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012). The relationships that evolve between a teacher and a student predict student engagement, course satisfaction, and student's intention to leave school without graduation (Farr-Wharton, Charles, Keast, Woolcott, & Chamberlain, 2018).

To sum up the literature review session, emotional engagement is one of the three components of the student engagement model (together with behavioral and cognitive). The sense of belonging, emotions, and teacher–student relationships are important elements of emotional engagement. Research shows that positive experience of the sense of belonging, positive emotions, and positive experience of communicating and working with a teacher are related with higher emotional engagement as well as higher levels of motivation and greater interest in the course. Teachers and students influence the social environment in the classroom in which they work. For higher emotional engagement, it is important to create safe environment conducive for productive peer-to-peer and peer-to-instructor interaction. Teacher's course implementation, communication style, and non-verbal behavior also affect student emotional engagement.

## **Methodology**

### **Study background and context**

This pilot study was conducted as part of the coursework for the EDU 603 Introduction to Qualitative Research class at Syracuse University during the spring semester 2018. I have been trying to understand the phenomenon of engagement since the fall 2016, but my research endeavors were limited to unsystematic browsing through the literature in search of useful techniques that can increase student engagement. One book particularly impressed me with the techniques I have not heard about such as the use of a graphic syllabus (Barkley, 2010, pp. 146–148).

Between 2016 and 2018, I was invited three times for one-time panel discussion in the Russian literature classes taught at Syracuse by Dr. Patricia Burak. Together with other panelists, my role was to share my thoughts on the role the Russian Literature had on me and how people from the post-Soviet bloc perceive the Russian literature today. I was struck all three times at how different cohorts of students were excited about the Russian literature. This background experience of coming to the Russian literature classes as well as my search around the topic of engagement formed the context for this study. I wanted to know what makes students enjoy those classes.

### **Participants and site**

I chose the LIT 227 Russian Literature (duration: 1h20min) class as the ideal site to explore student emotional engagement for two major reasons. First, this is an elective class that is not required for anyone at the school. Elective courses can stimulate students' autonomous motivation by giving students choice and control over their course of studies (Kusurkar, Croiset, & Ten Cate, 2011). So, I expected the students in the Russian Literature class to be motivated to take this class, and motivation can be predicted from student emotional engagement, as the review of the relevant literature showed. In other words, I could expect to collect rich data regarding student emotional engagement. Second, I already had a grasp of what the Russian Literature class looks like and I knew personally Dr. Patricia Burak. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) warned, "The first problem to face in fieldwork is getting permission to conduct your study" (p. 84). I did not have to experience that. In the email communication on January 31, 2018, I received her permission to observe her classes.

There were 15 students in the Russian Literature class I observed, three of who I perceived as international students. Most students were white, two were Asian, one Middle Eastern, one possibly Hispanic. There were no African American students in that class. Choosing the students for interviews required some deliberation. I asked Patricia Burak who she can recommend to talk to and gave me several names of who she thought enjoyed the class the most. I observed two

classes to see who seemed to be most engaged—participated, asked questions, and contributed the discussion by drawing examples and comparisons that went beyond the assigned texts. I finally chose three students, understanding that I chose not to include the students who participated the least. This is because my focus is on rich emotional experiences, but I acknowledge that choosing other students may have yielded somewhat different findings. I contacted two of the chosen students by email and invited another student to participate in the study personally after one of the observations. All three students agreed to have a one-hour interview over the course of March 2018. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested, “[F]or the sake of anonymity, use fake names for the people about whom you are writing” (p. 99). In this study, I altered their names to Emily (female), Kevin (male), and Derek (male). Their areas of study are social sciences and humanities. All three participants were white junior students from the Northeastern and Midwestern U.S. Emily is in her second year in college (technically, a sophomore), but she has enough credits to have a junior class standing.

### **Data collection**

Drawing from ethnography which studies how people collectively form and maintain a culture (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 17), I immersed myself into participant observation and in-depth interviews. Both of those methods are called “ethnographic field methods” (Glesne, 2016, p. 23) and are widely used in qualitative research. By field, I mean an actual setting where I conducted the study and where there is its own social and political environment with “unequal power relationships” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p. 37). The intensive fieldwork took place in February and March, 2018. According to Creswell (2012), “Fieldwork in ethnography means that the researcher gathers data in the setting where the participants are located and where their shared patterns can be studied” (p. 470). I attempted to observe the site in minute details as well as the behaviors and language of the students in the field. I also attempted to participate during the



observation, remembering that participant observation is a continuum (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2016). Overall, I spent six hours making five observations of the class (each class lasted one hour and twenty minutes). As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested, I made observations in the field by hand, tried to be discreet while making them, then went to a private place and typed those observations on the computer (pp. 98–99). These were my extensive field notes that I later coded to determine recurring patterns as well as used to confirm information that the three students shared with me during the interviews.

Participant observation allowed me to witness firsthand what happens in the Russian Literature class. The class was set in a semicircle, the instructor mostly stood in the middle of the room, the discussion mostly happened through the instructor and towards the end of the class it resembled more of a conversation where the students addressed each other's comments or questions directly, teacher's and students' body language was indicative of their emotional states, and so forth. Many of the interview questions were informed by the very first class observation. Similarly, the things that I observed were confirmed in the interviews, which added to the study's triangulation—data verification using multiple sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 115; Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 328).

To prepare for the interviews, I developed an interview protocol initially consisting of 13 questions organized by thematic areas: motivation, connection, and behavior. With concrete and invaluable 500-word feedback from EDU 603 course instructor Dr. Susan Thomas, I rephrased some and added new rapport-building questions, and the final interview protocol had 16 questions. Three in-depth one-hour long semi-structured interviews with the participants were conducted in March, 2018, in the Unique Teahouse on Marshal Street in Syracuse, NY. I met with three students on three different days between 12:00 and 5:30 pm. With the participants' oral permission and my assurance of confidentiality of their participation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 103, 111), I

recorded all interviews with the voice recorder function on my LG v10 cell phone. These three recordings were later fully transcribed and coded within the span of 18 hours in MAXQDA—German cutting-edge software for working with qualitative data. I shared the recorded interviews and transcripts with the participants, but the actual recordings are destroyed as of this writing to prevent leakage of raw data on my part.

Interviews allowed me to hear the views of the students for whom the Russian literature class is part of this semester's curriculum. They were the ones who had to come to class prepared twice a week and build their knowledge bases, they were the primary stakeholders. Understanding what makes them emotionally engaged in their own words, anecdotes, and lines of reasoning opened up the doors of their thoughts that are otherwise closed to those outside their close circles. In those interviews, Emily, Kevin, and Derek were very open and willing to share their experiences.

### **Positionality**

People see the world, as the Russian saying goes, 'from their own belfry,' Researchers are in the same boat. By being reflexive, researchers can at least acknowledge to the audience that his or her study is influenced by his or her identity and place in the world. Gordon (2005) stated, "Researcher reflexivity is meant to advance the understanding of both the researcher and eventual readers about how past experiences and beliefs shape the ways in which stories get told" (p. 280). I am no exception. I went to school in Belarus, where Russian literature is taught all throughout middle school and high school. Albeit not without ideological overtones, still, I had a long journey to learn to love and appreciate the literary treasure of that culture and acquired the toolkit to interpret it through my life experience. Moreover, I am part of the Eastern Europe, and the things that the Russian authors speak resonate with me many times on a non-conscious level. In that sense, I was an insider in the observed LIT 227 class, someone from the mysterious 'bubbling cauldron' (Shakespeare) of Russian literature that the students in that class were exploring. Finally, I

personally know Dr. Pat Burak with who I have been building a friendly relationship since August 2015, and her acceptance of my pilot study proposal was fast and positive. Many a time she actively engaged me in the classroom, even to just confirm whether a word was correctly translated into English from Russian, symbolically validating my insider status.

Conversely, I was the ultimate outsider during my fieldwork. I am not American and I cannot imagine what it means to tap Russian literature for the first time in one semester. Nor can I ever feel what drives non-Russian-speaking people to study Russian literature. I did not know any student in that class, and I joined their classes in the middle of the semester where the learning dynamics has already established. I knew it would take time for the students' to get used to my presence. Glesne (2016) argued that "participant observation provides the opportunity for acquiring the status of 'trusted person'" (p. 64); however, I don't think I ever gained that status with the students simply because there was not enough time to do that. Also, even though I am also a student, to those 18–19-year-olds I was a 29-year-old visitor who spoke accented English and who had put on a researcher persona. It certainly limits ways in which I can fully understand those students' lived experiences, but I did all I could to be reflective during the pilot study.

### **Methods of analysis and themes overview**

After the data from the fieldwork were entered into the computer and interviews were transcribed, I first reread all the written materials afresh and then started the process of coding—"writing a word or short phrase that captures and signals what is going on in a piece of data in a way that links it to some more general analytic issue" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 146). I was going through each data set line by line. After coding was done and I came up with around 50 codes, I reread a set of field notes or an interview and wrote 750–900-word analytic memos for each of them, reflecting on the codes, finding overlapping patterns across the data sets, summarizing emerging themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 164–165).

After coding and analytic memos were written, I began an advanced stage of data analysis—interpretation. Patton (2002) provided a perceptive description of this stage: “Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order” (p. 480). I wrote out all the most frequently codes and themes on one letter-format page and tried to see linkages among them. I bore central questions of an ethnographer in mind: How does the culture-sharing group work? (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 92).

First, I chose the themes and codes that were central to my pilot study such as “different perspectives” or “the real world.” Second, I crossed out those that did not seem to pertain to emotional experience in the setting of the Russian literature class such as “lecture” or “silence.” Third, I asked myself how the major codes and themes can be categorized in groups and whether one theme is prevailing for the group or all themes of the group are related to an overarching theme. Finally, I considered how those categories help me understand what the students have to know to make their Russian literature class emotionally engaging. This understanding could bring me closer to tackling the research question of this pilot study: What is the experience of emotional engagement for students in college courses? It was by far the most challenging task due to back-and-forth reflections when I frequently asked myself: “How do I know that this interpretation is valid? Can there be an alternative explanation? Is it at all relevant?”

My analysis of students’ emotional engagement in the classroom lead me to five themes: search for intellectual challenge, involvement in a friendly conversation, recognition of flowing power relations, transfer to the real life, submission to inspiration. They will be discussed in more detail in the next section. I think, those themes can best describe an underlying reality of emotional engagement of the students in the LIT 227 Russian Literature class.

### **Discussion and implications**

A set of core ideals as well as mental and behavioral strategies describes the students' emotional engagement. In the LIT 227 Russian Literature class, they seek for intellectual challenge, involve in friendly conversations, recognize flowing power relations, transfer knowledge to the real life, and submit to inspiration. What unites those strategies is students' agency—their capacity of taking control of their learning to be fully engaged. The students want to be at least partially responsible for their emotional engagement, not merely entertained in the classroom, and they exert efforts to push themselves to be engaged. They all love Russian literature and find it to be relevant in their lives. They love to see how they change as a result of this course, because it helps them to better understand themselves and deeply explore life dilemmas which characterizes Russian literature.

Those students' core ideals and strategies reflect their daily journeys to self-discovery. It is exciting and invigorating to collectively explore the universal truths about human nature as they approach their early twenties, draw parallels with life as they know it, agree or disagree in an environment that stimulates multiple perspectives and welcomes many viewpoints. By analyzing fictional characters placed in often hyper realistic environments, the students learn insights about their own character. They emotionally engage, because the content of the class is essentially about the different versions of them that they potentially can be, but do not know they can be, or do not want to be, or do not know they already are. This is, of course, the outcome of engagement.

The students' input to emotional engagement involves proactive behaviors. They have to read hundreds of pages, think about and discuss together complex questions posed by a genuinely enthusiastic instructor, listen to each other, know when to jump into the conversation, what questions to ask, how to interpret phenomena—those small, incremental steps that lead to rewards significantly bigger than a grade or graduation—their own lives.

### **Search for intellectual challenge**

The students in the Russian literature class aspire to be intellectually stimulated, entertain new propositions, consider opinions that they have never thought about. To use Emily's words, "things that spark my brain" are the most engaging experiences in the classroom. The students are on the lookout for such moments in the class and vie for ingenious ideas. Kevin noticed:

I like to feel like I'm seeing something from a different perspective or learning a new skill that I know I can apply somewhere. I feel engaged when I'm dealing with something that I'm not completely sure about.

Kevin is passionate about the unknown territory of inquiry, of which he has no fear; on the contrary, he is intrigued by the unknown. Perhaps, it's more vivid in his following observation:

I enjoy trying something new, even if in the moment it's taking me out of my comfort zone. I like looking at different perspectives, especially ones that I really disagree with, because it gives me the chance to see what it's really about and not just what I may have heard from someone say about the topic.

Kevin enjoys the experience of meeting the unfamiliar face to face and not reacting to it in and suspicious, argumentative, or rebutting manner. He gives himself time to think about his classmates' contributions almost with the humility of a philosopher.

For Derek, Russian Literature is "a little bit outside my comfort zone." But he enjoys it for similar reasons that Kevin mentioned—fresh viewpoints and ways of thinking. He mentioned that he had recently got interested in various spiritual concepts, and Russian literature fulfills this niche for him. Listening to what other people's thoughts is paramount for his emotional engagement:

I guess, it's the different perspectives. If I have an idea or a perspective and I share it, it can be countered in a way I didn't think about by somebody else or by professor. Hearing a range of different perspectives is really interesting, 'cause when I read it, I only have my perspective.

Derek's acknowledgement of his own limitations is indicative. Even though he has ideas and is willing to share them, he is ready to be challenged by unexpected comments and insights from the peers and teacher. His longing for the intellectual sparks is stronger than the risk to be objected to.

Emily echoes Kevin's and Derek's words: "I just really like feeling intellectually stimulated rather than brain-dead in a class." That excitement is never tiring for her: "I always come out of that class feeling energized, even though it's kind of late—just because of the mental stimulation." Similar to her peers, she thinks it is "important to hear from everyone and hear different perspectives." It would not be far-fetched to say that for Emily the Russian Literature class resembles an open market of ideas, meanings, and standpoints. She admitted:

[. . .] when I go to Russian Lit, I'm excited, I'm on the edge of my seat, and I love how everyone has something to say about it, and we can all build on each other. I like the excitement of hearing somebody say something that triggers another thought or new idea; or reading a line again and . . . making some kind of connection—that for me is exciting.

Emily enjoys it when somebody's words during a class discussion bring a slew of associations in her head and encourage her to revisit portions of the readings to see them in a new light. She also likes the collaborative nature of the exploration of hidden meanings, when students construct an elaborate interpretation by "building on" one another's comments.

During participant observation, I noticed how the search for intellectual challenge reached its peak towards the end of a particular topic and especially a class session. The students would jump into discussions, complementing each other, disagreeing with each other, asking questions, and changing the direction of the discussion. During my second observation, Kevin asked a question from Pat, and one of his classmates raised her hand, saying, "Can I respond?" During my fourth observation, the students were discussing a movie and the first comments were positive. Then one student said she did not like the movie because it was simplistic, and then other students started to talk about how they did not like it, either. That could be peer pressure or being nice, but it was the rupture in the way the conversation went after that comment that was important. This observation together with the students' reported feelings of excitement supplement the emotional foundations of learning (Titsworth et al., 2010) and cognition (Immordino-Yang, 2011).

**Involvement in a friendly conversation**

When the students talked about class discussions, they conceptualized it in terms that typically describe a friendly conversation. For a friendly conversation to happen, people have to feel safe to talk with and listen to each other, reciprocate the interlocutor verbally or non-verbally.

Friends usually have common interests and enjoy being around each other. Emily opined:

I highly doubt there's anyone in that class that doesn't like reading, 'cause why would they be there anyways [*smiles*]? Being in the class where we all obviously have that in common—our love of literature and our willingness to talk about [it]—some more than others. There's a good amount of people who regularly discuss in class. I think, that makes me enjoy it more. We all get to build on each other, learn from each other, too—not just from the professor or the book itself. The discussion is definitely my favorite part, and the feeling that it gives me.

For Emily, class discussions are a gathering of a congenial company that has a friendly conversation. People in this company learn by sharing ideas and bouncing off of each other. She recognizes that the peers are equally important for knowledge construction as the teacher, and she likes the emotions that such conversations give her.

Emily's comment is insightful, because it describes her feeling of being part of a like-minded group—the sense of belonging that is important for emotional engagement and motivation (D'Eloia & Price, 2018; Goodenow, 1993; Kahu, 2014). Derek's words are in line with those of Emily: “It feels like people getting together to discuss a book more than people going to class.” Those friendly conversations sometimes go beyond the classroom. Kevin and Emily said they regularly discussed the class and readings with some of their classmates outside the class. Derek did not have the same experience, but he said he would appreciate it: “Yeah, I think, that would involve me and I'd feel more connected with people in there.”

However, what is surprising and does not go in line with the sense of belonging research is that the sense of belonging for the students in LIT 227 is momentary and lasts for the time of the class session or shortly after that. They had in-the-moment sense of community rather than a



stable friendly relationship. All three students simply do not feel the need to form out-of-class friendships. Kevin admitted:

In class, it's kind of cool to have people to talk to, even if you don't hang out with them outside of class. It's cool at least in class to be able to say, "Oh, did you get to this part?"—"Yeah, that was really cool, that part of the book," something like that . . . I don't feel the need to make friends, but if I have someone that I can talk to, that's cool, too.

For Kevin, the idea of being friends with classmates is not exciting, it is simply "cool." It may be because he already formed the circle of college friends and three months is not enough to build trust. Derek thinks the reasons are in the zeitgeist:

I have an opinion that students these days, in my experience, don't—in any class—get their way into making friends for the most part. In the classroom setting or after class. Maybe it's a cultural thing? In all my classes, it just doesn't happen very much very often.

For Derek, such friendships with classmates out of class could help him feel more connected to the peers, but the times and culture dictate their rules which he accepts.

One way or another, the students value the friendly tone of the classroom discussions and state that even if they do not engage in a conversation, it does not mean they are disengaged. Emily said: "Sometimes if I feel I can't contribute anything useful, I just try to listen and absorb." Kevin asserted: "If the discussion in class isn't engaging me and I recognize that, I try to get involved in it or just pay a little more attention to it." Kevin pointed to his responsibility in being engaged. Derek seconded the idea of responsibility, which he extended to preparation: When he is prepared, he is excited and engaged, if not, he steps back and listens: "I feel like I can't really jump in, because I'm not prepared. I don't have the knowledge to participate in that discussion." This comment communicates Derek's respect that he puts on the informed opinions of his peers. And perhaps he respects the time. LIT 227 is only 1 hour 20 minutes long, he may well spend this time by listening to the teacher and peers discussing the readings rather than participate for the sake of participation. Emphasis on active listening characterizes their friendly class conversations.

**Recognition of flowing power relations**

There are no rigid protocols in LIT 227, and the students do not feel the pressure of teacher's authority. In almost all of my observations, I noticed the students may come to class as late as 15 minutes after the start. Instead of casting a scornful look, Dr. Patricia Burak welcomes them in passing and continues the discussion. The students typically raise their hands to answer or ask a question, but they also jump into the conversation without worrying about those rules.

At first sight, anyone will think that all the power is concentrated in Dr. Burak's hands in the Russian Literature class. The class layout is a semi-circle that reminds a crescent, and Dr. Burak is standing in front of the class in the middle of the crescent asking questions she has carefully prepared, calling on students, lecturing, citing critics, providing feedback, telling anecdotes from personal life or life in general. Emily's words are close to my observations:

[Dr. Burak] walks around the room, she will see you in the eye, she gets in your face sometimes, she asks you directly what you think. And that definitely keeps you on your toes. If you're not paying attention and she asked you a question and you're not on the right page, it can be flustering. Her engagement drives the engagement of the rest of the class.

While Emily's description does resemble a 'sage on the stage' paradigm in form, in essence Dr. Burak is practicing a 'guide on the side' paradigm. She is not the expert who fills passive students with knowledge. Emily considers Dr. Burak's behaviors engaging and likes them. The students recognize and like that. Kevin said:

. . . Professor Burak helps guide students to what she thinks the author was intending, but she also admits when she's not sure about something as well. I think, that's engaging, because if even Professor Burak doesn't know it, then it makes me want to go home and look it up.

Kevin's words confirm the guiding aspect of Dr. Burak's teaching, especially when she directly admits things she does not know. In my observations, that happened several times with the Russian language. She would ask me several times to confirm the translations. This is one example of how Dr. Burak subverts the traditional power relations—by giving power to someone she thinks knows

more than her in that particular context. For instance, she asked me in class if the word “doctor” is abbreviated in a certain way in Russian or what a “death department” means in the Russian original. Once a student asked her if young people in Russia and, broader Eastern Europe, read books such as Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, she redirected the power imposed on her to me as someone who represents Eastern Europe and let me answer that question. She actively involved me into the conversation, although I clearly was not part of the class.

Emily, Kevin, and Derek think she is a good facilitator of the classroom conversations and is reflexive of her role in class. She prepares the questions about the readings beforehand and sends them out to the students by email. She has multiple additional books on her teacher’s table while in the classroom. Emily reflected on that:

I like how she reads from the books and analyses of the books. I like how she has questions ready for us already, and we know what they are going to be. It’s good to have an organic discussion, but at the same time if it’s too unstructured, it can flop. I like that you come in knowing what you’re going to discuss. I also like how she responds to the students’ comments. She really lets you know that she hears you and understands what you’re saying. I think, that validation is important.

Emily’s comment illuminates Dr. Burak’s role outside the class as an instructional designer whose guidelines help her focus her readings and as a facilitator who helps classroom discussions go in a structured way. She likes her feedback as validation. This is important, I also noticed how Dr. Burak only several times used feedback as a corrective tool—when a student did not describe the ending of *Doctor Zhivago* correctly. That misunderstanding was simply a matter of fact, not interpretation or opinion.

Feedback as validation is Dr. Burak’s way to empower students. In my observations, she used it intermittently encouraging students with phrases such as “superb,” “well-said,” “perfect,” “I agree,” “excellent,” “good choice,” and the like. It is empowering because it reinforces the students to participate next time again, they feel valued and appreciated. Her interactions with the

students are very well-received, adding to the students' emotional engagement (Titsworth et al., 2010). She creates emotional support for the students in the classroom ("she really lets you know that she hears you") adds to the students' positive teacher–student communication (Mazer, 2017).

Finally, humor helps power flow in the classroom. Emily noted, "When we have moments like that when somebody makes a joke and everyone laughs, I think, that pulls people together more rather than just talking about the material. It humanizes the situation, I guess." That is to say, humor levels out the class dynamics, makes it less serious and more cordial ("humanizes the situation"). Derek thought in a similar vein, "I think the humor makes it feel natural, more like friends getting together to talk about the book." Sometimes laughter in the class in my observations was unintentional, but it brought that "naturalness" that Derek mentioned. Once Dr. Burak posed a complex question and called on a student. The student rounded her eyes, pressed her body to the back of her chair combo desk and said in a high voice, "But I did not volunteer!" It was funny, I think, precisely because everyone knew the question was complicated and no one wanted to speak.

The students in LIT 227 recognize the volatile nature of the power dynamics in their class. It is not concentrated rigidly in Dr. Burak's hands. In fact, she tries to give the power back to the students. She is a facilitator rather than a traditional lecturer. She wants them to generate answers for themselves, welcomes opinions, and always tries to empower the students to participate with her validating feedback. Humor also helps relieve the pressure in the classroom and help the power flow among everyone on the class.

### **Transfer to the real life**

Students' emotional engagement in the Russian Literature class is mediated by the degree to which new knowledge can be applied outside the classroom. Emily, Kevin, and Derek spoke at length about how LIT 227 helps them understand their lives and world around them better. Emotional engagement is both metaphysical and pragmatic for the students. Two Kevin's quotes

are indicative: (a) “I feel like when I’m in her [Dr. Burak’s] class, I’m learning interpretation skills that I’ll be able to apply to any book, not just Russian literature,” (b) “I like to feel like I’m seeing something from a different perspective or learning a new skill that I know I can apply somewhere.”

He illustrated it with an example:

That happened in *Anna Karenina* with the thunderstorm at the end of the book, when Levin’s running out of it, she asked us what we thought it might have meant. Finally, she said, “It’s his salvation, it’s his baptism.” Ooh! [*laughs*] I didn’t even think of that. Moments like that are really good, because it makes me want to go back and read all the books I’ve read and look for moments like that that I may have missed out on.

In this example, Kevin sounds excited about the new toolkit of skills he acquired in LIT 227.

The dichotomy between the university life and “the real world” is prevalent in all three interviews. Kevin is engaged and invested in the Russian Literature class, because he sees the way he can use interpretations skills to other literary works. Kevin is learning it to use in life rather than to get a grade. In fact, he mentioned that grades were not the reason he attends college: “Grades have never been my end, my top priority.” In a somewhat different fashion, Derek is talking about the “real world” application of theoretical knowledge from LIT 227:

I wanted to do a class that was different from my usual course load, which it is—it is extremely different. More, like, artistic and expressive. To stretch myself in a different way, because [in LIT 227] I work on softer skills and communicating with people, expressing ideas. I think that those skills are a lot of times more important than the technical skills. And I enjoy the spiritual aspect, talking deeper about life, why we are all here at all.

Derek sees the benefit of the Russian Literature class in the enhancement of his soft skills and broadening his outlooks on life in general.

For Emily, LIT 227 is beneficial in that it helps her hone her storytelling and writing skills:

When I don’t read for a long time, I feel slower, and when I’m writing, it just doesn’t flow. But if I’m reading a really good writer, it inspires me more to think differently. It adds fluidity to my thought process.

Emily enjoys Russian literature for its quality writing, and reading quality authors improves her thinking and, hence, writing.

The students value the transferability of the Russian Literature class. It is peculiar that the three students were able to find idiosyncratic ways in which LIT 277 improves their skills outside that class which help them grow—interpretive skills for Kevin, soft skills for Derek, and writing skills for Emily. Their personal interests and curiosity facilitate their emotional engagement, which is aligned with the view of emotional engagement in literature (Appleton et al., 2008).

### **Submission to inspiration**

To be emotionally engaged, the students willingly yield to inspiration in LIT 227. They are inspired by the feeling of the progress they make, by the instructor's passion and knowledge, and by the beautiful writing of the Russian authors. They reflect on the class after it is over, they want to spread the word about it to their friends and family.

After her first class, Emily called her mother to share her excitement about the Russian Literature class. Emily admitted: "It's the most exciting class I have. It's like a feeling in my stomach, when I have something to say, I'm excited to say it and discuss these books." And above all, it's her feeling of progress: "Russian literature have added so much to my life [that] I would never trade it for anything . . . I know I'm just growing so much every day." Emily's emotional engagement in LIT 227 is maximum, because she can compare herself to the one was prior to taking that class. Such a rapid change in a brief period of time is tremendous for her.

Kevin was inspired by the books, and his behavior changed: He chose to proactively share his excitement with his relatives:

Even in my free time, I'm still thinking about her Russian literature class. It's not just something for the class, something that I'm interested in. I bought my cousin *The Brothers Karamazov* for Christmas, I bought my mother *Anna Karenina*. I wanted other people to read these books so I can talk about them with them.

Thinking about the course after it is a direct indicator of Kevin's emotional engagement. He chose to spend his time and money to make gifts that, in his view, will excite others just as much.

All three students were excited by Dr. Burak and her passion. Derek confessed: “I admire her—her passion for Russian literature. She’s a wealth of knowledge about it. She’s obviously very experienced as a professor and is good at guiding the discussions.” Emily: “She just loves Russian literature so much, she’s so into it. Her love of it makes me love it. It radiates from her—her passion for it. It rubs off on you.” In those two quotes, the commonality is that the teacher is the additional source of inspiration, not only Russian literature. Without Dr. Burak, it would be a different class. In my observations, I noticed how she always brought several translations of the same book. She gave me some of them to browse through, they were all underscored and marked with her handwriting. I could witness how she had engaged with those readings and what questions she wrote in shorthand on the margins. The students’ excitement was also confirmed by her previous students’ projects that she brought to class to show to the students—collections of poetry, paintings, booklets. Her previous students had also felt inspired by her Russian literature class. Emily said, “I’m going to paint water colors from *Doctor Zhivago*”—this is compelling evidence for her inspiration by the class. This project in a way will return her to the class discussions.

At the end of this section, I want to include a quotation from Emily’s interview which succinctly summarizes the nature of inspiration and its significance for the students:

Professor Burak’s always talking about how these books are not so much about plot as they are about life. That speaks for itself. Reading these stories is a way for us to explore our own lives. Reading beautiful writing always adds something to my life, even if it’s about something that’s totally unrelated to what I’m studying or to my life. It makes you smarter, I think, and it helps you grow as a person. It’s a way to use my curiosity—I have an abundance of curiosity. Getting to explore something new and random (in terms of my area of study)—that’s why we get these electives, to add richness and texture to life. These books are such a beautiful writing, it enriches life.

Emily highlighted that the books students read in the Russian literature class have a lasting effect. They feel like they develop into mature adults who know themselves better. Some students are inspired to create art. The instructor is knowledgeable, and the readings are aesthetically beautiful.

**Implications**

The present pilot study has two major implications—for the everyday pedagogical practice and for research. For everyday pedagogy, this study emphasizes the active role of students in their emotional engagement as well as the role of inspirational and passionate instructors in promoting emotional engagement. While the instructors constantly improve their pedagogies, they can also use the data from this study to understand what it means for the students to be emotionally engaged—to be in the class that helps them embark on a journey to their self-discovery. The be on the journey, students search for intellectual challenge, involve in friendly conversations during class discussions, recognize the flowing power relations, transfer knowledge to aspects outside the classroom, and submit to inspiration. With that being said, caution needs to be taken. The obvious limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one location with one course relating to the field of humanities across a relatively short period of time with a particular focus on rich emotional engagement strategies and ideals that students employ.

For research, the study confirmed the prevailing ways in which emotional engagement has been conceptualized and studied in scholarly literature. The sense of belonging, emotions in learning, and teacher–student relationships are valid lenses for understanding students’ emotional engagement. This study did not address student disengagement and it did not give voices to the less engaged students. Future research may help explore what specifically makes students disengaged in the classrooms and what the nature of that disengagement is. The current pilot study may be redesigned into a full study in a different setting and confirm or disconfirm the themes it uncovered. Understanding emotional aspect of student engagement can help scholars view the student engagement holistically and suggest ways to increase student engagement and achievement.

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