

The Cultural Capital of Reading in the Early 21st Century:

A Creative and Critical Study

Emily Sun

BA(Hons), GDipEd. (Curtin University)

This thesis is presented for the degree of

Masters of English and Creative Arts at Murdoch University

2018

COPYRIGHT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I understand that, under the provisions s51.2 of the Copyright Act 1968, all or part of this thesis may be copied without infringement of copyright where such a reproduction is for the purposes of study and research.

This statement does not signal any transfer of copyright away from the author.

Signed:

.....

Full Name of Degree: Master of Arts in English and Creative Arts

Thesis Title: The Cultural Capital of Reading in the Early 21st Century: A Creative and
Critical Study

Author: Emily Sun

Year: 2018

I declare that this an account of my research and contains as its main content of work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution. The research involving human data reported in this thesis was assessed and approved by Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee: Approval Number: 2014/066. The first story, "How to Read Shakespeare in the Post-Atomic Age Whilst Duck Sitting in Outer Suburbia" was published in 2016 as "How to Read Shakespeare While Duck-Sitting in Outer Suburbia." *Transnational Literature* 8 (2): 1-7.

.....

Emily Sun

Abstract

Advances in technology, as well as shifts in the socio-cultural landscape, have democratised and created new forms of reading so that today the term reading itself is contested. This creative-based thesis, examining how an individual's socio-economic and education background shapes their reading identity and informs their reading practices, consists of two components: a small anthology of creative writing and a dissertation based on qualitative research.

The stories in the anthology—including traditional and experimental short fiction and a dramatic script—represent the perspectives of an array of characters in diverse settings for whom reading, broadly defined, matters in different ways. In capturing the minutiae and nuance of everyday practices often taken for granted or difficult to capture in traditional scholarly writing, these creative pieces illustrate the tensions constituting the field of reading.

Each piece, and the themes inspiring and embedded in the creative work, are those that emerged from the thesis's critical component. The dissertation is a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews conducted with 14 Western Australian teenagers. Using French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital as a point of departure, the study examines and reflects on the ways older teenagers in the final years of secondary school value various forms of reading in situated contexts. The study finds that reading practices are shaped largely in response to a participant's home and school culture and the value of each practice is context-dependent; yet participants determined the legitimacy of these practices according to

institutionally sanctioned notions about reading. Using rich descriptions and imaginative insights to explore how individual dispositions influence and challenge various practices, the thesis makes a combined critical and creative contribution to the existing body of work on reading as a socio-cultural practice.

Dedication

For my son, Luke-X

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my principal supervisor Associate Professor Anne Surma for her patience, encouragement, and guidance. She allowed me to develop my own ideas and methods but always steered me in the right direction so that the resulting thesis has legitimacy as both a creative work and a critical study. I also thank my secondary supervisor Associate Professor Wendy Cumming-Potvin and am indebted to her for sharing her expertise. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Simone Lazaroo who was not on my supervisory team but played a pivotal role in my decision to undertake this degree.

I must express my profound gratitude to my parents Lee Lai Chu and Chi-Ying Sun for sharing their life stories and family histories. These insights enabled me to develop a richer and more in-depth project with a broader historical perspective. I would also like to thank Katy Kell, Juliette Grey, Veronica Gardiner, Mikaela Nyman, and Dr Cecilia Sun who have supported me in various ways.

Finally, I must thank G for his unconditional love and support, and Luke-X for inspiring me with this project in the first place.

Preface

“Backyard Ducks, Carparks and Other Stories About Reading”, is a collection of short fiction which explores the cultural capital of reading and the ways in which each generation challenges but also conforms to the previous generation’s attitudes towards reading. Although the anthology reads as a stand-alone piece, it is one half of a unified thesis that folds in both the imaginative and creative, with critical and empirically grounded scholarship. Each component of this thesis was written in dialogue with the other, and as readers move between the creative and critical components—and thus as they move between different genres and modes of reading—they are themselves offered the opportunity to reflect on their own reading practices and positions, and to consider how they respond to and value particular texts. When woven together the stories and the dissertation offer interpretations on how these pluralist narratives about reading are situated in a much longer history of literacy. In this way, the readers of this thesis, including parents, teachers, and perhaps teenagers themselves, who are interested in the reading practices of contemporary youth, are encouraged to reflect upon the multifaceted forces that shape the field of reading.

Table of Contents

Abstract	
Acknowledgements	i
Preface	ii

Part One: Creative Component

Backyard Ducks, Car-Parks and Other Stories About Reading

How to Read Shakespeare in the Post-Atomic Age Whilst Duck-Sitting in Outer Suburbia	3
Eudaimonia	10
Conversations in the Car-Park: A One-Act Play	21
Reading and Forgetting	36

Part Two: Dissertation

The Cultural Capital of Reading in the Digital Age: A Critical Study

Chapter One: Introduction	64
Chapter Two: Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital	80
Chapter Three: Research Methods	92
Chapter Four: Participant Profiles and Key Themes	103
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion	133
Epilogue	148
Reference List	150
Appendix I: List of Acronyms.....	173
Appendix II: The Qualitative Continuum.....	174
Appendix III: Semi-Structured Interview Questions	176
Appendix IV: Consent Forms and Recruitment Flyers.....	184

Appendix V: Example of Coded Interview and Transcripts.....	189
Appendix VI: Additional Participant Information and Reading Position Maps	190

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Profile Summary of the 14 participants.	106-7
Table 5.1: Hierarchy of Senior School English subjects in Western Australia	140
Table 5.2: Percentage of ATAR students at Participants' Schools (2014-2015)	142

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Summary of Data Collection Sources	95
Figure 3.2: Cyclical Method of Analysis	101

Part One
Creative Component

Backyard Ducks, Car-Parks, and Other Stories About Reading

This isn't simply about reading or functional literacy. It never has been. *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Oryx and Crake*, should be required reading for secondary English. They remind us that civil society, human relationships and freedom are dependent on free flows of knowledge.

— Allan Luke, *Theory into Practice*

How to Read Shakespeare in the Post-Atomic Age Whilst

Duck-Sitting in Outer Suburbia

The three ducklings are dabbling in the large plastic turquoise clamshell we purchased for Ethan a few weeks before he was born. The ducklings are the first creatures to use the clamshell for the purpose it was intended. My husband Marco, an Italian-Australian, and I, a Chinese-Australian, live a few doors down from my elderly parents who have exiled themselves to one of the suburbs where key scenes in *Bogan Hunters* were filmed. I am defensive when my city friends visit and point out that I need to find a way to make more money so that I can move to a better school zone. Like all parents, I want my child to have opportunities that I didn't have so I sometimes lose sleep over my inability to channel my inner Tiger Mother, even though I wake up very early every Saturday morning to drive Ethan to a Chinese school in the city. I will also admit that I was initially nervous about moving to this suburb because it is not known for its cultural diversity. In my first month here, the "Fuck off, We're Full" bumper stickers triggered mild panic attacks, even though I wasn't sure which ethnic minority the driver was addressing. I also chased and confronted a couple of local teens who made a casually racist comment as they walked past me when I was weeding in the front garden.

We think that the ducklings are Muscovies, which means their bills are pale pink and not yellow like the ones near Toad Hall. They look very different from our dearly departed Duckie who was a wild duck hybrid that hatched in our electric frying pan one summer and died in spring. We joked about roasting it, but no one was game enough to eat a duck that had died from natural causes. My mother would not let

anyone, least of all her friend and former restaurant owner, Mr. Chan, joke about consuming Duckie because of her animistic beliefs. She truly believes that Duckie was a self-sacrificing duck who had taken the place of a relative who was suffering from a blood cancer. All jokes about serving up Duckie and accounts of Mr. Chan inflating the corpse of dead ducks by giving them what looked like mouth-to-mouth resuscitation are still met with a stern frown.

I wait on the patio for my octogenarian father to drop Ethan off after school and wonder what Marco will do if two or three of the ducklings turn out to be drakes. Ideally, we will have three females and no males, or one male and two females. Any other combination could end badly. Our backyard is very green despite being built on sand dunes because Marco has spent many hours enriching the sand with sheep manure and compost. I contemplate taking a crash course in botany as I harbour hopes of one day writing the Great West Australian Novel. The only plants I recognise are the ones you can find in the supermarket.

Ethan runs in from the garage and hugs me. The first thing Gong Gong says is, “Don’t let him play with the ducks. They carry avian flu.”

Although I know that one day I may live to regret not spending more time with him, I find it rather challenging to accommodate my father’s helicopter grand-parenting of Ethan. I take into account that he perhaps suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder because of the Second World War, even though he denies it left any scars. “My generation is tougher than yours,” he always says. Perhaps telling and retelling stories from his childhood means that he has never had nightmares. By the time I was Ethan’s age, I had heard so many of these stories that I felt as if I had also lived out the war in the jungles of Malaya and witnessed the bayonetting of Japanese collaborators and heard the cries of a young boy crying out for water from his deathbed. Ethan also

knows that Gong Gong's younger brother died from dehydration the year the war ended and understands that this is why Gong Gong is always monitoring Ethan's water consumption. I try to hold my tongue, but it's always challenging when you are middle-aged, and your father lectures you about your overly "Chinese" parenting-style ("Why do you send him to weekend Chinese school with all the rote-learning sheep?"), but at the same time points out your failure to follow the teachings of Confucius ("You can't let him play all the time! 'Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.'"). All I want to do is get Ethan out of his school clothes and into the shower before dinnertime.

"You won't believe what Mr. Collins taught us today," Ethan says.

"I can help him with his Chinese homework, but don't make him write out every word. It takes too long, do it with him. Ethan, where is your work? I want to show you," Gong Gong says, and begins rummaging through Ethan's school bag.

"Shakespeare," Ethan says.

"Where did you put his Chinese homework? You know that I should be teaching him. It's too much for a seven-year-old. We are not in Hong Kong. Where is the teacher from? Taiwan? Mainland China?"

"I'm the only Year Two kid there!" Ethan continues, as Gong Gong continues his search for the Chinese book. "The others are in Years Four or Five...and I am allowed to go to the Bell Shakespeare company play with them. Why did you waste so much money on sending me to the other school?"

"Friends are important," Gong Gong calls out from the house. "I need to show you the strokes, so you can show him where the order and where you apply pressure. There is an art to writing Chinese."

I've seen this week's Chinese homework and know that it involves sixteen strokes. There are eighty-eight square boxes in Ethan's exercise book which means that there are 1,408 character strokes to complete in the five hours we have before bedtime.

I send Ethan to Chinese school because I feel guilty for not speaking to him in Chinese. In the late twentieth century, many of us who knew how to speak it pretended we could not and eventually forgot our mother tongue. When Ethan was first born, I thought that being half-Chinese in the Chinese century would suffice, but now I feel intense pressure to raise a bilingual child as we live on the edge of Asia.

"Mr. Collins is the best teacher ever!" Ethan says, jumping up and down. "We learnt the prologue in *Romeo and Juliet*."

Gong Gong rejoins us in the patio as he has given up looking for the missing book.

"*Romeo and Juliet*?" Gong Gong says.

"Do you know what's going on? Are you reading a children's version or are you reading in Shakespearean English?" I ask.

"Of course," Ethan says proudly. "It's not the kid's version, *and* we watched a DVD."

"Hang on! Isn't that about gangs?" I ask. "The one with lots of guns? They show you that at school?"

"What are you talking about, Mum?" Ethan says indignantly. "It's a play, not a movie!"

"You mean people on a stage in old-fashioned costumes?" I ask.

"Yes, mum."

"Do you know what it's about?" I ask.

"Of course I do," Ethan says. "It's about crazy teenagers."

"You know ... um ... that it's ... um ... about romantic love?"

“In fair Verona ...two households, both alike in dignity,” Gong Gong begins.

“No, no,” Ethan corrects him. “*Two* households, both alike in dignity, in fair Verona, where we lay our scene.”

“Do you know where Verona is?” I ask.

“Yes. Mr. Collin taught us all of that. In Italy and the Capulets and the Montagues are nobles which means they are posh, but they are also ruffians,” Ethan explains.

“Do you know what ruffian means?” I ask, wondering why his teacher chose this play.

“They are like old-fashioned bogans,” Ethan interprets.

He pulls out a printout of the first twenty-eight pages of the play that his teacher has downloaded from Project Gutenberg. Gong Gong, who is as intrigued as I am, sits down next to Ethan and I can sense his pride in having a seven-year-old grandson who reads Shakespeare. When he was Ethan’s age, knowing how to read English let alone having access to a Shakespeare play was unheard of in the jungle hideaway. After the initial reign of terror, the Japanese began their imperial rule and allowed those who emerged from the jungle to attend their schools. It was in one of these schools that Gong Gong half-heartedly learnt how to sing Japanese nursery rhymes.

“This is the fun part,” Ethan says and reads off his sheet, “Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? I do bite my thumb, sir? Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? Aside to Gregory. Is the law of our side if I say ay... Your turn...”

I take some credit for introducing Ethan to Shakespeare. A few months ago, he saw my old copy of *Macbeth* lying around the house during one of my de-cluttering frenzies and asked why the ghoulish woman on the cover had a green face. It was the copy I took from a school in London when I had to teach a class of Year nine, many of whom were refugee kids from a limited schooling background, how to pass their Key Stage

3 English exam on the three apparitions. I questioned why these students had to learn Shakespeare before they could read a newspaper article, but a colleague defended the curriculum by saying that to succeed in their world one must know Shakespeare. I remember that each time I stood before the class, I thought to myself: *Prince Harry is at Eton and has an Oxbridge professor preparing him for the same exam. Shakespeare wrote this play for Prince Harry's ancestor.* That was back in the days when students only had to learn a couple of scenes and not the entire play.

I suggest to Ethan that we should all read a different part because Shakespeare is a play and not a novel, so he assigns me the role of Abraham and Gong Gong the part of Gregory. I worry about the age appropriateness of the exchange between Sampson and Gregory as they speak about gang rape but Ethan skips over that part and focuses instead on the section that he has already read to himself. As we rehearse, I find myself loving the rhythm and drama of the rapid exchange between Sampson and Abraham. As I get into my role of a young ruffian, I begin to see why Ethan loves Shakespeare so much.

I tell Ethan that when I was his age, I performed the *Double, double, toil and trouble* chant, not realising it was written by Shakespeare until I was in high school. Gong Gong recalls how, after the war, he won a scholarship to the British-run school and learnt Shakespeare before he knew how to speak English. "I sometimes spoke in Shakespearean English to my teachers," he said. "It was rote learning and it was how I eventually I understood the story."

I reminisce about the last time I was in a school production: it was in my first year of high school when I played a fairy from *A Midsummer's Night Dream*.

“I wanted to be in my school’s *Macbeth*,” Gong Gong says, “but I had to go home after school to shop and cook for the family. After my father died, I was the only one who knew how to slaughter chickens.”

We continue reading Shakespeare on the patio and the curious ducklings emerge from under their makeshift compost-box house. Ducks are social creatures that can die from loneliness.

No one mentions Chinese homework for the rest of the afternoon.

Eudaimonia

Charlotte rode the subway in New York, the metro in Paris and the tube in London, but she couldn't remember the last time she took the train in Perth. She would have Ubered it all the way to Northville this particular morning, were it not for the accident on the freeway because even though her Audi was a three-year-old model and not in an ostentatious colour, it was still noticeably shinier than the Holdens and Hyundais people in Northville drove. She would have cancelled this morning's meeting had it not been for her 18-year-old niece Hayley's insistence that she meet Jessikah, an old high school friend she called "the social media guru." Hayley explained to her aunt that Jessikah had close to 6500 followers on Instagram, and although this was only 0.00005 percent of the number of followers Ariana Grande had, it was an impressive feat for a local girl. Of all her classmates from school, Jessikah was the one most likely to return to their ten-year reunion as a multi-millionaire. Hayley herself only had 335 followers. Charlotte only had 243 followers on Instagram and fewer on Twitter and consoled herself with the fact that even a former supermodel like Linda Evangelista struggled to compete with the next generation with only had half a million followers. Charlotte needed someone au fait with social media to help her build a lifestyle brand.

Hayley had wanted to be her social media manager, but Hayley's mother Tahnee interfered and made up some excuse about Hayley needing to focus on her TAFE studies even though Tahnee had never cared about the girl's education. In fact, she had turned down Charlotte's offer to sponsor Hayley's education at St. Catherine's, Charlotte's alma mater, saying that it wouldn't be fair on her other children if only Hayley went to an elite school. Typical of most Northville single mothers, Tahnee was

undereducated, living off welfare and child support from the three fathers of her four children of which Charlotte's brother Reece was one. He met Tahnee on a surfing trip to Bali in his early twenties and no doubt Tahnee's Marilyn Monroesque proportions played a role in his seduction. This was the only explanation for why Reece would have found someone like Tahnee attractive.

Keeping an eye on Hayley fulfilled Charlotte's maternal needs. She had never wanted her own children when she was younger and her ex-husband Angus, a partner at her father's law firm and seventeen years her senior, already had three children with his second wife. Charlotte had enjoyed playing the role of a part-time mother for the sixteen years they were together. After their marriage ended, she dated a fireman and although there was talk of babies, it never really happened for them.

There were so many mothers and their toddlers on the train even though Charlotte had been strategic in catching the first non-peak hour train to avoid them. There was nothing worse than sitting next to a screaming child on a train, except perhaps sitting next to one on a plane. Her fear was why Charlotte only flew economy when she took Hayley to visit Reece in Bali, where he now ran a surfing business with his wife, a Javanese woman he married when Hayley was five. Charlotte encouraged Hayley to take a gap year and intern at Reece's company, but Tahnee predictably talked Hayley out of it. She said that she didn't want Hayley to think of life as one long holiday.

When the train stopped at Redhill station, a morbidly obese man stepped into the carriage. He was tall and carried his weight well despite the enormity of his belly, which seemed to extend from the bottom of his pectoral muscles, that is if he had any. Charlotte recognised something regal in his movements and which reminded her of a bull elephant she once saw in Namibia. The man's intelligent and smiling eyes told Charlotte that he had perhaps once been attractive. As she smiled back, she noticed

that the flab emerging from his right sleeve was covered in raised red bumps, some of which were still raw from scratching. Charlotte gagged but masked it as a gentle cough and as she looked away, caught a glimpse of large billboard for the emergency department of the hospital where she had had her rhytidectomy. As the train pulled away from the station, she went back to compiling list of potential blog posts on her iPhone.

- Feminist perspectives on botox parties for working-class women
- Chinese vitamin market
- Follow up on Claire's orphanages/ schools in SE Asian countries
- Trees and charities
- The social and economic benefits of gastric banding.

Charlotte wanted to develop her brand *Human Flourishing* into something that was of benefit to humankind, and, more specifically, to the everywoman. Some of her friends had online businesses selling luxury goods to the elite, but Charlotte had little interest in that market and she didn't want to source cheap goods from third-world factories. Instead, she wanted to inspire women in places like Northville, where few could ever hope to live Gwyneth Paltrow's GOOP lifestyle. Charlotte's lifestyle was attainable. The only problem was that Charlotte didn't know how to reach out to her target audience. She had surveyed followers of her blog and the feedback was that Charlotte's writing was inaccessible, too flowery. One follower wrote that few people had time to read the thesis-length treatises on the history of cosmetic surgery and even less time to look up the "big" words that Charlotte too often used.

The café where she had arranged to meet Jessikah was inside Northville shopping centre, just across the road from the train station. Charlotte suggested the Coffee Tree because she was familiar with the franchise and enjoyed their organic and locally

roasted bean. As she walked through the food hall, which was indistinguishable from any other in suburban malls, she noticed a purple pig drawn in anime style smiling at her from behind the *Roast with the Most* counter and Charlotte wondered why such adorable looking piglet was used to sell pork. Sitting close to the roast shop was a thin woman, with unnaturally black hair and sallow skin, sharing an enormous serving of bacon and eggs with her school-age child. Well at least they're not eating chips and gravy for breakfast, Charlotte thought, as she lined up at the Coffee Tree counter.

She checked her phone. There were still two minutes before the meeting and besides, some of the young people Hayley had recommended for this position hadn't bothered showing up on time, if at all. Focussing her attention on the bare legs of the woman standing in front of her, Charlotte wondered why anyone would endure the pain of getting the back of their legs tattooed with such ugly pink and blue ribbons. What if they changed their mind sometime in the future, or wanted to wear colours that clashed with that of the tattoos?

The woman turned around as if she had felt Charlotte's eyes boring into her.

"Charlotte? Oh my god, you look so much like Hayley. I'm just grabbing a coffee as I didn't have time to make one before dropping my daughter off at childcare this morning."

Jessikah was a large-chested redhead in a blue '50s style dress with red polka dots. With her horrendous tattoos out of view, she looked normal.

"I can't think before my double shot," Jessikah said.

They found a quiet corner of the food hall and sat down with their coffees.

"Let's just get straight into it?" Charlotte said. She wondered why Hayley hadn't told her Jessikah was a mother and wondered how many more of her friends were teen mums. Charlotte had been worried about Hayley attending a school that supported teen

mothers to such a degree that part of the staff room had been converted into a day care facility.

Jessikah took out her iPad and said, “Hayley told me a little bit about what you are looking for. I think I can help.”

“How?” Charlotte asked.

“So...as Hayley may have told you, I’m great at SWOT analysis and getting the marketing mix right. I haven’t had a look at your business plan so I can’t identify incipient barriers at this stage,” Jessikah said.

“What were your first impressions...” Charlotte said hesitantly, “I mean your first impressions of the blog?”

Jessikah continued, “From what Hayley told me, you want to be an influencer right, but you don’t have enough followers and that’s because you’re not using the right platforms to optimise your outcomes.”

“Be a what?”

“An influencer”

“I’ve never heard of that before,” Charlotte said, “but yes, you’re right.”

“Your revenue will come from selling ad space and endorsing other people’s businesses,” Jessikah explained.

“You mean like cash for comments?”

“Exactly, and these businesses will only come to you when you know who you are,” Jessika continued. “You need three hashtagable words. No one reads in proper sentences anymore “hashtag brave new world.”

“People my age still prefer reading longer articles and in proper sentences,” Charlotte said, and thought that if Jessikah had read *The Tempest* or Aldous Huxley she would have known it was a four and not a three-word hashtag.

...which is what I was just about to get to,” Jessikah said. “So...you still need your blog for people like mum. She has no idea how to hashtag or even what it was until recently!”

“I don’t really understand what it is that you’re saying,” Charlotte said, “I’m not your age, I didn’t grow up with the internet looking like...”

“There!” Jessikah interrupted, “That’s it! That is your brand!”

Charlotte was not only confused, but very conscious of Jessikah’s booming voice, yet no one else around them seemed bothered by it.

“Out there,” Jessikah said, “is a sea of beautiful young bodies, all wanting to influence everyone else, but what happens when mother time catches up with them?”

Time had caught up to Charlotte who had pushed it back through transcendental meditation, an organic diet, microdermabrasion and the occasional derma fillers.

“People like mum, have had enough of Instagrammers and the noise out there,” Jessikah said as she motioned to a group of teenagers who were ordering sugary soft drinks from the fried chicken shop. “There’s a gap in the market for the thinking woman whose body is falling apart...”

“I’m not sure what you ...”

“I mean people like my mum, not you,” Jessikah added quickly.

“And *that’s* why I need some help,” Charlotte said.

Jessikah grabbed a copy of the local paper that was sitting on a nearby table. The cover story was about a young man who was in a critical condition after a one-punch attack.

“How do you feel about the Rohingya refugees?” Jessikah asked.

“I don’t see how that has anything to my brand ...”

“It’s just that your brand has the word ‘human’ in it, and it makes *me* think of human rights.” Jessikah said, “If I think that, others might too.”

“I don’t think too much about them,” Charlotte said and wondered whether Jessikah was talking about the ones from Burma, or whatever it was called these days.

“Mum does,” Jessikah said, “all the time. What about human rights abuse in off-shore detention centres?”

“I’ve not really heard much about it in the news, so it can’t be as bad as some people make it out to be,” Charlotte said.

“I read online news for real news,” Jessikah said. Pointing to the nearby newspaper, she added, “*this* is irrelevant.”

Charlotte wondered if Jessikah was one of these young idealists who joined radical groups like the Socialist Alliance. Charlotte had had a boyfriend at university, the son of someone who co-owned businesses with a mining magnate, who during his Bolshevik phase, joined the communists and went all Tolstoy on Charlotte.

“Your post on orphanages is very popular,” Jessikah said, “but what is it really about? Social justice or philanthropy?”

“Isn’t the same thing?”

“Not really,” Jessikah said. “What did your friend have to do to get into some of the dodgier countries to build her orphanages?”

“I do want to be socially responsible, but this isn’t a political site,” Charlotte said, “I want to focus on the personal, and the environment. Clean air, that kind of thing.”

“Fair enough,” Jessikah said and seemed surprisingly nonplussed considering how intense she had been moments earlier. “So the plan for you Charlotte should be to work with companies that also promote environmental and social responsibility policy.”

“That’s a great idea,” Charlotte said, relieved that Jessikah was willing to let go of her human rights agenda.

“Like one of the banks,” Jessikah said.

Charlotte was unsure of whether this was said with a hint of sarcasm.

“We could look up which ones have green funds a little later,” Jessikah said.

“Moving on, your website looks too nineties. It’s reminiscent of a Geocities weblog with too many colours and hyperlinks. You need more of a contemporary info-hub to attract the attention of your target market.”

“Okay,” Charlotte said, relieved that Jessikah was moving on from her left-wing agenda.

“Hmm, and the site doesn’t reflect who you are because of the graphics ... and please take this as a compliment, how do I put this? It doesn’t reflect what I think you’re trying to do. You’re not Gwyneth, you’re not Amal Clooney, you’re more like Taylor Swift’s mother.”

Charlotte couldn’t see how any of what Jessikah said was complimentary.

“Have you set up a Facebook account under a new handle?” Jessikah asked. “Don’t use your personal account, and the same goes for Instagram and other social media. I wouldn’t bother with Snapchat because you’re targeting Gen-X and beyond, not the Miranda Kerr types.”

“Okay.”

“What about an email tracker?”

“Huh?”

“You want to track *when* your readers are opening and reading your newsletters and blasts.”

“I didn’t know there was such a thing. Isn’t that an invasion of privacy?”

“There is no privacy. You really should watch the Snowden doco,” Jessikah suggested. “And you need to know your followers are getting that one on one connection. Regardless of whether you’re a mini, micro or macro influencer, your followers need to know what you can do for them. Once you have that, they’ll follow you anywhere, onto webinars, instachat, and go to some of your in-person seminars.”

“Should I be taking notes?” Charlotte joked.

“No. I can do that,” Jessikah said very seriously, “Also, one more thing. There are too many pro-vaccination stories on your blog. The people who care about trees and orphans are not necessarily the ones who vaccinate their children. You need to consider your pay-offs for every strategy you use and weigh it up. It’s game theory. Mixed strategy Nash equilibrium.”

“You’re very confident for someone your age. Where did you learn all of this?” Charlotte asked, genuinely curious.

“*You* are the amazing one here honey,” Jessikah said, “You have some really innovative ideas. It’s just that there hasn’t been a lot of success in using an image dominant strategy for the over 40s. People forget that *all* women have something to offer.”

Jessikah looked at her fitbit, “I am so sorry this was such a brief meeting, but I need to go home and change before my next meeting.”

“Are you sure you don’t want another coffee,” Charlotte, “I can get you ...”

“I really can’t. I’m sorry sweetie,” Jessikah said as she gulped down what remained of her coffee.

“I caught the train in today. Perhaps we can walk and talk?” Charlotte quickly finished her coffee.

“I'm in the car-park on the other side,” Jessikah said, "but we'll speak soon okay? How does same time next week sound?”

Charlotte nodded.

“I'll send you a text confirmation closer to the date,” Jessikah said before she rushed off.

On her way back to the station, Charlotte reflected upon how although Jessikah had much to learn about communicating with clients, she was sure that once Jessikah had more exposure to different types of people, she would no doubt excel under Charlotte's mentorship and add value to the business. She was lost in thought when a blue Audi TT with a personalised number plate “CHAMPS94” parked outside a Mexican restaurant caught her eye because she had the same model, but in silver. Perhaps next week she would drive up here to meet Hayley for lunch. Charlotte was inspired, and in this moment, she was indeed a flourishing human.

By the time the train passed Redhill station, Charlotte was glad that she hadn't offered Jessikah the position. Yes, Jessikah knew about social media, but so did most teenagers. After all, cyberspace was their natural habitat. The job Charlotte was offering required more than the identification of Charlotte's skills deficit. Hayley had said that Jessikah was one of the top students at their school, but Northville was known for having lower standards and didn't even offer the top subjects. Hayley struggled with literacy, had little general knowledge and regularly attained B grades and the occasional A. The best Charlotte could do for Jessikah was offer her a casual PA job; coffee runs, that sort of thing. Charlotte's phone buzzed.

It was a message from Jessikah:

Sooo AWESOME 2 have met u. I sent the invoice to ur email. Paypal is fine. Lemme know if u want another consult. C u next week. Happy to meet in the city next time
Jess xoxo.

Charlotte opened her email.

J. Mitchell, Social Media Manager and Content Curator, had seconds ago sent an invoice for \$180.00 for an initial consultation.

She had included a 10% discount because the meeting took place in Northville. Typical millennial, Charlotte silently sneered. They came out of their mother's wombs already wired into the information superhighway and although Charlotte admired Jessikah's confidence, she shuddered at the thought of having to pay Jessikah for, well anything really. Who didn't know how to write a Facebook post?

She quickly deleted Jessikah's contact details from her phone and when the train stopped in the city, Charlotte decided that she would Uberselect the rest of her journey home.

Conversations in the Car-Park: A One-act Play

Cast of Characters

AMINA CHAUDRY, a former London barrister her early 40s

SARAH JONES, a professional blogger in her 30s

SANDY REEVES, a dental technician in her late 40s

MELODY CHOI a linguist and former flight attendant in her 30s

KATIE PATTERSON, a GP in her late 40s

JENNIE, a nanny in her late teens or early 20s

The action takes place downstage in front of the ornate wrought-iron gates of Hampton College. The school is a white heritage style building, with a centre archway upstage. Green manicured lawns and rose gardens, complete the centre and upstage set. Downstage left is a luxury brand car and downstage right is a more modest looking rusty car.

Darkness.

Indistinguishable whispers increase in volume as the stage lights up to reveal the morning scene Parents and children enter the school building. They walk casually to the cacophony of voices until refrains from Prokofiev's "Dance of the Knights" fade in. As the volume of music increases parents, walk in an affected style down the driveway as if it were a catwalk. SARAH and MELODY walk in this manner to downstage left. KATIE and AMINA also walk to the music to downstage left but their walk is statelier. SANDY and JENNIE scurry down the driveway to their positions downstage right.

The following words are projected on the school building: SNOB, NOUVEAU RICHE, FERAL, SHINY PEOPLE, POSH, FAT BOGAN, BOTOX FACE, POSH, CASHED UP BOGAN, TIGER MOTHER, POVO-TARD, DEPLORABLE, WISTERIA, PARVENU, WHITE COLLAR, BOURGEOISE HIPPIE.

The school bell rings, the music ends, the school gates close leaving SARAH MELODY KATIE and AMINA and the downstage left, and SANDY and downstage right.

AMINA and SARAH are engaged in a business transaction, and as SARAH counts the money AMINA's attention is drawn to SANDY.

AMINA: Hello. I thought it was you. You were so good with Henri's teeth.

SANDY: Pardon?

AMINA: From the dental clinic. Smile for more than a while? I came in with my youngest to get his teeth recapped...

SANDY: Oh...yes...

AMINA: He has had a fear of dentists and it took getting hit by a cricket ball to get him into the chair.... he said you were so gentle with him...

SANDY: Oh, Doctor Macquillan is very good with kids.

AMINA: Well, your team worked magic with him. He even said that he'd return for a scale and clean. The nurses back at the old clinic were a little too aggressive with him...

SANDY: *(laughs nervously)* Oh...I'm not a nurse. I'm just a technician. Did a course at Tafe

AMINA: You will have to let Duncan know how pleased Henry is with the capping...

SANDY: I will. I will.

JENNIE: *(to SANDY)* I'll leave you to it. I have a few errands to run this morning.... *(hurries off stage)*

AMINA: Was it something I

SANDY: No, no, no...Jennie is a nanny to one of the boys here. No, not a nanny more a private assistant to one of the mothers. She's got a busy day ahead.

AMINA: *(suddenly very interested in what SANDY has to say)* Oh....

SANDY: She works for ...

AMINA: Ahh ... I know who she works for. My husband knows her employer's husband or ex-husband from golf...I think that's her. We've only just moved here ... from the UK.

SANDY: Oh ok. *(long pause)* Are you new too?

AMINA: I'm Amina

SANDY: I'm Sandy. Jax's mother. We won a scholarship. Sat the test last year and started this year.

AMINA: That's wonderful they offer scholarships at these schools.

SANDY: I know, I know, it's a wonderful school. We wouldn't be able to afford to come here otherwise. I'm the only one working now....my husband lost his job.

AMINA: Really? What did he do?

SANDY: Oh, he was just up in the Pilbara during the boom. He...

AMINA: It truly is that wonderful a school....and Australia is a wonderful country, isn't it? Back home only unemployed aristocrats could afford private schooling. We just Googled for school, and this was the second-best school in this area. We're on the waitlist for Wellington Grammar. Everyone (*looks over to the group downstage left*) say that we should go there if we are offered a place there.

SANDY: Wellington Grammar is an all girl's school.

AMINA: Really? I heard that they now take boys in the middle school?

SANDY: This isn't such a bad school.

AMINA: The reviews on the internet said that students do get a choice of subjects in ...what do you call them here...not A-levels.

SANDY: I think it's called ATAR?

AMINA: Yes, that's it. My children are academic and we want them to be somewhere safe where they have good peer influence. Their peers play a more important role than we do.

SANDY: I agree. It's why we went for the scholarship. We live in a bad school zone. I only work up here...but if we lived here, I would send him to the local school.

AMINA: (*astonished*) Really? That's not what the others (*Looks to the group on the other side of the driveway*) have been saying. They said that the units around here...

SANDY: (*less assured*): Ummm I don't know. It's not a rough school, maybe its...

AMINA: Middling? Maybe from what the others have said. I'm not so worried about the boys' education if we stay here. But there's talk at my husband's company of relocating to Asia. The tax rate is more competitive. It'll probably be Singapore where they are working two years above what they do here. Or at least in maths and science, or so I'm told. I'm not so worried about Omar, more Henri.

SANDY: You're Omar's mother. Jax has spoken about Omar and how he helps him in maths because he knows more than the teacher!

AMINA: The curriculum here is almost a year behind what he was doing back home.

SANDY: Um...I really should get to work.

AMINA: You know, you should come over and meet some of the other mothers. A couple of them have children in Omar and Jax's year. Oh, they won't bite I promise. *(laughs)* Well, Sarah might, but she's a lot of fun.

SANDY: I can't be late for work...

AMINA: Isn't it just around the corner? Believe me, these are some of the nicest mothers I've met. Back home, no one would talk to me even though they knew both my husband and I went to Russell group universities. He went to Oxford, not Bolton. He's an engineer. People are so much more laid back here and there's no such thing as class, and it doesn't bother them that the top university here barely scrapes into the top 100 lists.

SANDY: I don't really follow that kind of thing. *(looks nervously across the driveway)*.

AMINA: Here I am rambling on again about education but I'm sure you share the same views. Oh, come and say a quick hello, at least. *(takes SANDY by the wrist and leads her across)*.

SANDY: Maybe just for a minute...I think I know Doctor Patterson...She's the GP at...

AMINA: Oh, Katie. She's wonderful. So down to earth.

AMINA and SANDY join the semi-circle of mothers right of stage. SANDY stands slightly apart.

MELODY: Call me cynical.

SARAH: No, no, I absolutely agree with you darling. I know exactly what you mean. It's like every parent here thinks their child is gifted. I doubt that they are.

KATIE: You've never actually been on the board Sarah, how you would know how these decisions are made?

MELODY: They give scholarships to people who have multiple siblings, not to kids like Lizzie. They know I'm too old to have another child. I still can't believe they only offered scholarships to new students. I don't expect much from this school, but at least acknowledge the students that make your school look good.

AMINA: What do you mean? I thought all the teachers here were experienced and qualified?

MELODY: Who knows where they got their qualification from? I met with Lizzie's English teacher last year after he gave Lizzie a D for her King Lear essay. She's a straight-A student and knows her Shakespeare. It's the teacher who doesn't know how to teach. I mean it's not that hard teaching Shakespeare these days with so many movie adaptations.

AMINA: I don't think they've made a recent one for King Lear.

MELODY: Who cares? There's always Wikipedia. It's referenced these days. Teachers should know their King Lear. I was so angry because if she doesn't do well here, we'll have to leave. I don't have the energy to move.

KATIE: Lizzie will be fine.

MELODY: I'm sure you're right, but I don't know whether I'll be.

Everyone laughs, except for SANDY, who is unsure whether this is a joke. She joins in after the others have moved on.

SARAH: I don't know a word of Shakespeare and it hasn't stopped me from running an international company. *(She sneers at SANDY.)*

KATIE: You probably do know a bit of Shakespeare, you just don't know that you do.

AMINA: Back home everyone has to read Shakespeare. There's this hilarious episode of Blackadder where he travels back in time and punches Shakespeare on behalf of all the school children for the next four hundred years who will be made to read his plays!

KATIE: I remember that episode. Is that the one where he's told he's down for Kenneth Branagh's four-hour-long version of Hamlet? Or was it Henry five? My sister-in-law makes a living on the side creating on-line teaching resources for Shakespearean plays. So many teachers don't know how to teach it and she says that you can't pass your GCSE without knowing the entire play these days.

SARAH: I tried watching the Ethan Hawke version. I thought he was hot when I was a teenager, but it was so boring.

SANDY: Jax had a Shakespeare club at his primary school.

MELODY: And where was that?

SANDY: Out in Greenlakes...

MELODY: I've heard that there's a very good Catholic school out there. Saint...

SANDY: We were just at the local school.

KATIE *(after a long pause)* I went to my local school until we moved to the city. I would have sent the kids to the local, but my work is just down the road from here.

SARAH: The school across the road is fine. It's what happens afterwards at high school that's a worry. State schools take in all that riff-raff.

KATIE: *(aware of SANDY's discomfort)*: Oh, it's not that bad. State schools are hardly ghettos...look at Greenlakes, they teach Shakespeare there.

SANDY: *(nervously)* They also teach Shakespeare at the prison across the road from Greenlakes primary. They get the same theatre company as the school does.

AMINA *and* MELODY *laugh and* SANDY *is visibly more relaxed.*

AMINA: Oh, this is what I love about Australia. We come from all walks of life...not all of us need to read Shakespeare but our children have the same opportunities.

MELODY: Lizzie was reading Shakespeare when she was seven. She had a college freshman reading age when she was a pre-teen according to an app I downloaded.

SARAH: That's like Caleb. He was reading his father's case files when he was five and knew the word "ambiguity." It was so cute.

KATIE: Well, it's what I love about this school. They don't expect every child to go to university, which they shouldn't. Not all kids are academic. It's not elitism.

SARAH: I don't think they could if they tried. Have you seen the types of people they are allowing into the school these days? It's because people overcapitalised on property during the boom!

MELODY: I don't know why we are forcing the children to understand Shakespeare. Half of Henry the fifth isn't even in English...Lizzie already speaks Japanese and German, and she can pick up real French when she is older if she really wanted to. Her brain is already wired for languages.

SARAH: Caleb and Christian have not picked up a single word of French at this school, but who cares. It's a dying language that's regulated by crusty old French men.

The others are puzzled by SANDY's awkward chuckle.

SARAH: (to MELODY) You are so lucky you're Asian and can teach Lizzie Chinese.

MELODY: Well, it's more, my husband. You know I grew up here and besides, I'm Vietnamese which sounds nothing like the Chinese they teach in schools.

SARAH: I forget that it's hubby who is Chinese. He's so Australian.

MELODY: He's Korean.

SARAH: I forget that he is...he just sounds and is ...so Australian.

Once again SANDY takes cues from the others before laughing at what may or may not be a joke.

AMINA: Ladies, ladies. I love this. We must do this more often. Perhaps over brunch. This would never happen back home. Everyone is from somewhere else in the world, and we don't care where that is. Our children have the privilege to dream big even if we're not the Queen's fifth cousin thrice removed.

SANDY: Yes. This really is a wonderful school.

SARAH: We pay for this privilege.

KATIE: There's no one size fits all.

SANDY: No, no. Of course not.

KATIE: There's that collegiality between the kids and teachers, whereas at some of the local schools the kids are ...

MELODY: Feral?

AMINA: Our local school looks okay. They have some very lovely modern buildings that you wouldn't get at the state schools back home, it's just that we want Omar and Henri to have the best chance at life. Be around the right people. Be successful in life.

KATIE: Of course they will, with you as their mother.

SARAH: I wouldn't send either of my children to the local. Have you seen the units on Stratton Street? They look good because they're new minimalist buildings, but the rent's so cheap you can buy one for less than half a mill. They are going to bring in all sorts. Meth addicts, or worse, dealers.

KATIE: I don't think it'll be that bad. They'll just bring in some young people and some life into this area.

SARAH: Life? Yeah ... if life means homeless people in the foyer and soup kitchens for the cashed-up bogans who will no doubt default on their payday loans.

MELODY: I thought you are on the board of the homeless soup kitchen place...

SARAH: Yes, but that doesn't mean I want them around here, and it's why I know what happens when you bring in mix-housing developments.

SANDY: *(visibly uncomfortable and looks at her bracelet)* Oh is that the time ...

KATIE: I would love to stay and talk politics, but some of us have to work.

KATIE *air kisses the other mothers and exits stage left.*

SARAH: (to AMINA) Katie is such a lefty-pinko-greeno or whatever it is that you call them. I admire her for helping all those poor people, but the rest of us have to live in the real world.

MELODY: (to AMINA) Don't let Sarah put you off this school. They do have some very good teachers here. It's that Sarah has some ...

SARAH: Standards? What's wrong with that? What's wrong with the pursuit of excellence? I expect to get some return on my investment.

AMINA: Is there something I should know about?

SARAH: Well not now since the principal has left ... and thank God she left. I don't know what we would have done if she hadn't left. (to AMINA) I will introduce you Jodie, the chair of the school board tonight. Were it not for her, I'd probably have no choice but to homeschool because at that point we'd only just moved into the property and needed to live there for at least six months to avoid capital gains tax.

SANDY: What happened?

MELODY: What didn't happen?

SARAH: (*turns to SANDY for the first time*): The last principal was so terrible that I almost went to the local school to see if they could cater for the boys. I just couldn't let the woman get away with her reforms. She was a refugee from the state system so had *no* idea what was expected of her.

MELODY: (to AMINA) The principal that year got the job because her husband was someone important. The former minister of something or other and her father was the principal of Saint ... it wasn't enough transparency.

SARAH: It started with the swimming lessons. She wanted our children to take lessons at the local pool as ours was too expensive to run! This was in the middle of winter? Do you know part of our fees pay for the sun-filter technology so that we don't have to put in truckloads of chlorine? That and only a few kids were selected to join the golf lessons, the ones who had shown potential in tennis.

SANDY: They have golf at this school?

SARAH: But the rest of us had to pay. Also, who streams children into elite teams at such a young age? The Chinese? For f

SANDY: I'm sure they still inject the growth hormones into kids over there.

MELODY: That's a broad generalisation ...

AMINA: That was in the past.

SARAH and MELODY *glare at SANDY*. AMINA *chuckles*.

SARAH: My boys are not into sports, so they weren't so affected by her outdoor education policies, it was more the academic side of things. Their father was a plumber, but I really can't see my boys doing the same thing. Not after the privileged lives they've lived.

AMINA: This truly is the workingman's paradise.

SARAH: The principal supported the awful teacher Caleb had that year. She was from somewhere like Africa or India, and maybe she just wasn't used to Aussie kids you know.

MELODY: That's right. I remember what happened.

SARAH: I hope you don't take offence Amina, but the parents wanted diversity so the school employs only exotic types even if they are not as qualified. The principal thought it was more important for the staff to reflect a more diverse globalised world.

AMINA: Well it is true, the world is changing.

SARAH: It's not changing that quickly, and nor was this teacher. People thought I was racist, but it was more about the quality of teachers the ex-principal employed. How can I be a racist when Melody is one of my closest friends?

SANDY: Are the foreigners familiar with the curriculum?

MELODY: I think it was just your teacher. Lizzie was fine that year with Mrs. Marmion. She's from Zimbabwe.

SARAH: At first, I thought the teacher had language issues. I tried to get the teacher to give Caleb more challenging work, but she said he wasn't that special.

MELODY: I remember when it happened. The book of songs or sonnets was the straw that broke ...

AMINA: Ahhh ... sonnets. My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun, coral is far more red than her lips' red ... I always loved Sonnet one thirty. I always thought I was the mistress.

SARAH: I don't care about songs but I hadn't seen any of Caleb's work until they sold it back to me for twenty dollars.

AMINA: They are selling your child's soul.

SARAH: Twenty dollars is and I wouldn't have minded buying the book if his song was in ...

MELODY: They were sonnets.

SANDY: Then what happened?

SARAH: I called up to have a meeting with the school thinking it would be a civilised discussion about education, but the teacher brought both her union rep and the principal into the meeting. Over a goddamn photocopied book of songs. I mean come on ... I'm hardly a tiger mother like Melody is here.

MELODY *and* AMINA *look at each other and chuckle.*

SARAH: So, I thought I would raise the issue of teaching quality at the school and demanded to see the teacher's CV because you can buy your degree in some countries. It wasn't a pleasant meeting but I wanted to support the principal at the time because we are both female leaders.

MELODY: (*nods*) That is true. I remember you telling me to stop bitching about her.

SARAH: But the next evening, the principal called me at home, at six o'clock!

AMINA: (*mouth agape*): Six o'clock!

SARAH: She asked me if I knew anything about an incident about Shane, one of the boys in Caleb's class, and someone else whose name I can't even remember. No, hello, how are you, sorry to call you at this hour?

AMINA: That is so unprofessional.

SARAH: We weren't even at school that day? I let both Caleb and his brother have a mental health day.

MELODY: You were livid! I remember you calling me after the conversation ...

SARAH: I tried to be polite and end the phone call, but she kept interrogating me and asked me why I had told other parents that the teacher couldn't handle the classroom content or management.

MELODY: I emailed her around that time to tell her how concerned I was classroom management at the school.

SARAH: I know. Thanks for doing that for me.

MELODY: Of course.

SANDY: Then what happened?

SARAH: When I tried to hang up politely, she wouldn't let me. So I decided to raise the issue of general bullying and she started calling me one!

AMINA: That is shocking. That is awful.

SARAH: But you haven't heard the worst part of it, and why I reported her to the board.

AMINA &

SANDY: What happened then?

SARAH: She asked me why I believed Caleb over an adult!

AMINA: What a ridiculous question!

SARAH: So I said to her, "Melissa, you are asking me WHY Caleb doesn't tell the teacher anything? We've already had this conversation but I will repeat this now ... but then she interrupted me and said ... (*long pause for effect*) before I continue, I have to let you know that this is a conference call and I also have my union rep with me ...

AMINA *gasps*.

MELODY: (*to AMINA*) and that's when Sarah completely lost it and called me. I told her we all have our idiosyncrasies ...

SANDY: I didn't know that private schools had unions.

AMINA: How did it all end?

SARAH: As it so happened, I was on my way to hot yoga. The same class the chairwoman goes to ...

SANDY: Is the teacher still at the school?

SARAH: Of course not! She was sacked too.

MELODY: That's incredible you managed to do that.

SARAH: It was at a cost. There are still members of the board who aren't too happy with me because their union negotiated big fat pay-checks for both the ex-principal and teacher just because we made them sign a confidentiality agreement. It's standard practice. Everyone knows that!

AMINA: I had no idea. The website makes the school look so ... well managed.

SARAH: It was very hush hush. These things often are.

AMINA: *(looks at her phone)* Look at the time. Sandy, you are going to be late for work.

SARAH: I have to get ready for tonight.

MELODY: I have a paper to finish before I fly out to Auckland *(to AMINA and SARAH)* I'll see you tonight at seven. *(to SANDY)* Nice to meet you ... um ...

SANDY: Sandy.

MELODY exits stage left. As AMINA and SARAH air kiss good-bye, "Dance of the Knights" fades in. SARAH exits stage left. AMINA and SANDY move to downstage and the music fades out.

AMINA: I completely forgot to introduce you to the others. You should come with me to Sarah's party tonight. She is launching her organic skin ...

SANDY: Oh that's okay. It's really not my thing. I'm happy with the stuff I get at the chemist.

AMINA: Some of the other mothers will be there. They're not all as querulous as Sarah.

SANDY: She is a little queer, but I must get home early. I live quite far away.

AMINA: Jax is very welcome to stay at our place ... Our au pair will be looking after the boys because hubby is in Singapore for work and I can pick you up from work. It will be loads of fun!

SANDY: I'm not really dressed for that sort of event.

AMINA: Nonsense you look fine. No one cares. I've seen mothers drop off their children in yoga pants. Sarah puts on a spectacular show.

SANDY: I really don't have the time. It's a long drive home.

AMINA: At least come over for the drinks after work.

SANDY: I can't say really ...

AMINA: I insist. There's an amazing cream that would work wonders on your skin.

SANDY: Well if you insist.

AMINA: I insist.

SANDY: I need to check a few things.

AMINA: Let me give you my number and I know where you work.

AMINA quickly writes down her number on a piece of paper, air kisses SANDY goodbye and exits.

SANDY: It was lovely to meet youse all!

SANDY remains on stage as the final recapitulation of "The Dance of the Knights" plays at volume. Lights down when the piece ends.

END

Reading and Forgetting

Our theatres have expended a great deal of energy on giving Shostakovich's opera a thorough presentation. The actors have shown exceptional talent in dominating the noise, the screaming, and the roar of the orchestra. With their dramatic action, they have tried to reinforce the weakness of the melodic content. Unfortunately, this has served only to bring out the opera's vulgar features more vividly.

– “Muddle not music”, *Pravda*, January 28, 1936.

Case No: CT 354/2436/215 Evidence Type: Decoded Data/MC 2.5 (DOI: 2016)

Additional Notes: Please refer to forensics officer's report

Engagement Level: Classified B Quarantine: Juvenile

Thursday 14/11/1991 9.30pm

Mrs. Quentin, hereafter known as the Quentin, cornered me after school to tell me that "the big talk" will take place in her office on Monday morning. That's when I have biology. It'll just be my dad because mum is at work as usual, and I am nervous. Make that very nervous about losing my place at the school as there is no way I can survive Yarlington because all the illiterate ferals are at Yarlington. At least it's safe at my school, and I have Lisa. She is always there to lift my spirits after the Quentin forces me to self-denunciate at the end of every class. I'm "on watch" you see which means that at the beginning of every class, I have to submit the green slip to whoever is taking the class that period. (I don't know why they call it a slip, as it's more like a mini booklet). The teacher has to comment on my attitude (usually poor), behaviour (surly) and performance (poor to satisfactory) during my time with them. There is an expectation to kowtow to the honourable teacher and thank them for policing me when the class finishes. Lisa dared me to do that once in Mr Pence's class, and he immediately scrawled "insolent" on the slip. It earned me some cred with the popular kids because Cheryl invited me to her party after that. I didn't go but I kept her invitation. Of course, dear diary, not every teacher is as bad as I've made

them out to be. Miss Broadmeadows, for example, has no idea why I'm on watch because I'm the perfect student when I'm in her class.

Every now and again the Quentin makes me write a one-paragraph reflection at the end of the day, which is when I usually run to the office after school so that she doesn't have a chance to catch me, and so I can catch the bus on time. I tend to run the other way when I see the Quentin during the day because our exchanges are tape loops:

You are wasting your potential. Yes miss. I think you could try harder. Yes miss. You are not fulfilling your potential and that's terribly sad. Yes miss. Your behaviour is unacceptable at this type of school. Yes miss. Your attitude won't get you far in this life. Yes miss. You are wasting your potential. Yes miss. I think you could try harder. Yes miss. You are not fulfilling your potential and that's terribly sad. Yes miss. Your behaviour is unacceptable at this type of school. Yes miss. Your attitude won't get you far in this life. Yes miss. You are wasting your potential. Yes miss. I think you could try harder. Yes miss. You are not ...

I have to print this out and delete this file because I don't want Peter to know that I've been in his room. I hope that when Peter finishes his degree and goes back to Singapore, he won't take this computer with him. I would write, I mean type, more except Lisa wants her *Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* back by Monday, so I'd better get back to reading.

Friday 15/11/1991 9 pm

I got to choir on time because dad drove me all the way to school even though he was on night shift. Mr Pence noted that I arrived on time but he also saw that I forgot to bring my music. Overall though, it was a surprisingly non-bad day. Even English was okay although Mr Lyndon did “spring” an in-class assessment on us. It wasn’t another “compare and contrast” response type essay probably because he couldn’t find a study guide for *Coonardoo* as it’s a Western Australia story set up north somewhere. He’s allowing us to complete the story at home, which is just as well because I didn’t write much in class. The only guidelines Mr. Lyndon gave us is that we have to narrate it from a third-person omniscient point of view, which is something I struggle with. Each time I’ve been asked to write as the God-like narrator, I feel that I must mimic Dickens and his nineteenth-century-length sentences. But who speaks like that? Back then there was no film, so writers had to describe everything and paint the scene for a reader who probably hadn’t ventured very far beyond his or her little world. Not that I have, but I watch a lot of TV. Also, I don’t feel I have the authority to write as a white man, living or dead, which is funny because I have no issues replicating the music of long-dead white men. I guess that’s because no one has a monopoly on sounds, even babies make them, but words are different. I always feel as if I’m stealing words from the British royal family even though the Queen’s recent ancestors are German.

Mr Lyndon said that it’s important we put some effort into this assignment because it could determine whether we get to study Literature next year. I want to study Literature because it’s way easier to read books or read study-guides for books. Also, if I take Literature, my marks will be scaled up even more than they would in English. Although no one ever gets scaled down at my school. At Yarlinton, everyone gets scaled down. You are only as good as the people around you, which is why I’m not going to Yarlinton.

Lisa has let me keep the book over the weekend because she knows I have too much on over the weekend. I need to wake up at 6.30am so that I can catch the bus to orchestra, state not school, rehearsal for three hours, followed by a lesson. My parents say that I'm fortunate to have these opportunities that they didn't have growing up in their village somewhere in remote China, but I think they're lucky to have seen the South China Tiger in the wild. I think that's why my parents are always on edge and why I am too. My brain was made to figure out ways to avoid being eaten by tigers, not how to run away from the Quentin. I know that some people, namely my parents, have said how fortunate I am to go to such a prestigious school but what they don't know is that it's a school that dines out on its past glories. People like me are shipped in like coolies to make the school look good. I'm sure that the Quentin is under some misguided belief that my people are hard workers because we worked from sunrise to sundown in paddy fields. She seems to think that it is humanly possible to be part of five ensembles, in and out of school, and to practice for each one while maintaining decent grades. I'm playing Shostakovich next month with the state orchestra, why doesn't the Quentin come and listen to that? She'd probably have the same reaction as Stalin.

Saturday 16/11/1991 8 pm

Rose picked up some movies from the video store and is going to let me watch *Born on the Fourth of July* with her. I was really surprised when she told me that she's going to dub it as her boyfriend left his video recorder at our house. I suppose I would do that for my younger sister too if I had one. I might get more ideas after watching the film. I know nothing about love other than the clichés.

Sunday, 17th November 1991 10 am.

I skimmed through *Coonardoo* it's about an Aboriginal girl who falls in love with a white man. I can write about racial stereotypes and prejudice, but I'm not sure I can write about love. I took

Birdy from Rose's room because of the naked man perched on a bed. I can't believe they get to read fun books, or at least books not written over a hundred years ago, at Yarrington. They even study a novel about a weirdo butterfly collector who abducts a young woman and adds her to his collection.

8 pm

I just finished the Laura Palmer diary. I should start my assignment. I wonder if Mr Lyndon will accept my story if I write it on the word processor.

9.30pm

My hands hurt.

I've handwritten a five foolscap pages about a 13-year-old girl called Arabella Wong who lives with her family in one of the red dusty inland towns I've seen on TV (*The Flying Doctors*), and I've made them refugees who are fleeing communism. She falls in love with Hugh, a local Aboriginal boy. Introduction, orientation, conflict, resolution, and denouement. I've used the themes Mr Lyndon wants us to include: interracial love, tolerance, racism, that kind of thing. Tick. Done and dusted.

I'm not looking forward to Monday.

Case No: CT 354/2436/215 Evidence Type: Raw Data/HG 4.5 (DOI: 2026)
Additional Notes: Witness's father Mr John Robertson QC present. Witness requires RB credited counsel. Please refer to LA 354/2436/215
Engagement Level: F Quarantine: Nil Transcribed: W2341

I, Lisa Robertson, have known Isi ... I mean Isidore Moly Marr since kindergarten. She has been my best friend since then and she has spent considerable time with my family. This is my account of the day of the incident in hopes that it will help the family come to terms with the tragedy. We are both students at John Galt College.

Everything seemed normal that morning. Isi was not acting out of character until after her meeting with Mrs Quentin. I would describe Isi as a filial daughter and a good student, although others may disagree. She was under a lot of pressure to maintain the Galt scholarship because she, like everyone else, knows that entry to Galt is the golden ticket to life. The tipping point? It was probably the day she and her father met with Mrs Quentin. I don't know what happened in there but the Isi that went in was not the one who came out. Her father had driven all the way to Galt after coming off night shift. Did I know what her father did for a living? Of course I did. She never hid it from me, but she did from some of the others because it's rare for kids of non-professionals to attend Galt. I don't think that played a role in what eventuated. What? How would I describe her? Worldly, yes, but naïve. Yes, I know it's a paradox. I can't explain it. So you're asking me to give a broad picture of who she is? I can't do that without telling you what she was like before it happened. Yes. Oh yes. Yes, I would definitely say that she was conscientious. Well it's probably not in your reports because I don't think people saw that side of her. I know that she was allowed to keep the arm implant because the family couldn't afford WR or bio-ink. It wasn't an issue for her and many of us dislike bio-ink because it absorbs into the body after a while, and it hurts more to get the WR implant than the arm one. Isi fitted in well with the rest of us, or as well as any of us fitted in with each other.

Before the meeting, we were both in Mr Harris's genetics class where we watched a documentary about an island in the Caribbean where girls turn into boys upon puberty. We all found it interesting and everyone was focussed on it. Even Isi was engaged even though she knew that Mr. Harris was allied with the, oops, I mean Mrs. Quentin. Yes, Isi did carve obscenities about both of them her on the laboratory bench. It was out of character but who doesn't let off steam every now and again. I thought she was just not coping well with all the assessments we have at this time of the year.

I'm sorry I didn't hear that. Can you repeat the question? Oh, what did she read? How is that relevant? I guess she read whatever the rest of us read. School stuff, I guess. She liked fin de siècle novels and sometimes enjoyed the even older stuff.

Of course she told me how she felt after meeting with Mrs Quentin. Of course she was distressed after meeting with her. That's quite normal. I would be too because we all know that there is probably someone out there more deserving of our place, and Mrs. Quentin often reminds us of this. No. No. She does not take drugs. She was disorientated for sure, but I thought she was dehydrated. You know that the school has data on all of us. I didn't draw the smiley face on her hand and, until just then, I didn't know that people in the last century associated it with drugs and illegal dance parties. For starters, I don't take vintage ink pens to school. We're not allowed to. It must have been another student. Maybe someone stole it from the Luddite club? Was she looking forward to anything? Well, of course she was. The end of the year, Christmas, performing at the opera house, and I'm sure she was looking forward to Tom's presentation.

The Incident

"Where were you?" Lisa asked as she ran up to Isi. "You didn't send me a message. I was so worried about you."

"Did you get my bag?" Isi asked.

"What bag?" Lisa replied. "Why do you have those sheets of inked paper?"

"I didn't take my bag with me," Isi said. "These are my notes about the trans on the island."

"You can't call them that, Isi! That's so offensive!", Lisa growled and grabbed Isi's right arm. She rolled up Isi's sleeves and then swiped her wrist along her forearm.

“What the hell are you doing?” Isi asked.

“These are the notes from our genetics lecture. You are so lucky I haven’t had time to remove my old WR. You really should upgrade to a more compatible chip or else you’re never going to get invited to Giselle’s parties!”

“Huh?”

“When I leave this place, I’m going to get nano fleck nail polish. I’m so sick of being forced to undergo all these procedures, but I guess it’s easier and cheaper than bio-ink,” Lisa said.

“What the hell are you on about?”

“Thanks, Lisa, for finding me before the Quentin did. No worries, Isi,” Lisa said dryly.

“Where is my bag?” Isi asked.

“You should be asking where is my presentation?” Lisa said. “You haven’t uploaded yours.”

“What presentation and for who?” Isi asked.

“For English dummy. When I uploaded mine, I saw that you had a red dot next to your signal. You know even though your parents aren’t bigots like mine, it’s still important you don’t screw this up!” Lisa said, genuinely concerned.

“Your parents, bigots? Hardly.” Isi said, wondering why Lisa was so hard on her parents who were the nicest adults she’d ever met.

“Do you want to talk about your meeting with the Quentin or do you just want to swipe me when you’re ready?” Lisa asked.

“It was an awful and humiliating experience. I kept looking down at the smiley face you drew on the back of my hand. I couldn’t have gotten through it without that,” Isi said.

“What smiley face?” Lisa said. “Never mind that, the Quentin is the awful experience. She’s an infidel you know. She probably goes over the top with how she manages people like you so that the administrators don’t haul her over the coals,” Lisa said vehemently. “No pun intended.”

“How is it a pun?” Isi asked.

“You know what happens to infidels when they’re caught?”

“What are you talking about? The Quentin isn’t the world’s best educator and I think you’re going a bit too far calling her an infidel,” Isi said, unsure of whether Lisa was deliberately using extreme language or had simply confused it with another word. After all, there was a period where Lisa thought “facetious” was synonymous with “hypocrite.”

“The Quentin has some serious pre-rebalance issues,” Lisa continued. “Everyone knows that she was on the other side and still believes in the old ways, and that’s why she is not allowed to teach. She’s still here but really can’t afford to put a foot wrong. Teachers who have PR issues always find a way to impose their retrograde views upon us. The only reason she is still here is because her brother is married to you-know-who and had the money to pay for an acquittal. Let’s not think about her,” Lisa said, visibly perturbed.

“Did you finish writing your love story?” Isi asked, grateful for the opportunity to change the subject.

“What love story? More importantly, which text are you presenting?” Lisa asked.

“For what?” Isi asked. “I thought the story was due today. I stayed up working on it. I put a lot of effort in.”

“Woah ... You really need to upgrade. Stories are only for kindy kids.”

“What upgrade are you talking about? Peter will probably get Windows 3.0 before he goes back to Singapore,” Isi said indignantly.

“Poor you. The Quentin really messed with your head didn’t she,” Lisa said sympathetically.

The two girls walked through what Isi thought was an open undercover area linking the old North to the more recently built South building. However, upon closer inspection, she noted that glass panels now enclosed the space. Isi had probably been too self-absorbed with her Quentin issues to notice the five-star-hotel-style renovations. Isi nearly walked into the glass wall because it was so clean, as she looked up saw that the ceiling was now three storeys high and was made from an ebony looking material, instead of asbestos sheets. “Wow,” she marvelled.

“Earth to Isi. Earth to Isi,” Lisa called out to her. “You know you’re at risk of losing your place here and you can’t leave me here by myself. Do you want me to give you a copy of my presentation, there’s still some time to modify it before we get to class?” Lisa said. She grabbed Isi’s wrists, but Isi instinctively shook her off.

“Fine,” Lisa grumbled and walked off ahead of Isi.

As the girls stepped into the North building, there was, in place of the Archibald-prize-winning portrait of former Prime Minister Jeremy Acton, a large curved flat screen. Had the monitor not been curved, Isi could have sworn that it was a window looking out over the Swiss Alps. She walked up to the screen to see if there was, in fact, a world on the other side but there wasn’t.

Lisa ran up to her and slapped her wrist. “What’s wrong with you, woman?” she said, “Don’t do that! We’re not allowed to do that!”

Isi walked away from the screen and felt noticeably warmer when the image of the alps changed into an image of someone who looked like Mr Lyndon, but then morphed

into someone who looked as if he worked at an American pioneer world theme park. Isi rubbed her eyes. The way Mr Lyndon had morphed was similar to that final scene in the Michael Jackson video for *Black and White*, the one with the multiethnic faces. Isi was convinced she had heard Mr Lyndon's voice in her head saying, "Remember, Isi, to upload your presentation upon entering English class. See you soon."

"How did he do that?" Isi said out loud.

Lisa ignored her.

Isi's father had once told her about a patient at the mental asylum he worked at who thought a lioness he had seen in a wildlife documentary was his mother and who believed that magpies spoke to him. The man also suffered from autocoprophagy.

Before the girls entered the classroom, Lisa took Isi's arm and held it against a red pad on the door. To Isi's relief, the English classroom had not changed at all. Indeed, the furniture appeared cleaner and perhaps newer, but the layout was the same. Mr Lyndon's desk was still where it should be and the whiteboard was at the front of the class. Tom Woodlands walked in and sat in his usual seat in front of Isi and Lisa, and greeted them in the usual way, a cheeky look back and that all-too-knowing grin. Isi was somewhat placated.

"Why do we have to present when it's all uploaded anyway?" Lisa said very loudly.

Tom turned around, "Why, Lisa Robertson, are you telling me that you're not prepared?"

"Of course I'm prepared," Lisa said feigning indignation.

"So, what are you doing for the denounce?" Tom asked.

"You'll just have to wait and see like everyone else," Lisa responded flirtatiously.

Tom turned to Isi and asked, “What about you? Mademoiselle Marr?”

“She’s had a rough day,” Lisa answered for her. “You know, she had that meeting with the Quentin.”

“You poor thing,” Tom said. “I know why they let an infidel stay on in her role after the rebalance. My dad’s not too happy about that.”

“I know. She’s such a bigot,” Lisa said. “Head on a plate material.”

“I mean she’s the worst teacher here but she’s far from a bigot,” Isi said and couldn’t believe she was defending the Quentin. She was both afraid and disgusted by the venomous look on Lisa’s face every time she brought up the Quentin. The Quentin had been nothing but supportive of Lisa and Tom. In fact, the Quentin was invited to dinner parties at their homes. If anyone, it should be Isi who had a reason to hate the woman who was only doing her job.

“The Quentin isn’t as bad as ...” Isi started, but Tom stopped her by reaching over to brush his wrist against her arm.

“*Coonardoo* ... That’s brilliant!” Tom said genuinely impressed. “You are going to ace this one Lady Marr.”

“Arghhh, why didn’t I think of that,” Lisa said. “An ancient text, written by a local communist. I thought you said you wrote a story?”

“That better way to highlight the limited ways in the pre-rebalance by using their primitive method of information transference,” Tom said excitedly, “It’s brilliant.”

“Why did I not do something like that too? I played it safe and did *The Great Gatsby*. I can’t afford to fail this class,” Lisa added quietly “You know who my parents are.”

Tom nodded knowingly.

“I’m doing *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*,” Giselle said. She took her seat next to Tom, but not before running her fingers through her waist-length hair and rolling up the waist of her skirt.

Lisa put her hand over her mouth and gasped, “No ... Wow. That is ingenious.”

“Mr Lyndon said we needed an infidel book,” Tom said with some consternation. “I thought you said you were going to do *Lord of the Flies*.”

“Well, I spoke to my mother about it and she says *Lord of the Flies* is too safe. She does it with her students in Econ-Lit. Everyone does it. It’s too straightforward,” Giselle said. “I started working on a presentation about Piggy as the contagion and argue that Ralph’s adherence to the old ways was no better to the bigots in our society,” Giselle said. “But I want to save all that for next year. I know we can submit the same presentation for Poli-lit, and this is low stakes for me.”

“Oh my god,” Lisa said, “The step-mother! I never thought I’d say this, Giselle, but you are a genius. You’re going to speak about the evil step-mother and how she’s been completely maligned by bigots.”

“Beauty and brains,” Tom grinned approvingly at Giselle and said, “When dad read *Lord of the Flies* when he was at school. He said that he was taught that Piggy represented scientific progress, Ralph reason and Western civilisation, can you imagine, they had to denounce Jack, the only one with leadership, technical expertise, and innovation.”

“You are kidding me. I had absolutely no idea that’s how bad things were before the rebalance!” Lisa said visibly upset.

“That’s because your parents are infidels,” Giselle said.

“What the hell are you on about?” Isi said, but everyone, including Lisa, ignored her.

“And Mr Woodlands,” Giselle leaned into Tom, “What are you presenting?”

“*Macbeth*,” Tom said.

“Now *that* is a refresh,” Giselle said, “Are you doing a gen-interpretive denounce this week or are you picking a specific character? My mother was one of the first teachers to write a study guide for *Macbeth* after the rebalance you know.”

“Gen-interp because this is only Year 10. Just for you, though, a sneak preview,” Tom said as he brushed his wrists against hers.

“Oh, I can't wait to hear it,” Giselle said.

“Get a room,” Lisa muttered under her breath.

At that moment, Mr Lyndon walked into the class and said, “Isidore Marr. Did you not hear the message I sent? This is unacceptable. We do not study texts about the ancients here, as innovative as your approach is. You are already on watch.”

“Sir, it's her software,” Lisa said.

“Do not call out, Miss Robertson,” said Mr Lyndon said firmly. “Those who cannot afford the WR or bio-ink can upgrade their implant at student services free of charge. Isidore Moly Marr, you cannot afford to fail another assessment. We don't have all day children. Let's begin... with you, Mr Woodlands.”

Tom stood up and stretched his hands out to Lisa and Isi, but Lisa reached out to him. “He is so good looking but so arrogant,” Lisa said, her cheeks flushed.

As he spoke, Isi saw words appear on the whiteboard like subtitles in a foreign film, yet not everything that he said matched up with the words on screen:

Fair is foul and foul is fair.

My talk today is a general interpretive denounce analysis of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Shakespeare was the Ayn Rand of the pre-balance generation as he was their ideinost. After the rebalance, Shakespeare was banned from schools because our government was afraid that our parents, who had been forced to read his plays in ways that

promoted pre-balance interests, could not forget, as there is less neuroplasticity in their brains. Indeed, our elders were misguided into thinking that there was universal beauty; they called it aesthetics. They believed that there was "art for art's sake." More damaging to our society was perhaps the idea that morality could be extracted from Shakespearian plays, "age-old truths," so to speak.

There are indeed many plays I could have selected for this talk, but today I have chosen the Scottish play precisely because it *is* a Scottish play and because it is one that your elders are most familiar with due to the various degenerative re-interpretations of it.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the play, all I need to tell you is that it is about an ambitious man, Macbeth, whose path was thwarted by his subordinate, Macduff. It may be hard for our generation to understand, but our elders were taught that the play teaches humanity about the dangers of unchecked ambition. Feminists in the pre-rebalance generation critiqued the play by highlighting how women were blamed for all Macbeth's failures by highlighting the fact the only significant female characters were all so-called "dark forces": the three servants of Hecate, Hecate herself, and Lady Macbeth. These days we know that only children enjoy supernatural tales, and that Lady Macbeth failed due to some form of mental illness.

It was not pointed out to our parents' generation that King Duncan, or at least his ancestors, had risen to his position because of the same ambition that they looked upon with such disdain. They read *Macbeth* as a tragedy and wrote in countless essays that Macbeth was a "once courageous warrior who was corrupted by the sin of greed." This is just how it was in the pre-balance.

It is evident to contemporary readers that Macbeth's life story is one we should aspire to because he acts objectively. He is a rational being. You might be asking, why is he rational if he listens to the ramblings of witches? But you need to read it within the era it was written. If a fortune-teller told you that you would win this weekend's lotto jackpot, wouldn't you buy a ticket? I am not saying that the supernatural is real. We know that it is not. What I am saying is that Macbeth should be commended for acting so rationally and should not be held hostage to the "milk of human kindness," for kindness is as fluid as milk.

Another point I would like to make here, Mr Lyndon and my fellow students, is that in the pre-balance

some students were probably taught *Macbeth* without learning about the historical context, or at least not from a positivist perspective. They did not teach students about the technological advances of the Tudor and the early Stuart periods, and how the Reformation happened because of the invention of the moveable type printing press. Scholars today note the irony in pre-balance readings of Shakespearean plays, because Shakespeare wrote for King James I and Queen Elizabeth, both of whom were absolute monarchs and unapologetic about pursuing personal excellence. They were fair rulers who acted logically. For example, Queen Elizabeth had her cousin, the mother of King James, executed to restore balance to the Crown. She did not give in to subjective emotions and nor did King James. Why did "our betters" in the pre-balance era expect doctors to be objective, and put in place rules to avoid practices based on emotion and intuition, but not expect it of political leaders?

Macbeth and his wife were right to feel no remorse, because to overcome opponents there must be sacrifices. Pre-balancers were hypocrites in that they valorised Samson in the Philistines' temple, but not Macbeth. The inconsistencies in their fluid ideology are why those fighting for the Rebalance were victorious.

In *Atlas Shrugged* the noble industrialists pursued excellence and saw civilisation advance, yet they were sequestered because they were so maligned by savages. This is akin to Macbeth and his wife's isolation from the other noblemen. Needless to say, Macbeth was in pursuit of what we all want, but he was condemned for centuries for it. As we know from modern history, we are fortunate now that our teachers study and celebrate the sociology of the Rebalance and have learnt how to avoid these, at best, "misreadings" of Shakespearean plays and other pre-balance classics.

As John Galt said in his soliloquy in Rand's magnum opus *Atlas Shrugged*, "All that evil needs to win is the consent of good people." Macbeth did not want to be controlled by such a person as weak as Duncan, and it was his right to liberate himself and his family from the tyranny of a substandard ruler. The tragedy of Macbeth is not that "he could have been a good ruler but that he became corrupted by power and ambition," the tragedy is that his inferiors murdered him. Thank you all for being so attentive throughout to my presenter.

The classroom broke into applause.

"I thought that it was some philosopher guy from way back who said that all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing," Isi said, not

understanding most of what Tom had said in his speech. "... and don't people usually quote that when talk about genocide?"

Lisa ignored Isi because as she was too busy beaming at Tom as he walked back to his desk.

"Excellent. Excellent as always," Mr Lyndon said, visibly moved by Tom's speech, "Bravo, young Master Woodlands."

Tom walked back to his desk and everyone except for Isi reached out to brush their wrists against his.

"That is so weird. Why did you do it?" Isi asked Lisa.

"I had to tell him that talk was hotter than he is," Lisa said.

"He obviously hasn't read or seen the play. He is full of shit," Isi thought, but she must have said it out loud because the next thing she knew, she was sitting in the Quentin's office.

"Miss Marr," the Quentin started, "What are we going to do with you? So much potential, so much unfulfilled potential. What are we to do with you? Your tests showed that you would be an asset to a school like ours but there is so much confusion in your thoughts."

"How would you know?" Isi thought, "You are so limited ..."

"It's unfortunate that you think this way," the Quentin said. "It must be the incompatible software that's making you so aggressive. We usually need parental permission to alter faulty algorithms but perhaps we can by-pass that given your behaviour in recent months. The chip should have been replaced a last year ..."

It was then that Isi understood that whatever it was in her arms and everyone else's wrists, enabled the teachers to access all their thoughts and no thought was private. Isi felt her chest tighten and faint. When she tried to speak, she could only hear her breath.

“I know it’s difficult for you Isi, but you must know that this is where you’ll have the best opportunity to succeed in life, given your background. I was like you once,” the Quentin continued in a gentler tone. “but I soon learnt that it’s easier just to do what’s right and not re-invent the wheel.”

Isi focused on the tingling in her fingertips and dryness of her mouth.

“It’s not that we don’t want you think, it’s just that we are all but worker ants and must be order in the colony. If we all did whatever we felt like, how would any of us survive?” the Quentin said kindly.

Isi continued to focus on her breath and dared not think any thoughts. It was only when the Quentin walked over to a water dispenser in the corner of her room that she quickly dived onto the Quentin’s desk, reaching for a pair of scissors and used it to hack into whatever it was that had been implanted in her arm, or was it her wrist?

Case No: CT 354/2436/215 Evidence Type: Raw Data: NF2.0 [Voice Recording] (DOI: 2026)

Additional Notes: Please refer to forensics officer report Engagement Level: Classified B Quarantine: Juvenile Transcribed by: TKhan [03:40:59]

It’s Tuesday I think. It’s uh ... Tuesday the twenty something of November twenty twenty-six.

The specialist gave me this device so that I can record anything I can remember [coughs]. He’s reassured me that he is the only one who has access to these recordings and he will only share this information with the school or my parents if I hurt myself again. I really hope he, or rather you, are not lying to me.

I told him, or you that I intended to save, not hurt, myself. I am not an infidel, nor am I a bigot and I am for the rebalance. It’s just that these words no longer mean what I thought they meant.

Lisa’s said that it’s just as well my parents are not native English speakers because if they were, I would have been sent to the other place and not here. I’m fortunate that I’m now in the care of those who know how to help me recover. When I’m better, I can go back to school.

The doctors have told me they know what happened, but they don't really understand why or how it happened [cries]. According to my neuro-specialist, I fell victim to bullies who uploaded my chip with the wrong memories. Lisa is adamant that it was Giselle, and that she did it because Tom paid too much attention to me, and she is sure that Giselle hacked her mother's computer to get memories of a dead person. Apparently, Giselle's mum is someone who is very well connected and has hundreds and thousands of memories stored on her hard drive. Lisa also said that, in a way, it's good that I tried to gouge out what I thought were malevolent spirits living in my wrists in front of the Quentin because she was there to save me. She's also heard rumours that the Quentin has volunteered to see my successful reintegration into the school community.

I will most probably go back before Rebalance day next year, if my specialist, you, I mean, give me a good reference because I do want to play in the orchestra again. They are screening *Triumph of the Will* at the celebrations and only the nation's top young musicians will be selected to play the soundtrack. There are some infidels in the community who say it's one step too far, but I know that they are misguided at best and we must ignore those who cannot separate past politics from excellent art or outcome from intent [laughs].

I've been thinking about my subject selection and it's just easier if I take more science subjects because I want to study bio-engineering. Mrs Quentin will allow me to take English as an Additional Dialect even though I don't have any other dialects ... [inaudible] ... I won't have to do as much reading as the others. They just need to make sure my communication skills are okay. The doctors say that because I had an older implant, some of the data is embedded in the bio-ink they tried to put on me to override the infidel's memories. It's a trial so they cannot be certain that it's worked, and so it's going to be challenging for me to study Economic-Lit, or even Politico-Lit, as these subjects require mastering the denounce [mutters something inaudible]

under breath]. So if I take any of the Lits, and traces of the infidel remain, the system will tag me for review every few months, and no one wants that.

Although everyone at school knows what happened to me, the school doesn't want the broader community to know because they don't want to lose students. The school doesn't need this type of media attention because it is one of the top schools in the country. I'm disappointed about not being allowed to read until after I graduate from school, but it's best for everyone that I don't. It will take some time before I can tell which memories are the correct ones and which belong to the virus.

Author's Notes

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental, and exceptions are outlined in the notes below. All font and line spacing inconsistencies in the anthology are intentional.

In "How to Read Shakespeare Whilst Duck-Sitting in the Post-Atomic Age", Gong Gong's experiences are inspired by my father's school experiences in British colonial Malaya between the mid 1940s and early 1950s. My father was a child during the second world war and spent much of it hiding in the Malayan jungle. He started secondary school after the war when he gained a place at a British run grammar school during "The Malayan Emergency", a 12-year conflict between the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) fighters and British army. Many ethnic Chinese who had joined the MCP during the war and fought alongside the allies against the Japanese Imperial Army during the war, saw the post-war period as an opportune time to overthrow the British imperialists who had returned to resume colonial rule after Japan's surrender. The British understood that many young ethnic Chinese in Malaya were potential communist recruits because of their marginal positions and launched their "Hearts and Minds" campaign, giving ethnic minorities more opportunities and rights, which included access to education and, by extension, access to civil society. As a student at a British-run grammar school, my father had opportunities that his friends at Chinese vernacular schools did not have, including the opportunity to attend universities throughout the Commonwealth, including Britain, on full scholarship. In the mid-1950s, based on his first-placing in the Cambridge exams, my father was

accepted into a university in Queensland and issued a British passport with an Australian student visa. However, instead of boarding the ship to Australia, he followed his Chinese-educated friend who were going to further their education in the newly formed People's Republic of China (PRC). In Beijing, his Cambridge certification and English competency were of no value, and he had to take a bridging course in Chinese and Marxist-Maoism before he could qualify for university where he had aspirations to study Chinese literature. In Malaya, he had studied Shakespeare, nineteenth-century English novels, and French as a second language, but in the PRC he studied Chinese he read modern Chinese literature, such as Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary" 狂人日记—a canonical short story inspired by nineteenth-century Russian writer Nikolai Gogol—and learnt Russian as a second language. In the early 1960s, my father arrived in British colonial Hong Kong where his Cambridge qualification and his English literacy meant that unlike many of his PRC friends, he easily found work as a secondary school teacher. However, all that he had learnt in Hong Kong, all that he had learnt in mainland China was of no value, including the Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) and the simplified written script.

Many contemporary social media apps are mentioned by the characters in "Eudaimonia," including UberSelect, the luxury option of the Uber ride-sharing service where drivers must drive certain makes of cars. Also in this story is a reference to Aldous Huxley's 1932 dystopian novel, *Brave New World*. The title is an ironic reference to a line from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that has such people in it!". Huxley's seminal novel is set in London around 2540 where thoughts, including emotions, are repressed, by a totalitarian regime, and the population is controlled by new technology, and pacified by sex, pharmaceutical products, and consumerism.

Although eudaimonia, or eudemonia—Greek for happiness and well-being—is a concept Aristotle interrogates in *Nichomochean Ethics*, the term itself is not used in his treatise but was added afterwards.

“The Dance of the Knights” by Sergei Prokofiev from his ballet suite *Romeo and Juliet* features in the play “Conversations in the Car-Park.” Some readers may know this piece of music as the theme song from the British version of *The Apprentice*; the original American version featured then property developer Donald Trump.

The epigraph to the final story “Reading and Forgetting” is excerpted from a scathing review of Russian composer Dimitri Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in Pravda, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The review was rumoured to have been penned by Joseph Stalin himself because it was published shortly after Stalin attended Shostakovich’s popular opera. All Soviet artists during this period had to adhere to the strict guidelines set by Stalin’s totalitarian regime and create socialist realist art. Artists accused of being counter-revolutionaries found themselves in precarious positions, and many artists, mostly writers, were exiled, imprisoned or executed during the purge that took place around this time. (Some of Prokofiev’s music, including *Romeo and Juliet*, was also considered too avant-garde, and deemed inaccessible for the proletariat. Like Shostakovich, Prokofiev too faced periods of censorship.)

Triumph of the Will refers to the propaganda film directed by Leni Riefenstahl and was shot during the 1934 Nuremberg rally. The documentary raises questions about whether propaganda that promotes evil can be critiqued purely on its technical merits. *Coonardoo*, the story Isi has to study in English, is a late 1920s novel by Western Australian novelist Katharine Susannah Pritchard. Although Aboriginal Literature was not taught in Australian universities until the 1970s, Pritchard’s novel

which represents Aboriginal Australians as humans, was in Tasmania and Victorian secondary school syllabuses in the late 1950s, and in Western Australia in the 1960s. See Jacqueline Wright's essay "'On Coonardoo' by Katherine Susannah Pritchard" for a brief overview on the socio-cultural context of production and reception of the novel.

There are also references in the final story to *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*, a book published in parallel with *Twin Peaks*, a murder-mystery that aired on Australian commercial television in the early 1990s, co-created by American avant-garde artist Mark Frost and film-maker David Lynch.

The micro-chipping of humans is an existing but voluntary minority practice. During the final editing stages of this project, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced that researchers had developed a computer interface which could potentially eliminate the need for verbal communication between humans (see Hardesty 2018).

Bibliography

The following are some of the materials I consulted for the anthology which might be of interest to readers who wish to discover more about the socio-cultural and historical references in the stories.

Barber, Noel. 1972. *The War of the Running Dogs*. New York: Weybright & Talley.

Brooke, Caroline. 2002. "Soviet Musicians and the Great Terror". *Europe-Asia Studies* 54 (3): 397-413.

CBS News. 2017. "Microchips Implanted in Humans: Practical or Perilous." *CBS This Morning*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/microchips-privacy-implants-biohacking/>

- “Chaos Instead of Music”. 1936. *Pravda*, Tuesday, January 28,
<http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1936-2/upheaval-in-the-opera/upheaval-in-the-opera-text/chaos-instead-of-music/>
- Chapman, F. Spencer. 1997. *The Jungle is Neutral*. New York: Times Books.
- Garner, Ross P. “The Series that Changed Television? Twin Peaks, ‘Classic’ Status, and Temporal Capital”. *Cinema Journal* 55 (3): 137-142.
- Hack, Karl. 1999. “Iron Claws on Malaya: The Historiography of the Malayan Emergency”. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30 (1): 99-125.
- Hardesty, Larry. 2018. “Computer System Transcribes Words Users “Speak Silently.” *MIT News*, April 4. <http://news.mit.edu/2018/computer-system-transcribes-words-users-speak-silently-0404>
- Heinaman, Robert. 1988. “Eudaimonia and Self-Sufficiency in ‘Nicomachean Ethics’”. *Phronesis*, 33 (1): 31-53.
- Leskov, Nikolai. (1865) 2013. “The Lady Macbeth of Mtseknsk”. *The Hudson Review* 64 (4). https://hudsonreview.com/2013/02/the-lady-macbeth-of-mtsensk/#.WrsO_NNuaV4
- Luskin, Donald L. and Andrew Greta. 2011. *I am John Galt: Today’s Heroic Innovators Building the World and the Villainous Parasites Destroying It*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Pike, Francis. 2011. *A Short History of Modern Asia Since World War II*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Shimabukuro, Karra..016.“The Mystery of the Woods: Twin Peaks and the Folkloric Forest.” *Cinema Journal* 55 (3): 121-125.
- Sunderland, Riley. 1964. *Winning the Hearts and Mind of the Malaysian People: Malaya 1948-1960*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation.

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_memoranda/2005/RM4174.pdf

Trotsky, Leo. 1960. *Literature and Revolution*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Tucker-Abramson, Myka. 2017. "Atlas Shrugged's Shock Doctrine". *Modern Fiction Studies* 63 (1): 73-94. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2017.0005>

Williams, Rebecca. 2016. "Ontological Security, Authorship, and Resurrection: Exploring Twin Peaks' Social Media Afterlife". *Cinema Journal* 55 (3): 143-147.

Wright, Jacqueline. n.d. "'On Coonardoo', by Katherine Susannah Pritchard." *Griffith Review*. <https://griffithreview.com/coonardoo-katharine-susannah-prichard/>

[This page has been intentionally left blank]

Part Two

Dissertation

The Cultural Capital of Reading in the Digital Age: A Qualitative Study

Chapter One: Introduction

Background to the Study

The goal of this study is to gain further insights into teenagers' reading practices in the digital age. Drawing on the findings from a small qualitative study involving 14 teenagers from Western Australia, this dissertation examines the ways in which French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital offers a productive approach to reflecting critically on how reading is practised and valued in situated contexts. Many researchers, myself included, are drawn to Bourdieu's work as it offers a framework to help explicate how cultural practices are stratified by social class (O'Donoghue 2011, 191). This study examines how each participant's reading choices are shaped by, and shape, group "habitus", a term used by Bourdieu (1984) to describe how a set of dispositions of an individual or group, influences actions within a social space (170).¹

Across cultures, there is broad consensus that it is important to inculcate a love of reading in children as it has been claimed that children who can read enjoy reading, and so read more, which consequently makes them better readers. These stronger readers also achieve academic success (De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp 2000; Parlette and Howard 2010; Sullivan 2001; Tramonte and Willms 2010), which in turn leads to a wider range of options beyond their compulsory school years. Longitudinal studies report that children who learn how to read from an early age and are supported in their reading at home, are more successful at school (Sparks, Patton and Murdoch 2014; Stanovich, Cunningham and West 1998). Thus, in Western Australia (WA), for

¹ These questions are also addressed in the creative component of this thesis.

example, early reading practices are promoted and supported by *Better Beginnings*, a state- and corporate-funded organisation, through initiatives such as gifting newborns with a children's board book and encouraging parents to take their children to rhyme-time and story time sessions that are often held in community libraries.² While there are differing opinions on how large the gap between readers and non-readers grows over time, researchers agree that rarely do poorer readers catch up with their well-read counterparts (Rigney 2010, 63). This so-called "Matthew Effect" is documented in multiple studies across disciplines concerning reading (Cunningham and Stanovich 1997; 2001; Nuttall 1996).³

In Australian primary and secondary schools, reading is regularly assessed by means of standardised tests.⁴ Not only do students take part in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), but since 2008 their reading competency is tested in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9, in the National Assessment Programme Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) along with other skills policymakers deem "essential" in school and life (NAPLAN 2016).⁵ From 2011, Year 4 students' reading abilities have also been measured in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), a study run

² The five regions involved in *Better Beginnings* 2004 pilot program were Gosnells, Mandurah, Midland, Carnarvon, Halls Creek and Kalgoorlie (Better Beginnings 2017); these are socio-economically disadvantaged areas in metropolitan and regional Western Australia.

³ The "Matthew Effect" is a term used in sociology to describe how inequality gaps widen. It was first used by Robert Merton with reference to a verse from the New Testament; "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. 25:29 in Rigney 2010).

⁴ Until 2009, the first year for secondary school students in all schools was Year 8. From 2015, the first-year intake in all secondary schools in WA is Year 7. As such, some schools include Year 10 in their senior school structure. However, in this dissertation "lower secondary school" or "lower school" indicates the first year of high school to Year 10, and "senior secondary school" or "senior school" refers to Year 11 and 12.

⁵ See also Appendix I for list of acronyms used in this dissertation.

⁶ The transition from paper-based to online testing begins in May 2018 (NAPLAN 2018).

by Boston College, on a five-year cycle (Thomson et al. 2017, viii).⁷ ⁸ Individual schools can also choose to benchmark students' reading competency by enrolling them in the fee-paying International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) English assessments, developed by the University of New South Wales's global branch. Since 2016, due to demands by tertiary institutions, employers and the community for "greater assurances" of the literacy and numeracy standards of secondary school graduates (SCSA 2018), WA students who fail to achieve Band 8 in their Year 9 NAPLAN tests must pass the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) before they can graduate from secondary school.⁹

Reading, as one component of standardised testing, is thus a high-stakes activity for individual students and their communities. Although NAPLAN was introduced to ensure a more equitable education system (Thompson and Harbaugh 2012, 301), there have been unintended consequences. For example, NAPLAN results are uploaded online in a format that allows the public to compare schools' results, which influences parental school choice (Thompson and Harbaugh 2012, 300).¹⁰ As such, NAPLAN is both directly and inadvertently linked to funding because families who have the financial resources flee schools that are perceived as less desirable.¹¹ Real estate values are consequently inflated in the local-intake zones of schools that

⁷ PIRL also includes ePIRL which tests fourth-grade students' ability to read, comprehend, and interpret online information (Mullis, Martin, Foy and Hooper 2017).

⁸ In 2016, one class of Year 4 students in 286 schools, in all school sectors took the PIRL test. All Year 4 indigenous students in the selected schools sat the test (Thomson et al. 2017).

⁹ Although there are alternative pathways to university, most university-track students are admitted according to their Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). The aggregate used to calculate a student's ATAR in WA is the sum of a student's top four scaled scores that comply with subject combination rules, plus 10% of the best score in a Language other than English (LOTE) subject, and 10% of the scaled scores in Maths Methods and Maths specialist (TISC 2017). All students must study at least one English subject, and universities require English competency regardless of entry pathways. However, each institution sets its own entry requirement for alternative pathways.

¹⁰ See <http://myschool.edu.au>

¹¹ In Western Australia non-government schools receive per capita grants (Department of Education 2018a)

are perceived as superior (Danielsen, Fairbanks and Zhao 2015).¹² Critiques of standardised high-stakes testing identify it a symptom of “neoliberal logic,” where key infrastructure including education has been commodified and monetised (Chang and McLaren 2018, 3).¹³¹⁴

British researchers Alice Sullivan and Matt Brown (2014) report a strong link between frequency of reading and academic success with the caveat that not all forms of reading reap the same academic rewards.¹⁵ The authors classify reading materials by genres which are aligned to a low, middle or highbrow status. Brown and Sullivan (2014) find that reading materials that are middlebrow or lowbrow do not reap the same academic outcomes as the reading of highbrow material, such as literary fiction.¹⁶ Moreover, their study finds that lowbrow fiction readers and non-readers made the same progress in terms of vocabulary gain (Sullivan and Brown 2014, 18). Their study also identifies a distinction between the reading habits of elite university graduates and those from other universities, and reports that almost half of elite Russell Group

¹² Since July 2016, students from any country who are over six-years-old are eligible for entry into any Australian school as fee-paying international student under subclass student visa 500 if they have a guardian accompanying them. (Department of Home Affairs 2018). At the time of writing this thesis, there were no studies on how these additional actors in the marketised education system change or affect in school reading practices.

¹³ The term “neoliberal” was first used to describe the ideas advocated by the Mount Pèlerin Society, a group of intellectuals who met in 1947 to discuss the “fate of classical liberalism” (Marangos 2009, 367). The neoliberal project had its origins in the work of economist and philosopher Friedrich von Hayek and economist Ludwig von Mises in the 1920s and 1930s (Davies 2014, 3), spreading from Austria into London, Germany, the rest of Europe and the USA over the following decades. Since the 1970s its impacts have been felt variously across the world, in all spheres of life. William Davies describes neoliberalism as “the disenchantment of politics by economics” (2014, 4); and Wendy Brown defines it as “an order of normative reason that, when it becomes ascendant, takes shape as a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices and metrics to every dimension of human life” (2015, 30). Brown also posits that in the West, in recent years, education is formulated “as primarily valuable to human capital development, where human capital is what the individual, the business world, and the state seeks to enhance in order to maximize competitiveness” (2015, 176).

¹⁴ Chang and McLaren point to how, under neoliberal policies, the “social state” is replaced by a “consumer state” where “corporate reformers” control education (2018, 4).

¹⁵ This longitudinal study is part of the multidisciplinary *1970 British Cohort Study* (BCS70) which has been collecting data about participants since they were born in one particular week in 1970.

¹⁶ The origins of the terms “highbrow” and “lowbrow” are controversial because these were used in phrenology, a late nineteenth-century practice that involved the measuring of head shape and size to infer brain size and intelligence, a practice that later led Nazis to develop their racist theories (Meisel 2009, 3).

graduates like to read “contemporary literary fiction” compared to only 30 percent of other university graduates (Sullivan and Brown 2014, 5).¹⁷

The value of reading has been quantified in earlier studies that find a link between reading and academic outcomes. Anne Cunningham and Keith Stanovich’s research on reading and academic outcomes is based on the premise that reading particular print texts exposes students to infrequently used words not found in “lexically impoverished” oral language (2001, 139). The study used existing indices that measured a text (both oral and written) based on its lexical and syntactic complexity. This form of assigning a value to texts has since been developed, commercialised, and renamed a “Lexile value” which has been promoted to educators as a tool to “personalise learning”, “measure student growth” and report to parents (Lexile 2018).

Underlying much existing reading research and many reading programs are what Canadian-Australian education theorist Allan Luke terms “folk theories of literacy” (Carrington and Luke 1997, 97; Luke 1995); the simplistic belief that reading will improve one’s life opportunities, and that a successful reader is one who achieves set benchmarks in “decoding, summarising and comprehending ‘large chunks of text’” (Alvermann 2001, 680). These presuppositions are problematic because they fail to acknowledge newer understandings of literacy and reading as a socio-cultural practice. Literacy no longer indicates one’s ability to decode and write words, but a broader set of situated social practices (Freebody and Luke 1990; Luke 2012).¹⁸ The definition of literacy has shifted from the concept of basic literacy, the ability to read and write short

¹⁷ See Russell Group Universities (2018).

¹⁸ James Freebody and Allan Luke were part of the 1990s “New London Group”, a collective of educators whose work on multiliteracies challenged existing understandings and teaching of literacy.

simple sentences about daily life (UNESCO 2004, 12), to functional literacy, the idea that literate societies provide opportunities for the free exchange of information and lifeline learning (UNESCO 2006, 159), and critical literacy, which is linked to mastery of a skillset that facilitates the claim to and extension of human rights (UNESCO 2006).¹⁹ Not achieving some degree of competence in literacy, of which reading is only one element, also limits one's ability to participate in the social, economic, and political development of a nation (UNESCO 2006) and contribute to civil society (Cullinan 2000). Therefore, reports of “aliteracy”, those who can read but choose not to (Brinda 2011; McKenna et al., 2012; Merga 2014; Pitcher 2007), have much wider implications beyond an individual’s academic performance.

The definition of reading itself is contested due to the digital revolution of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century which has changed the way we now consume and produce texts. Laura Singer and Patricia Alexander (2016, 1060) express their disappointment in the lack of explicit and implicit definitions of reading in their systematic review of reading comprehension across both print and digital formats. They suggest that the lack of explanation of what digital reading is in these studies reflects researchers’ perception that the difference between traditional and digital forms of reading is due to the “context of the process” rather than the “reconceptualization of the basic construct” itself (Singer and Alexander 2017, 1060). Many earlier studies on reading in digital formats explore the possible implications of these newer reading practices. Some studies predicted that digital formats might lead to even more fragmented forms of reading (Liu 2005, 700) and others argued that the disruption to traditional reading practices would lead to more superficial ones and a dumbing down of society (Baurlein 2008). However, other researchers predicted that

¹⁹ See United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948).

print based reading would still exist as they believed that in-depth reading would still require paper texts (Liu 2005; Sellen and Harper 2003) and that in an increasingly complex world people would continue to read in paper format (Liu 2005). Yet others argued that traditional reading practices would be limited to an elite minority and most people would only read for functional purposes (Griswold et al. 2005). These early twenty-first century studies, however, predate the invention of the Amazon Kindle in 2007, the smartphone in 2008, and the iPad in 2010.²⁰ More recent studies report that traditional book reading practices co-exist with digital reading practices (Perrini 2016; Zickhur et al. 2012).

As traditional definitions of reading do not adequately encapsulate contemporary reading practices, reader advisory researcher Laurel Tarulli (2014) argues for a new definition of reading. Tarulli's definition—and the one that I adopt in this thesis—conceptualises reading as a practice that involves not only digital versions of traditional texts, but a “mash-up of formats” (2014, 297), including audio books, computer games, and online articles. Tarulli defines reading as the “interaction with text in a variety of formats for a variety of purposes” (2014, 297) and challenges the idea that reading is on the decline (298), pointing out that digital technology has enabled more people to access reading materials they would otherwise have not been able to afford. All books, including texts books, are cheaper in digital format and more easily accessible to populations who did not have the resources to buy or access books (Baron, Calixte and Havewala 2017, 591; UNESCO 2014). Technology has allowed greater access to previously inaccessible texts and this has resulted in significantly

²⁰ Tablets such as Samsung's GRiD, IBM's ThinkPad, Apple's Newton and the Palm Pilot were available to consumers in the late 1980s, and early to mid1990s (Nield 2016). Arguably, however, it was the Apple company's iPad that popularised the use of tablet technology.

increased international literacy rates both the developed and developing world (UNESCO 2014).

The impacts of reading have also been examined and measured in contexts outside of the field of education. The reading of narrative fiction has been linked to increasing one's empathy and imagination (Kidd and Castano 2013; Mar et al. 2005). American academics Jeffrey Wilhelm and Michael Smith (2016) point out that when Year 8 students read books that lie outside of the school curriculum, they experience genuine pleasure and gain a sense of psychological well-being. Similarly, Canadian researcher Vivian Howard (2011) reports that teenagers who read for pleasure have enhanced self-awareness, which helps them resolve issues in their own lives, and an increased awareness of the wider world.²¹ Reading has also been linked to better physical health outcomes (De Walt et al. 2004); and, more specifically, book reading has been linked to longevity (Bavishi, Slade and Levy 2016).^{22 23}

Research Focus and Researcher's Perspective

Many studies of reading and reading practices adopt an instrumentalist approach and examine measurable outcomes. There are fewer empirical studies on reading that conceptualise reading as a complex and contested concept and practice. Moreover, there is a dearth of research on the reading experiences of older teenagers who are in their final years of secondary schooling. Existing research on teenage

²¹ Studies that do examine the teenage reading habits include Merga's (2014) West Australian book reading study involving students in Year 8 and 10; Howard's (2011) Canadian study on pleasure reading practices of twelve to fifteen years old ; Parlette and Howard's (2010) study on the reading habits of undergraduate students, aged 18 to 20-years-old, and academic outcomes and Sullivan's 2001 statistical study on reading as a cultural capital focuses on GCSE students, who are mostly fifteen or sixteen years old.

²² This study finds that those who read books had a 23-month survival advantage over those who read other types of materials such as newspapers and magazines.

²³ For a witty and richly ambivalent exploration of the value of reading see Debra Adelaide's short story "The Ministry of Reading" (2014).

reading habits tend to focus on participants in their early to mid-adolescence or undergraduate students.²⁴ This dissertation seeks to address this gap and to further understandings of how older teenagers, those in their final three years of secondary education, value different forms of reading by exploring how each participant engages in this multifaceted cultural practice.

The study presupposes that all participants engage in multiple forms and approaches to reading in school and at home.²⁵ The central questions this study seeks to address are:

- 1) How do participants evaluate the different reading practices they engage in?
- 2) In what ways are reading preferences shaped by an individual's disposition and the influences of their socio-cultural situation?

As with all qualitative studies, this one is shaped by the researcher's positionality. The questions specific to this qualitative study are borne out of my lifelong fascination with the contextually and temporally sensitive nature of the cultural capital attached to reading and other literacy practices in different social contexts. As a Hong Kong born child growing up in Greater London, and later in Perth, Western Australia, I spoke a hybrid form of Cantonese Chinese with my grandmother and mother, English with my older sister, and a combination of both with my father.

²⁴ It is probable that this is in part due to the difficulties of recruiting willing participants in this age group, but also because the focus of many of reading studies is on school-based academic outcomes, and those in their later teens have already chosen or been streamed into either a university (academic) or non-university (vocational) pathway.

²⁵ Although "reading" can be used to indicate the reading of multimodal texts, I conceived this project with a working definition of reading as the decoding of written text in all formats and contexts, and allow for participants to articulate their conceptualisation of reading, so that their evaluation of various reading practices can be examined.

In my working-class diasporic Chinese family, reading was an activity that was highly valued and explicitly linked to academic success. My screen time was restricted, so when I professed boredom I was instructed to read or “duk sheu” (读书) words that can also be used in place of “study” or “school.” When my family migrated from England to Australia, the only possessions my parents shipped were our books, notably, thirty leather-bound gold-edged volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Despite growing up in a household where reading was highly valued, I was aware that being well read or educated was not always an advantage in life. I knew that my illiterate maternal great-grandfather thrived in French colonial Vietnam as a merchant in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, but that my paternal grandfather, a graduate of the elite Nanjing University, struggled to provide for his family when he sojourned to British Malaya in the early twentieth century. However, I also knew that my paternal grandmother was able to raise her six young children after she was widowed because she was educated and qualified to teach in schools run by the Chinese community in post-war Malaya. Although her salary was low, it was enough to raise her six young children.²⁶

I continued to read books when I entered high school because there was little else to do in my leisure time. I had been introduced to classical literature in primary school by my father and sister, and through my classical-music education, which included learning about various Western art periods.²⁷ This knowledge, however, was not of any obvious value at school outside of the music lessons, and was only relevant in the senior school English literature classroom. In the schoolyard, there was kudos

²⁶ My paternal grandmother had the opportunity to attend teacher training college in China because the missionaries who converted her family to Christianity advocated female education.

²⁷ The piano playing Chinese prodigy has become somewhat of a caricature in Western culture and one Amy Tan explores in the phenomenon in her fiction, and Amy Chua, in her non-fiction books *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011) and *The Triple Package* (2014).

attached to reading fiction with adult themes, such as Judy Blume's *Forever* (1975), books from Virginia Andrew's *Flower in the Attic* series, or teen pop-culture magazines such as *Dolly* or *TV Hits*.²⁸ I did not disclose to my friends that I still enjoyed reading children's novels such as the *Anne of Green Gables* series, except when it was framed within the context of the television series which featured Jonathon Crombie, the Canadian actor who played Gilbert Blythe, who had a cult following. I instinctively understood what was acceptable in the different social spaces, or in Bourdieusian terms *fields*.

One Christmas, I acceded to my father's request that I ask one of my music teachers if he read *Reader's Digest* (a general-interest magazine whose parent company also published condensed books), because he wanted to buy the teacher a gift subscription. I recall the look of disgust on my teacher's face as he said something to the effect of "No, not that doctor's waiting-room rubbish. Why do you ask?" My face flushed red with embarrassment and I lied that I was conducting a survey for an English project on reading habits. That Christmas, I presented the teacher with a coffee table book on French Impressionist art, which might not have been what he was interested in but given that I took lessons at a music conservatorium was perhaps considered more appropriate.

Around this time, I was streamed into an advanced English class taught by a woman made in the mould of Robin Williams' character in *Dead Poets Society*.²⁹ She fulfilled the requirements of the quintessential English teacher as she allowed us to

²⁸ Although *Flowers in the Attic* was published in 1979, it was still popular when I was at high school in the late 1980s and early 1990s, possibly because of the 1987 film and subsequent novels in the series were published in the 1980s.

²⁹ *Dead Poets Society*, a 1989 film set in the late 1950s, is about an English teacher in a conservative elite boys' school who encourages students to think for themselves, rejecting the formal curriculum in favour of personal and creative responses to Literature.

think for ourselves, fostered creativity and instilled in us a love of reading and writing, while also teaching us the skills we would need in senior school such as essay writing and practical criticism. The following year, however, the English classroom experience was very different as I advanced into Tertiary Entrance Exam (TEE) Literature at a new school.³⁰ I chose to study Literature over TEE English because I enjoyed book reading, and because of my view that only the reading of serious literature was a legitimate subject of study. I also chose Literature because I had an aversion to multiple-choice tests, then a key component in the TEE English exam, and because I knew that my marks would be scaled up if I chose Literature over English.

After graduating from secondary school, I decided to go to university because that is what everyone at my school did, and I decided to study at a university with a reputable English program.³¹ In the first week at university, a lecturer told us that we had chosen to study at one of the more progressive universities and that everything we had learnt in high school English was most likely out-dated. It was at university that I was formally introduced to critical theory. When I re-read some books from high school Literature, I thought how dull the study of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* had been in high school as we examined the book with a fine-tooth comb, looking for symbolism of one man's descent into madness without any historical or critical perspective, even though in Year 12 I had not disliked reading the novella.³² Although I studied English at university, I no longer considered myself "well read" since I was

³⁰ I changed schools after lower secondary school because I wanted to attend a school closer to home. Although my local school offered the TEE subjects that I wanted to do, I was accepted into an inner-city school where I completed Years 11 and 12 on the condition that I participate in the school's extra-curricular music program.

³¹ In the early 1990s education was compulsory only until Year 10, so many who were not university bound left school to attend TAFE or enter the workforce.

³² This "close-reading" practice is part of New Criticism, a formalist literary theory which dismisses the context of a text's production or reception and instead focuses on the supposed 'intrinsic value' of a text. This "cultural heritage" approach to reading is one that dominated the WA English curriculum until the late 1960s (Dowsett 2016).

reading fewer books than at any other stage of my life because of the nature of some of the units I studied, and also because of my online and real-life social activities. In my first year of university, I met computer engineering students who introduced me to *Baymoo*, a text-based virtual reality world hosted by San Francisco State University.³³ The space is best described as a text-based version of *Second Life*, that involves creative writing and basic coding skills, and one that was populated by university students who interacted with others both in and out of character. Although most inhabitants of *Baymoo* were based in the USA or Europe, I had local friends who also spent considerable time in this space, so I often signed into *Baymoo* to arrange our real-life social events.

In my final year at university in the mid-1990s, I wanted to read more books and when I expressed this to a classmate, she gave me a copy of Robert Dessaix's "The Love List" (1998).³⁴ In this piece, Dessaix tells the reader to simply read "what you love" and not to be "put off" by those who "press their own loves on you, amazed that you're not instantly seduced" (1998, 85). Dessaix (1998, 85) reassures readers that they do not have to read Roland Barthes, Margaret Mead, Janet Frame or Dante. Dessaix's writing inspired me to find the time to read books of my own choosing, and so I devoured any books, articles and websites that wrote about the diasporic Chinese experience, which at the time was a very limited selection. I discovered that Chinese-American author Amy Tan had, like me, grown up in a household that received the *Reader's Digest*, and that her father had subscribed to it for the same reasons my father had: to increase his children's exposure to new English vocabulary.³⁵ I was at what

³³ See Baymoo (n.d.).

³⁴ The essay appears in Dessaix's 1998 book ... *And so forth*.

³⁵ In interviews, Tan has often spoken about the centrality of *Reader's Digest* in her early life. See, for example, Mandall 1991. In the *Joy Luck Club*, Jing-Mei's mother, a cleaner, brings home magazines

developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1963) terms the “identity crisis versus role confusion” stage of my development, so these texts played a pivotal role in resolving my so-called identity crisis.³⁶ Although I could not relate directly to the stories, they were told from perspectives that were close to my own. In an era that predated online shopping, I would on occasion email my North American-based sister to source relevant books that I discovered on websites created by people with similar reading interests to mine.³⁷ While some of these books and their authors are still obscure in Australia, others, such as Tan and Maxine Hong-Kingston, are on some reading lists in schools today.³⁸ My lived experiences have informed all stages of my research.³⁹

Structure of Dissertation

This dissertation comprises five chapters. In this chapter I have presented the focus and aims of this project, offered a small, selective overview of studies of reading pertinent to the study, and introduced Bourdieu’s ideas of cultural capital as the theoretical framework. I also presented an account of my reading experiences, and in doing so have situated my subjectivity, a process essential in qualitative research (Cumming-Potvin 2013; Powell and Truscott 2016) and highlighted how the value of reading is contextually and temporally sensitive.

from work, including *Reader’s Digest*, and places them in the family’s bathroom. I could relate to this as my parents worked in a hospital and would bring home discarded magazines.

³⁶ This is not to say that books by other authors did not play a role at this important stage of my psychosocial development. Randolph Stow’s novel *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, (1965) introduced me to ideas about belonging, and provoked me to think thought deeply about individuals who reject grand narratives about national identity, or do not conform to their imposed identities. See Pavlides’ (2013) study of Australian literature published between 1988 and 2008 that challenge traditional notions about Australian national identity.

³⁷ These websites, which could now be classified as blogs, were often manually coded websites hosted by university servers.

³⁸ Tan’s novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) is studied in some Australian schools and the film adaptation was until recently on the WACE General Literature suggested text list. Hong Kingston’s novel *The Woman Warrior* is, at the time of writing, on the WACE Literature suggested text list (SCSA 2017). See also Helen Sykes’ (2011) recommended text list. Texts that are classified in some way “Asian” have been included into reading lists because Asia is a cross-curriculum priority (ACARA 2018a).

³⁹ The scale and scope of this study does not allow for deeper engagement on how my race, gender, and “Chineseness” have influenced my research focus and methods.

In chapter two, I define Bourdieu's key concepts—cultural capital, field and habitus—and outline how the difficulties in conceptualising class in Australia problematise the use of Bourdieusian theory in the local context. I also present an overview of studies relevant to this study, that use Bourdieusian concepts as a point of departure.

In chapter three, I identify this study as one that is both interpretivist and critical and examine where it sits on the qualitative research continuum. I detail my research design and process, including the ethical considerations in recruiting and interviewing participants who were minors at the time of the interviews. I also outline and justify my approach to data collection and analysis.

Chapter four is the presentation of this study's findings and comprises two sections. In the first section, I provide a summary of the participant cohort before presenting participant profiles. These rich descriptions of participants highlight the multitude of factors that influence how participants define and evaluate different forms of reading. In the second section of this chapter, I present the two key themes that emerged from the study: firstly, that the participants' self-identification as readers or non-readers adhere to traditional notions of reading, and secondly, that they define reading according to subjective qualifiers that have been influenced by each participant's home and school culture.

In the final chapter, I discuss the key findings through a Bourdieusian lens, and explicate how the relationship amongst individuals and institutions within specific fields generates individual reading identities. I conclude this study by considering the implications and applications of this study and make recommendations for further research on reading and reading practices.

I anticipate that this study will deepen understandings of reading as a situated socio-cultural practice and that the detailed descriptions and conclusions generated from this study will enable those with a vested interest in the reading practices of older teenagers—such as parents, teachers, and teenagers themselves—to gain insights into the meaning and significance of contemporary reading practices in both individual and social terms, and to critically reflect upon their positioning of various reading practices.

Reading may be an intimate, social, pleasurable, high-stakes, recreational, study, or work-related activity that involves multiple skills and it is a socially situated practice. Each reading practice is valued in various ways, by different actors in different times and situations, and the struggle for a dominant definition of reading takes place in a dynamic social space that is shaped by geo-political forces. Although it is not possible to present an exhaustive review of existing studies on reading due to the limited scale of this project, the select studies highlighted in this chapter illustrate the intricacies of reading and the complexities involved in attempting to settle on a stable definition for the term.

Chapter Two: Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented this study's aims and a selected overview of existing empirical reading studies and also highlighted some of the competing approaches researchers from various disciplines have used to define reading, evaluate reading competency, and measure the attitudes towards and benefits of reading. In this qualitative study, I define reading as a situated socio-cultural practice that involves the reading of texts in both traditional print and multi-modal online and offline formats (Tarulli 2014), and I use cultural capital theory as the conceptual framework.

There are two sections to this chapter. In the first, I define and explain concepts central to evaluating cultural practices, and hence, to determining cultural capital—*forms of capital, habitus, and fields*—and introduce Bourdieu's definition of *taste* and *symbolic violence*. In the second, I outline the ways Bourdieu's ideas have been used in subsequent research relevant to this study. In this section, I also point to the challenges of discussing cultural practices as a marker of class in contemporary Australian society and how Australian academics have adapted the notion of cultural capital to the local context. In defining and describing Bourdieu's theory and its usages, I explain the theoretical perspective upon which this study is built.

Bourdieu's Cultural Capital: Key Concepts

Cultural capital theory first appears in *Distinctions* (1984), Bourdieu's study on the cultural preferences of the French, in which he analyses how the cultural practices of individuals from one class in society distinguish them from those in

another.¹ Bourdieu surveyed the cultural consumption of participants from the three strata of 1960s French society—working, middle and upper class—and identified patterns in their cultural preferences.² Significantly, Bourdieu did not define his use of the term “culture” and the term thus remains contested.³ The definition of culture I adopt in this study is one that understands culture as a “shared meaning and information system shared by a group of people that allows individuals to survive, pursue happiness and find meaning in their lives” (Matsumoto and Juang 2013, 15).

Bourdieu’s thesis focuses on how the education system reinforces and reproduces class inequality, as it advantages students who are from homes that have the cultural resources, or capital, to be successful at school. Bourdieu (1986) identifies three forms of cultural capital: embodied, objectified, and institutional. Embodied forms of cultural capital are intangible and unquantifiable, and include an individual’s practices, general disposition, skills and knowledge, and accent. Objectified cultural capital refers to the possession of a material object that is acceptable to dominant agents within a social space (Bourdieu 1986). Institutional cultural capital refers to credentials, such as qualifications awarded by educational institutions.⁴ Bourdieu classifies cultural practices, such as reading, under the *embodied* form of cultural capital, and posits that all three forms of capital can be inherited and accumulated. Reading is also associated with objectified and institutional forms of cultural capital because reading requires material (books or devices) and individuals can only obtain a

¹ The book was first published in French in 1979 as *La Distinction, Critique Sociale du Jugement* but was only translated into English in 1984.

² Bourdieu surveyed cultural practices such as reading, cinema viewing, theatre and concert attendance, mass media consumption habits, choice of recreational activities, and style and food preferences. See Bourdieu (2014, 525-545) for statistical data.

³ Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1996) comments that “culture is one of those words we all know the meaning of until we probe further” (56). See *Field Work: Sites in Literary and Cultural Studies* (Gerber, Franklin and Walkowitz 1996), an edited collection in which researchers from across disciplines problematise and illustrate the complexity of the term and its usage within academia.

⁴ See Bourdieu 1986.

recognised education qualification if they have demonstrated a certain level of reading competency.

Different cultural practices are valued and reproduced within different social spaces. Bourdieu argues that the legitimisation or disavowal of specific cultural practices is played out in a field, a social universe with its own logic (Bourdieu 1993a, 163). A cultural resource or practice only has value and can be converted into a form of capital if it is recognised by others in the field.⁵ This field can be visualised as a football pitch populated by players who are social agents (individuals) and both formal and informal institutions. As on a football pitch, each social universe involves a unique set of players and each are equipped with different level of skills and knowledge (their cultural capital) which informs their dispositions. Each player occupies different positions in the field and only those who know the rules or “logic of the field” can take part in the game; those with more knowledge of the game are in more advantageous positions. Newcomers to the field must familiarise themselves with that social universe before they can successfully play the game, and any advantage within a field is dependent on what specific cultural capital an individual possesses. Bourdieu also observes that those who earn their cultural capital differ from those who inherit it because of the imperceptible ways in which class manifests itself (1984, 110), such as through one’s manner and accent or in one’s choice of cultural and general lifestyle practices.

Cultural preferences play a role in the class conditioning of an individual who is then in possession of *habitus*, or a set of dispositions, which shapes their actions

⁵ The other types of capital that Bourdieu identifies are economic and social capital.

(Bourdieu 1990, 53).⁶ Bourdieu posits that individual and group habitus dictate play within a field and thus social agents do not move within any social space in a “random way” (1984, 110). Bourdieu likens such external factors to a magnetic field because these forces, which are beyond the control of agents, constrain actions within the field (1984, 241).⁷ He identifies an individual’s *tastes* as “manifested preferences” (Bourdieu 1984, 56) and argues that dominant groups assign cultural capital to their practices by disavowing the preferences of those lower in the social hierarchy. He argues that “it is no accident that when [tastes] have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes” (Bourdieu 1984, 56).⁸ Moreover, he asserts that cultural practices are not as innocent as they first seem, as taste “classifies the classifier” (Bourdieu 1984, 6). Bourdieu states that while “taste” implies choice, many individuals who are from the dominated classes do not have this freedom of opportunity as they lack both the economic and cultural capital required to access the lifestyles valued by the dominant class (1984, 179-179).⁹

Bourdieu draws attention to the complicit role educational institutions play in maintaining class distinctions through the sanctioning of the “hereditary transmission of cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1986, 243). Those who do not come from homes in possession of cultural capital, but who have the financial means, can still access costly

⁶ Habitus is the Latin word for Hexis, a term used by Aristotle to describe ethical or intellectual virtue, and is an acquired ability, skill, habit or incorporated disposition which makes people act in ways and is something that is borne from practice (Eikeland 2008, 53).

⁷ Bourdieu’s argument can also be likened to Newton’s law of inertia in that Bourdieu believes that shifts in an individual’s life trajectory only occurs when when acted upon by external forces. For Bourdieu, these are both fortunate or unfortunate events such as finding a benefactor or the outbreak of war respectively (Bourdieu 1984, 110).

⁸ There are similarities between Bourdieu’s work and nineteenth-century economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen’s 1899 treatise *Theory of the Leisure Class* (Trigg 2001). Veblen, like Bourdieu, argues that people distinguish themselves from others through their lifestyle choices. Veblen posits that each class in society feels pressure to copy the class practices of those higher up on the hierarchy through the consumptions of goods and leisure activities that are most distanced from work (Veblen 1899, 85).

cultural pursuits valued by the school system, such as attending the theatre or buying books they are likely to study in school (Bourdieu 1984, 122). Rejecting essentialist ideas about intelligence, Bourdieu argues that tests that measure cognitive ability, such as the Stanford-Binet IQ test, advantage those who are in possession of significant amounts of cultural capital. Students who are from lower-socioeconomic groups do not possess the level of cultural and linguistic competency (embodied cultural capital) recognised by school systems and as a result, do not do as well in these tests. Bourdieu terms this disadvantaging practice “IQ Racism” (1993b, 177-178).¹⁰ In administering these types of tests, schools enable and commit *symbolic violence*—a term Bourdieu uses to describe the visceral rejection of specific cultural practices, and arbitrarily privilege cultural practices that are familiar to and benefit the dominant group in society (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 5). Cultural practices that are condemned as too familiar or easily accessible to the mainstream population are generally marginalised within elite institutions. For example, Bourdieu points out that easy-listening music and accessible forms of writing hold little value in the *economy of practices* and so are disparaged as vulgar, childish, primitive, frivolous, shallow, superficial, or meretricious (Bourdieu 1984, 486). Within the field of education, critics of the theory of cultural capital point out that Bourdieu is too deterministic and that his notion of habitus leaves little to individual agency (Connell 1987, 94).¹¹ Bourdieu, however, argues that habitus does not “govern practices along the paths of mechanical determinism” but that it does generate “thoughts perceptions, expressions, and actions”

¹⁰ The term “IQ racism” is used by Bourdieu to indicate that those who practice this form of discrimination essentialise people the way racists do. It must also be noted here that Bourdieu’s experiences during the Algerian war for independence in the 1950s influenced all his subsequent work. See Bourdieu 2002.

¹¹ Terry Lovell (2000) outlines critiques of Bourdieusian theory in feminist studies, but also highlights the ways cultural capital theory has been used by feminist scholars in studies on class and gender.

that are limited by historically and socially situated conditions (Bourdieu 1990, 55). Moreover, he argues that it would be naïve to believe that “traces of life” exist within a vacuum (Bourdieu 1990, 55). Bourdieu’s theory, however, has also been accused of being too vague, dated, and lacking in empirical evidence (Sullivan 2002; Goldthorpe 2007). Sullivan and Brown (2014) described it as “somewhat opaque” and British sociologist John Goldthorpe (2007, 12) believes that Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is no longer pertinent to contemporary society because it predates the expansion of education systems that have facilitated upward mobility. Goldthorpe’s critique, however, fails to recognise that Bourdieu’s argument is in fact that the opening-up of centralised school systems that has compounded, rather than reduced, social inequalities (Calhoun 2006, 1409).¹²

Using Bourdieu in Research

Contemporary studies and Bourdieu

Researchers from different fields have used Bourdieusian theory to explain and explore how individuals and institutions, or agents, act relationally within a social space.¹³ There are fewer studies that focus on reading as a form of cultural capital compared to other cultural practices. However, studies conducted in Britain and Northern European countries find that reading is still a form of cultural capital, more so than the beaux-arts (fine-arts) of 1960s France, because reading is aligned with knowledge attainment, cultural knowledge and linguistic ability (De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp 2000; Prieur et al. 2008; Sullivan 2001). However, critics of studies that evaluate the cultural capital of reading, such as British sociologist Will Atkinson,

¹² *Distinctions* (Bourdieu 1984) was written during the period of education reforms in France. Education reforms in 1963 which saw the establishment of three streams of secondary schooling: classical, modern and practical, and later classical-modern, technical and vocational (Resnik 2007, 156-157).

¹³ Bourdieu’s fundamental concepts have been used in of fields as diverse as accounting and finance (Malsch et al. 2011), translation studies (Inghillieri 2005) and health (Cockeram 2005). For more examples of how Bourdieu is used outside of education, view delegates’ abstracts from the Bourdieu Study Group’s inaugural conference also (British Sociology Association 2016).

argue that different interpretations and piecemeal usage of Bourdieusian concepts fail to consider the nuances of reading practices and classify reading under vague categories that are too broad (Atkinson 2016). Furthermore, these studies use simple measures, such as education levels, as indicators of cultural capital (Atkinson 2016, 250) and fail to consider the multi-dimensionality of Bourdieusian theory. Atkinson (2016) argues that even more comprehensive studies of reading and cultural capital, such as the longitudinal British cohort study (BC70) mentioned in the previous chapter, fail to recognise factions within social-class groupings and other nuances that influence reading practices. He also points to how the BC70 study only looks at the reading practices of participants who are 42-years-old, and as such does not explore emerging forms of cultural capital (Atkinson 2016).

Annick Prieur and Mike Savage (2011) also recognise the dynamic nature of cultural capital and call for a conceptualisation of the term that reflects its relative value. They dismiss the idea perpetuated by researchers who argue that Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital no longer holds true because the legitimate culture practiced by the French elite is less valued across the contemporary world. Instead, Prieur and Savage (2011, 577) argue for a "field-analytic concept of capital", in which researchers do not simply directly transport Bourdieu's *content* of cultural capital into their situated contexts but rather transpose his *concept* of cultural capital.

John Guillory (1994) points out the relative value of cultural capital in his critical analysis of the role education systems play in forming and reinforcing the Western literary canon, a set of literary works that are valued above other works. Guillory posits that a canonical work is itself a form of symbolic capital and not because of any intrinsic property, but because of where it is positioned in relation to other works within a historically situated curriculum (Guillory 1994, 46). Guillory

places the education system and the ways in which it distributes and regulates access to forms of cultural capital at the centre of debates about the canon (1994, vii), pointing to how agents within higher education legitimise or marginalise specific works by including or excluding them in undergraduate English courses.

Guillory is dismissive of debates over whether a book should be included in the literary canon based on its intrinsic (aesthetic) or extrinsic (representational) worth, and instead places contestations over the value of certain texts within a dynamic, multi-dimensional and situated field, manipulated by education systems. He explains that challenges to the Western literary canon are due to the increasingly heterogeneous constitution (*habitus*)—or what Guillory terms “caste”—of those in the previously homogenous field of English literary studies that has led to revaluations of the Western literary canon. For Guillory, those on the left who push to legitimise non-canonical works by forming an “alternative” canon deny these newer works from ever attaining canonical status and are therefore as blind and “unresponsive” as those on the right to the heterogeneous constitution of cultural capital (1994, 47). He points out that “there can be no general theory of canon formation that would predict or account for the canonisation of any particular work, without specifying first the unique historical conditions of that work’s production and reception” (1994, 85).

WA education researcher Patricia Dowsett (2016) does not explicitly use Bourdieusian theory in her review of the state’s English curriculum between 1912–2012. However, Dowsett’s research is nonetheless an examination of how institutions and individuals within institutions [*agents*] possessing competing ideologies have shaped and sought to seek control of English in secondary schools [*the field*] (193).¹⁴

¹⁴ Bourdieu is mentioned in Dowsett’s doctoral thesis and in Rod Quin’s foreword in *Required Reading* (Quin in Dolin et al. 2017), a collection of essays co-edited by Dowsett that examines how literature has been taught in Australian schools since 1945.

Dowsett draws attention to a “cultural heritage” model of instruction that dominated English teaching in schools for over half a century. This mode was “embedded in Leavisite and Anglophilic tendencies” that were influenced by Oxbridge ideals that reinforced British imperial ideology, beginning with Walter Murdoch’s appointment as the head of the University of Western Australia’s (UWA), then the state’s only university, English department.¹⁵

More progressive social attitudes in the late 1960s disrupted traditionalist perspectives on the function and pedagogy of English teaching, and these more liberal ways of thinking were reflected in the curriculum (Dowsett 2016, 10). English was split into two subjects, English and English Literature due to the successful lobbying of “vocational and science advocates” who deemed the study of Literature irrelevant to those who were not in the literary field (Dowsett 2016, 10). English became a subject that focused on contemporary fiction and non-fiction texts, including media texts, and Literature became an optional specialist subject that focussed on classical literature and literary fiction (Dowsett 2016; Yiannakis 2014).¹⁶ English was from then on viewed as the more “working-class” or “softer” option and English Literature became the high-status subject (Dowsett 2016, 90), a position it has maintained regardless of subsequent socio-cultural shifts. As such, despite the many incarnations of the WA English curriculum, the value of reading works identified as “literature” is still cultural capital because of its legitimisation by the education system.

¹⁵ Leavisite refers to F.R. Leavis who taught Allan Edwards, the Chair of English at UWA 1941-1971. Guillory examines the ideology of Leavisites and New Critics, and how these two formalists schools of literary criticism reinforced the notion of a civilising literary canon (1993, 134-175).

¹⁶ Walter Murdoch laments, in his essay “The Tyranny of the Low-Brow”, the anti-intellectual tide in Australia where it was “quite usual to boast of being a low-brow” (1937, 40). Murdoch encapsulates the idea that “superior” talents are field based and acknowledges other forms of intelligence, such as his mechanic’s ability to fix his car or peasant’s mastery of Italian, and comments that “so long as they [people such as his mechanic or an Italian peasant] stay there [within their social space], you will never suspect the low-brow for being what he is” (Murdoch 1937, 43). The idea of introducing broader and popular texts into the English curriculum would have been to his chagrin.

American sociologists Annette Lareau and Elliot Weiniger depart from conceptualising cultural capital as a specific cultural activity and adopt the approach that cultural capital should include any practice or competency that allows for the “appropriation of the cultural heritage of a society” (2003, 578). They believe that the term should be used to indicate the possession of any resource which has the potential to advantage an individual within a specific social space because traditional cultural pursuits are no longer afforded their previous level of respect (Weiniger and Lareau 2003, 578). They argue for a definition that conceptualises cultural capital as any inheritable resource that “provides access to scarce rewards, and that is subject to monopolisation” (2003, 567). Lareau (2011; 2015) uses the Bourdieusian-inspired phrase, “cultural logic of child rearing” (2011, 3) to describe middle-class parenting practices and her work focuses on how middle-class parents deliberately “stimulate” their child’s cognitive and social development to enhance their cultural capital. Moreover, these children are further advantaged because they are inculcated with a sense of entitlement at home and the confidence that allows them to negotiate different relationships to their peers who are not in possession of this capital (Lareau 2011, 6).

The Challenges of Using Bourdieusian Theory in the Australian Context

It can no longer be broadly claimed that cultural practices are homologous to social class because most cultural practices are less clearly or securely defined by social-class boundaries than they were in the past. The social structures and perceptions of class within the context of this study differ significantly from those of Bourdieu’s; as Bourdieu’s concepts germinated from his research of 1960s France with an easily identifiable and entrenched social-class structure and my research is situated in Australia where historically, notions about class are “downplayed” and “significantly

avoided” (Butler 2015, 345). As such, traditional assumptions about class do not necessarily apply in the Australian context, and those who occupy dominant positions in society do not necessarily engage in the cultural practices associated with the traditional middle-upper classes (Pini, McDonald and Mayes 2012; Forsey 2015).

There has only been substantive engagement with Bourdieu’s by Australian scholars since the late 1990s (Woodward and Emmison 2009, 1). This is in part because Australian researchers tend to look towards the US and Britain, rather than to Europe, for research paradigms (Woodward and Emmison 2009, 2), but also because there are more “structural variables” in contemporary Australian society than in the cultural-historical context within which Bourdieu originally conceived his concepts (Bennett et al. 2013). Australian studies that adopt a Bourdieusian theoretical framework do not find that dominant groups are the same across multi-fields because class structures in Australia are less rigid and there is more opportunity for social mobility (Bennett et al. 2013).

Moreover, the inchoate use of cultural capital theory has disrupted the connotations of the term. Despite these contextual differences, Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital can be used to examine the subtle ways social class manifests in taken-for-granted contemporary practices such as reading. In this study, I adopt Lareau and Weinger’s (2003), and Prieur and Savage’s (2011) conceptualisation of cultural capital as relative, and not an absolute term. Cultural capital is any practice that is valued within a specific field, and it can take the form of cultural activities, such as a reading approach, that can be used to an individual’s advantage and in exchange for another kind of capital, such as economic or social capital. It is with these contemporary notions of cultural capital and localised understandings of social-class in mind that I examine the reading

practices of Australian teenagers who live in a text-rich and the globally connected digital world.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described concepts central to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and outlined how it has been used in existing studies. I identified that the broad usage of Bourdieusian terms in extant research has resulted in many variants of the application of the notion of cultural capital. I highlighted the fact that there are fewer studies of reading as a form of cultural capital than there are of other cultural practices, and I pointed out the challenges of using Bourdieusian theory in the Australia context. In this chapter, I detail and justify the research methods I use in this study by addressing the philosophical underpinnings of the qualitative or interpretivist approach. I then outline the processes I used to obtain permission to carry out the research, and then to generate, gather and analyse the research data.

Qualitative Research: a phenomenological interpretivist and critical approach

In using a Bourdieusian framework, this study is both interpretivist and critical, and mostly aligns to the "middle-ground" area on the qualitative continuum on which art and science are at opposing ends (Ellingson 2009).¹ The purpose of interpretivist research is to access, describe, and further understandings of a lived experience (Creswell 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2013) and is based on the belief that there are multiple context-bound socially constructed realities. This study is underpinned by the phenomenological belief that social reality is subjectively interpreted, and the epistemological perspective that knowledge is gained through human consciousness

¹ See Appendix II for further explanation on where the whole thesis sits along the qualitative continuum.

(Creswell 1998; Glesne 2016; Patton 2002).² Researchers who adopt this approach do not maintain a purely neutral stance as they take each study participant's responses as their own interpretation of the phenomena (Orlikowski and Baroudi 1991).

Phenomenological research aims to further insights into a phenomenon by providing a detailed and descriptive account of what a lived experience means for the person who has experienced it (Moustakas 1994, 13). While some researchers see the ontological perspectives of interpretivist and critical approaches as irreconcilable (Merriam 2009), others argue that interpretivist studies can also be critical, and the degree of criticality is dependent on the theoretical lens a researcher chooses (Walsham 2005, 14).

Research Questions

The aim of this research is to reflect on and critically analyse, thus deepening our understandings, the individual reading practices of selected contemporary older teenagers living and studying in Perth, Western Australia (WA), by interviewing fourteen individuals in Years 10, 11 or 12.³ This study was designed for secondary school students at institutions where English as a compulsory subject, and it was based on the assumption that that every participant would be engaged in some form of reading practice even if they claimed to be non-readers.⁴

The questions that guided this study were:

²There is no singular definition of or approach to qualitative research. Qualitative or interpretivist approaches are founded upon nineteenth-century philosophy, and in the 1920s these approaches emerged as an alternative to quantitative methods used in the natural sciences (Merriam 2009; Patton 2002).

³ As I mentioned in chapter one, the reason I chose to examine this age group is that there are fewer extant reading studies that focus on this demographic.

⁴ See Coffey et al. (2011) and Trenwith and Rickard (2011) for an overview of changes to secondary school entry-year levels.

- 1) How do participants define, make sense of, and value various reading practices, given the many different forms available in the contemporary world?
- 2) How do participants' habitus and their family members' cultural capital shape and inform participants' reading preferences?⁵ (See Appendix III for interview questions.)⁶

Reflexivity

Although it is sometimes dismissed by some researchers as self-indulgent, reflexivity it is an essential part of the validation process in qualitative research and acknowledges that a researcher's subjectivity influences all stages of the research project (Bourke 2014, 2). Reflexivity involves identifying, rather than controlling or eliminating, social factors (Cumming-Potvin 2013) and, in being reflexive, researchers consider where they are positioned in the "grids of power relations" at all stages of the project (Sultana 2007, 376). I recognised, in conceiving this study, that while aspects of my identity are fixed (such as my ethnicity and gender), others were more fluid and subject to change (such as my life trajectory and perspectives). I was aware of my insider status due to the multiple roles I have held in both my professional and private lives, as well as my outsider status as someone unfamiliar with the social spaces the participants frequented and their various cultural practices.⁷

⁵ These questions are reiterations, in Bourdieusian terms, of the questions posed in chapter one, "Research Focus".

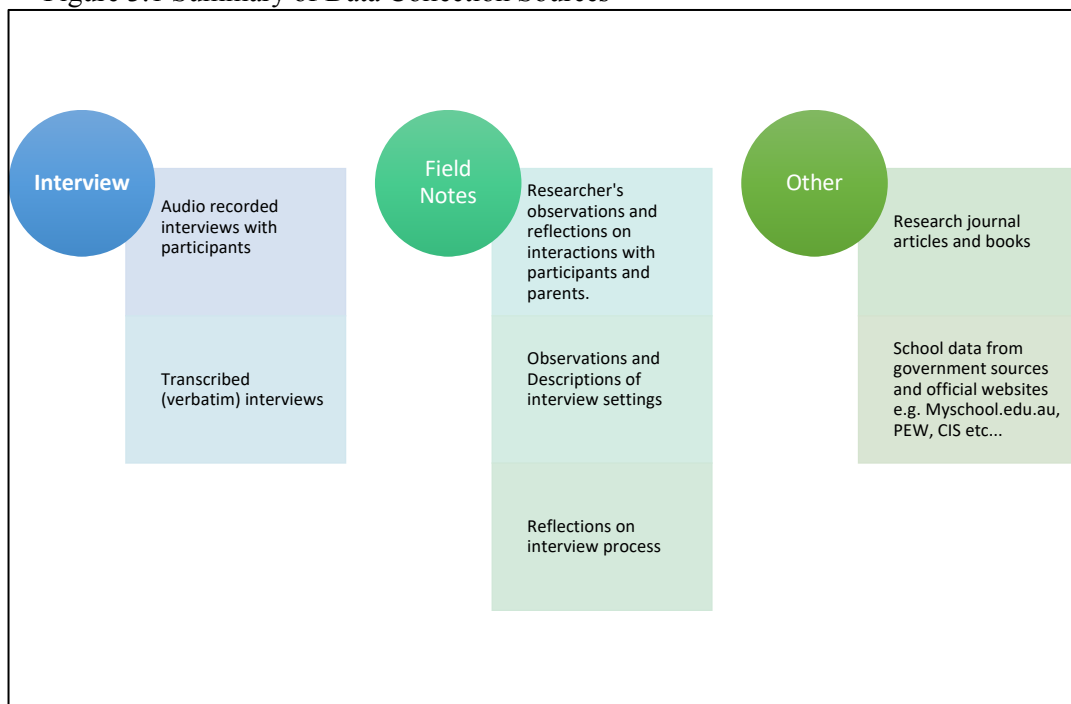
⁶ Having provided the conceptual and theoretical background to the dissertation in previous chapters, I now offer a slightly more expansive version of the research questions that were listed in chapter one.

⁷ In the early 2000s, I was employed as an English, English as an Additional Dialect (EALD) and web-design teacher in the secondary sector. At the time of conducting this study, I was also working as a communication skills teacher in the tertiary sector. In my personal life, I am a parent of a primary-school-aged child. See also "Researcher's Perspective" in chapter one of this dissertation.

Research Design

The two primary sources of data used in this study were the semi-structured interviews with participants and field notes, made up of a collection of observations I made about the interview settings and the interactions I myself had with, or observed between, parents and participants. Additional sources of data included existing academic research relevant to the study, as well as information from government and other research institutions. (See Figure 3.1 below.)

Figure 3.1 Summary of Data Collection Sources



I adopted the semi-structured interview approach because in doing so I could cover the same topics with all participants but also have the flexibility to explore both pertinent and tangential issues. There is no optimum number of interviews a qualitative researcher should conduct, as the number depends on a multitude of factors such as the researcher's epistemological approach, the scale of the project, and institutional

requirements (Baker and Edward 2012; Bryman 2012a).⁸ I decided to recruit 11 to 15 participants because I anticipated that I would reach saturation point by this stage, and further interviews would be redundant.

Ethical Considerations and Participant Recruitment

I applied for a research permit from the university's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) before commencing my interviews.⁹ I sought to recruit teenage participants fell into two categories: those who were mature enough to give consent to be interviewed and those who were not (NHMRC 2007, 50). As I was unable to gauge each participant's level of maturity before the interviews, I decided to seek additional consent from parents of those who were under 18 years old, regardless of whether the participant was in Year 10, 11 or 12. I also made the decision not hand back transcribed interviews for member checks, the process of reviewing and adding to interview transcripts, because of concerns raised by HREC about the high level of maturity and commitment required to do this.¹⁰

I did not deliberately recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, people from an identifiable cultural, ethnic or minority group, nor people whose primary language is one other than English.¹¹ I did, however, inadvertently recruit participants who were from visible minority groups or who came from a culturally diverse background.

⁸ Bryman (2012a) recommends reaching saturation point when researchers use other qualitative approaches.

⁹ See Appendix IV for copies of recruitment information and consent forms submitted to Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics committee (HREC).

¹⁰ If I had undertaken this process, I might also have compromised the privacy of some participants who were minors because I would have had to send their transcribed interviews, either in hard-copy or via email, to a parent or guardian.

¹¹ During the research design stage of this study, the decision was made to not recruit minority groups because of the scale and scope of this project.

Although this study was considered low risk (See NHMRC 2007, 70-71), I was aware that the nature of semi-structured interviews meant that some of my innocuous questions might lead to conversations about sensitive personal issues which might trigger feelings that surpassed mild discomfort.

I recruited participants by placing flyers at display counters at bookshops and libraries and handing them to people who expressed an interest in helping me recruit participants. In adopting the “snowball” (Patton 2002, 194) sampling method, more participants were recruited. In the end, I had a cohort of 14 teenagers who were in Years 10, 11 or 12, at schools across the Perth metropolitan area. I communicated with participants’ parents via email, messaging or the phone if participants were under 18. I made direct contact with two participants who were in Year 12 and ascertained that they were mature enough to take part in the study without parental consent, but asked them to bring a copy of the consent form to the interview nonetheless. (See Appendix III for flyers and consent forms.)

Interview Process

The setting for the interviews was at a place agreed upon by the participant or their parent. I stressed how important it was that the interviews should be conducted away from a school setting as I did not want the participants to infer that my research was concerned only with school-sanctioned reading practices. I did not anticipate that parents would invite me to their home or ask to drop their child at my house to conduct the interviews. These unexpected invitations and requests meant that I could observe intimate family interactions and have face-to-face interaction with some parents. These additional insights enriched the study and enabled me to form descriptions that were more detailed than they otherwise would have been.

At the beginning of each interview, I read through the consent forms with the participant and gave a summary of the ethical guidelines. I informed them that I would use pseudonyms in any material generated from their responses and reminded them that they could withdraw from participating at any stage of the study. I approached each interview with the idea that the data generated would be a collaboration, and that the interviews were “social encounters” at sites of knowledge production (Holstein and Gulbriun 2004, 147).¹² It was crucial that I shared something about myself during the interviews so that my participants felt safe and at ease. While some researchers are critical of this method because of concerns participants might develop a friendship with the interviewer which would influence their responses and produce inconsistent results (Gomm 2004, 175), I viewed the interviews as two-way conversations. Moreover, conducting my interviews this way did not affect the aims or validity of this study.

I anticipated that some participants might conform to the stereotype of the monosyllabic teen and provide very brief responses, so I included questions that allowed for shorter answers, which I, in turn, could build upon with additional probing questions. Adopting a flexible approach meant that some interviews were longer than others, and most interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. The longer interviews tended to be with participants who were more confident and had the capacity to talk about reading and their other cultural preferences; however, this was not always the case. Some interviews were longer because it took longer to build rapport with a participant, and my first two interviews were significantly shorter than the rest because of my inexperience as an interviewer. After reflecting on these interviews, I modified the sequence of questioning and included more rapport-building questions earlier on

¹² Jack Douglas (1986, 115) in his work on creative interview techniques refers to this as the offering the “soul self”.

in the interviews. I also included demographic-related questions at the start of the interviews, and although some researchers suggest that such questions should be kept to a minimum or woven throughout the interview (Patton 2002, 353), I found these were ideal “ice-breakers” which sometimes led to in-depth conversations pertinent to the study.

I always aimed to be conscious of my limitations and responsibilities as a researcher and sensitive to the vulnerabilities of some participants. My language register changed according to an individual participant’s facility and confidence in expressing their ideas. While interviews with some participants felt like a conversation with peers, in others I had to find ways to reframe questions to ensure that they were readily understood. In two interviews, the participants disclosed how reading helped them cope with some very challenging life experiences. I interpreted these disclosures as indications that the participants had enjoyed the interview experience and felt very comfortable sharing more intimate reasons for why they valued reading so much. I gave these participants time to finish telling me their stories but did not ask further questions about their personal lives. I also discontinued my line of questioning about reading when I sensed that participants were embarrassed about their lack of knowledge about certain topics. With one participant, I changed the entire course of the interview and focused only on computer gaming practices when the participant’s responses indicated that he might have had a learning disability that affected his ability to read at a level expected of others in his age group. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to suggest additional topics of discussion for my subsequent interviews, and after the completion of each interview, I noted down my reflections in my research journals.¹³

¹³ Further descriptions about the interview process are embedded in the “Participant profiles” section in the following chapter and in Appendix VI.

Analysing the data

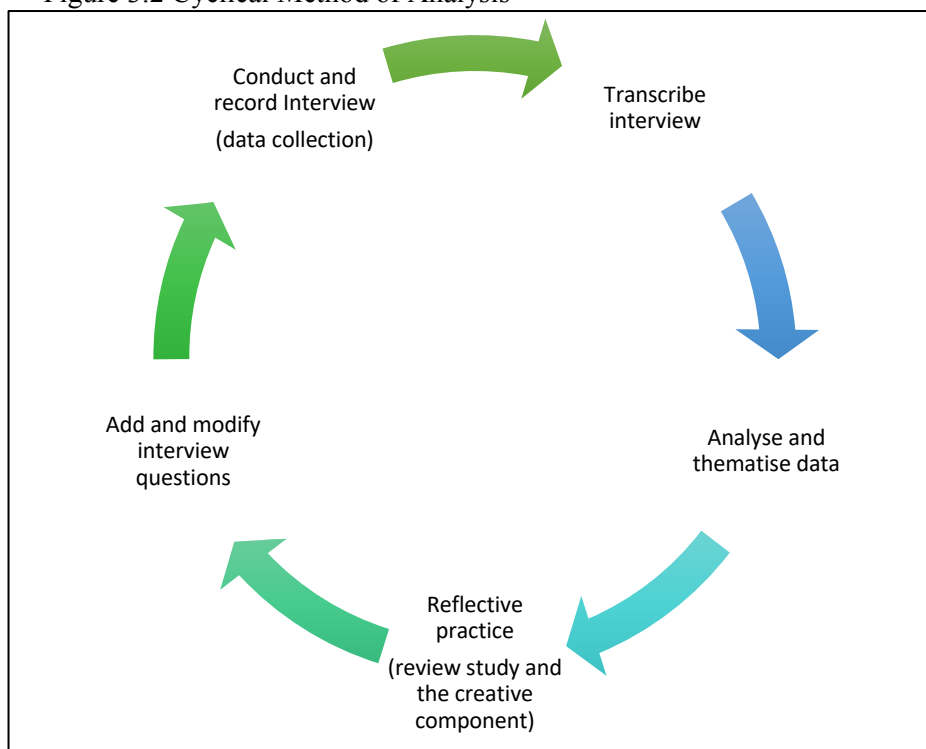
As it took me over six months to recruit participants, I had time, sometimes weeks, to reflect upon each interview before the next. The analysis process involved first transcribing the audio interviews verbatim.¹⁴ I then began thematic coding as I read through interview transcripts in search for common themes (See Appendix V). Within these themes, I searched for differences and similarities amongst participants. After completing each interview, I returned to coded transcripts from earlier interviews and reviewed them for common and unique themes. Throughout this process, I was always conscious that I was interpreting findings through a Bourdieusian theoretical framework.¹⁵ This is sometimes referred to as “triangulation”, but as triangulation does not include creative analytic processes, and the creative component of this thesis was a key component to this study, it is more appropriate that I use “crystallisation” to describe this process.¹⁶ Figure 3.2 illustrates the data analysis process which began immediately after my first two interviews and is included in this diagram where the creative component of this thesis fits into the research process.

¹⁴ I had listened to the audio recordings more than once during the transcription process to capture utterances, pauses and expressions of emotion.

¹⁵ While some researchers argue that this method complicates the linear process of sampling (Bryman 2012, 18), others advocate this technique since new questions lead to further insights (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

¹⁶ Crystallisation is a component of Laura Ellingson’s (2009) concept of the qualitative continuum. See Appendix II.

Figure 3.2 Cyclical Method of Analysis



I created graphical representations to assist me conceptualise emerging themes. These diagrams mapped out where participants positioned their reading practices in relation to those of others, and how they interpreted the dynamics within the field of reading.¹⁷ I compiled participant profiles, which I present in the following chapter, to further detail how individual participants form their reading identities and attitudes towards different reading practices. These profiles illustrate the complexity and variegated nature of contemporary reading practices, and highlight aspects of each participant's individual and group habitus.

This research approach requires ongoing reflexive practice and inquiry, where the researcher must be aware of not only where the research is situated in the qualitative research continuum, but also where the researcher herself stands in relation to each

¹⁷ These concept maps should not be confused with Bourdieu's (1984) mathematical co-ordinate maps, which were based on surveys of thousands of participants, nor those of subsequent researchers who attempt to create a visual representation of fields for their research; see, for example, Patricia Thompson (2008, 72) regarding Bourdieu's social field.

participant. The transparency of my position at all stages of this study has been crucial to the reliability of this project. In outlining the research process, I have shown how I integrated research approaches to design a study which is phenomenological, critical and empirical, and one that furthers understanding about the reading preferences of older teenagers.¹⁸

¹⁸ The creative process was also key at all stages of this research, as it helped me illustrate a rich and textured multi-dimensional social world in ways that cannot be depicted in traditional empirical studies. A detailed exploration into how adopting a research approach that integrates creative production into traditional qualitative research may deepen the study lies beyond the scope of this project.

Chapter Four: Participant Profiles and Key Themes

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I detailed my research method and the phenomenological approach adopted in this study, which, through a Bourdieusian lens, seeks to address the question of how older teenagers value reading in the contemporary world. In the first section of this chapter, I profile the 14 participants, focusing on how they form their self-perceived identities as readers or non-readers. These profiles offer a holistic picture of how the participants' education and family backgrounds influence the way they value specific reading practices. In the second section, I present two of the key themes that emerged from my data analysis: firstly, that there are many forms of reading, but not all are considered legitimate by the participants; and secondly, that the reading practices of participants did not develop within a vacuum but are shaped both by home and school cultures. (See Appendix VI for additional information about participants.)¹

Participant Profiles

Although the premise of Bourdieu's theory is that class stratification manifests in cultural practices such as reading, I was careful not to categorise the participants in this study according to class.² However, I identify the range within which each participant's school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value falls in Table 4.1.³ The ICSEA value is measure of school socio-educational

¹ This information was not included in this chapter due to the scale of this dissertation. These additional notes include information about participants that do not directly relate to the key themes but nonetheless provide a deeper understanding of the multifactorial conditions that shape reading choices and practices.

² I did not identify nor did I ask participants to identify a social class status not only because of ethical considerations, but also because of the complexities of identifying social-class distinctions in Australia, as well as because of those complexities related to class ascription identified in the previous chapter. No specific ICSEA values were given to anonymise the schools.

³ I am unable to present the exact ICSEA value as this would identify the school and possibly the student.

advantage and was developed to enable “meaningful” comparisons between NAPLAN results of schools of similar socio-economic advantage or disadvantage (ACARA 2013, 1). At the time of the interview, no participants were attending a school that had a cohort of “extremely” educationally disadvantaged students; however, some participants were at schools that included students from “very” educationally advantaged backgrounds.⁴ All participants who were not in the Catholic schools or AISWA systems were attending state schools that have been granted Independent Public School (IPS) status.⁵ I have used pseudonyms for participants, their schools and all suburbs.

⁴ The median ICSEA value is 1000 with a standard deviation of 100. ACARA (2013, 2) explains that a score of 500 “represents extremely educationally disadvantaged backgrounds”, and 1300 “represents schools with students who with very educationally advantaged backgrounds”. See ACARA (2011; 2013; 2014) for further information about ICSEA values.

⁵ In Western Australia, the IPS system was introduced in 2010 in order to give school administrations more autonomy and flexibility in accommodating the needs of the local community (Trimmer 2013, 179). These schools are not to be confused with charter schools in the USA. IPS schools are still state schools, whereas charter schools are publicly funded schools managed by private organisations, which do not have to adhere to a national or state curriculum. See Trimmer (2013) for further discussion.

This page has been intentionally left blank

Table 4.1 Profile Summary of the 14 Participants.

#	Name	School Year	School Type	ICSEA value of school	English subject	Self-perceived reading identity	Participant's perception of mother's reading identity	Participant's perception of father's reading identity	Aspirations
1	Jason	12	IPS State	1000-1050	*Non-ATAR English	Non-reader	Non-reader	Reader	Work or TAFE
2	Tania	11	IPS State	1000-1050	Non-ATAR English	Reader	Reader	Non-reader	Study Psychology
3	Daniel	11	IPS State	1100-1150	ATAR English	Reader	Reader	Reader	UWA Science
4	Jacqueline	10	IPS State	950-1000	**Year 10 AEP	Reader	Reader	n/a	University Science or Nursing
5	Theresa	12	AISWA	1150-1200	ATAR Literature	Reader	Reader	Non-reader	University Business or UWA Science
6	Angelina	12	AISWA	1150-1200	ATAR Literature	Reader	Non-reader	Non-reader	UWA Psychology
7	Michael	11	Catholic	950-1000	ATAR English	Non-reader	Non-reader	Reader	University Business or Engineering

#	Name	School Year	School Type	ICSEA value of school	English subject	Self-perceived reading identity	Participant's perception of mother's reading identity	Participant's perception of father's reading identity	Aspirations
8	Aylish	11	IPS State GATE	1100-1150	ATAR Literature	Reader	Reader	Non-reader	UWA Science
9	Lucas	10	Catholic	1100-1150	Year 10	Reader	Non-reader	Non-reader	UWA Science
10	Nick	11	IPS State	1000-1050	ATAR English	Non-reader	Non-reader	Reader	UWA Politics or Economics
11	Michelle	12	IPS State	900-950	ATAR English	Non-reader	Non-reader	n/a	UWA Law
12	Marlow	12	IPS State	900-950	Non-ATAR English	Non-reader	Non-reader	n/a	Uncertain
13	Mia	12	AISWA	1000-1050	ATAR English	Reader	Reader	Reader	Primary school teaching
14	Jack	12	IPS State GATE	1200-1250	ATAR English	Reader	Reader	Reader	University Politics

*Non-ATAR English indicates any English course that is not subject to external examinations and does not contribute to a students' Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

** AEP refers to Academic Extension Program. This is not to be confused with GATE programs. (See Appendix I for list of acronyms.)

Participant 1: Jason, Year 12, Stewart College (IPS State School)

At the time of our interview, Jason had just completed Year 12 at Stewart College in Redhill, a suburb no more than a decade old, and was living at home and working part-time in hospitality. Jason lives with his parents and two adult siblings, one of whom is at university and the other in full-time employment. His mother is a part-time carer and his father is in real estate. Jason's mother invited me to interview him at their house and when I got there, she introduced me to Tania, a friend of Jason's who was also interested in participating in the study. Jason speaks Standard Australian English (SAE), however, the rest of his family converse with each other in SAE, Singlish, and several Chinese dialects including Mandarin.¹

Jason's recreational activities revolve around the computer. In primary school and the first year of high school Jason read or drew pictures in his leisure time, but this changed when he was given a laptop in Year 9, under the Rudd government's Digital Education Revolution (DER) program. Jason explained how owning his own computer and gaining access to the internet both at school and at home was a "game changer". Jason laughed as he confessed that he and his friends knew that their teachers were unfamiliar with new technology, so they played computer games during class and simply "alt-tabbed" out of a screen when the teachers walked past. He also attributed the lack of access to a well-resourced library as one of the reasons he read far fewer books when he started at Stewart College. He noted that there were far fewer books in Stewart College's library. Even though Jason still reads, he does not think of himself as a reader because he only reads online texts.

¹ Singlish is the colloquial English spoken in Singapore that uses linguistic devices from dialects spoken by the ethnically diverse Singaporean population. See also Lionel Wee's study on the contestation over Singlish and anxieties about appropriate language use of English in the former British colony (2014). Mandarin is the official language in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan (or The Republic of China), and is one of the four official languages in Singapore.

The last book Jason read was in his non-ATAR English class and although he could not remember the title, he remembered it as an engaging book about a drug addicted teenager. Jason had also recently read a woodworking book, but did not think that the reading of instructional texts qualifies one as a reader. Jason is toying with the idea of furthering his education at TAFE.

Participant 2: Tania, Year 11, Rutland Quay Senior College (IPS State School)

Tania is a friend of Jason's and volunteered to take part in this research because she identifies as a reader and is someone who "always has a few books on the go". Tania is in Year 11 at Rutland Quay but is unsure of whether she is in a VET or university pathway program. Although Tania loves reading, she struggles with reading in the English classroom which is why her teachers put her in the non-ATAR stream. Tania is more engaged in English this year than when she was in Year 10 English where she had found the set-texts "a little bit boring" even though some books had been "a little bit interesting". She said that she enjoys General English class because of the lighter workload. She noticed that those in ATAR English read entire books whereas in General English students are only expected to read short stories or excerpts from longer works.

Tania's mother works in real estate and her stepfather is in the construction industry. Tania thinks of her mother as a reader because she often sees her mother reading magazines and celebrity memoirs. She "rarely" sees her stepfather read, so considers him a non-reader. Tania has a rich reading life outside of school and, unlike all other participants, makes a point of not reading books before viewing screen adaptations. Sometimes, Tania chooses not to watch the screen versions of books that she has read. Her favourite genres are fantasy and supernatural, and one of the two books she was reading at the time of the interview was from George R.R. Martin's

Game of Thrones series. She has viewed a few episodes of the popular TV series but prefers reading the novels. Tania plans on studying Psychology at university after she graduates from Year 12.

Participant 3: Daniel Year 11, Jacaranda Senior High School (IPS State School)

Daniel is in his final term at Jacaranda, a school in an area of Perth with a cluster of highly-rated schools. Jacaranda is a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) school but it does not run a program specifically for academically gifted students. Yet the school has a large cohort of high academic achievers and regularly ranks in the list of top 20 schools in the annual ATAR performance table.²³ Most of Daniel's primary school friends went to their local school, Bluegum Senior High School, which also has a reputation for being one of the top state schools in Western Australia and has a GATE program. However, Daniel's parents were keen for him to take up a Jacaranda sports scholarship because all students at Jacaranda have the opportunity to study languages other than English (LOTE), which is not the case at Bluegum.

Daniel strongly identifies as a reader even though he reads far fewer books than he used to. For Daniel, and all other participants, life got busier when he started high school, and busier still when he started Year 11. Despite various activities competing for his attention, Daniel is still a bibliophile and is never short of books to read. However, he chose to study English over Literature because he dislikes reading for academic purposes. He enjoys reading Young Adult (YA) and adult fiction that falls under the action and adventure or thriller genre. Both his parents regularly introduce Daniel to new novels and authors, which is how Daniel discovered Matthew Reilly,

² GATE programs can include general academic or subject specific programs such as arts or languages.

³ Traditionally the "league tables", which ranks a school's median ATAR, has been published in the state paper *The West Australian*, but these days they can also be found on commercial websites, for example, see <http://bettereducation.com.au/SchoolRanking.aspx>

one of his favourite authors. Daniel's father is an academic and his mother works in medical research. He has an older sister who studies science at university and at the time of the interview, Daniel wanted to follow in her footsteps.

Participant 4: Jacqueline, Year 10, Riverdale College (IPS State School)

Jacqueline is an avid reader and book collector who, at the time of the interview, had only just started Year 10 at Riverdale College. Despite the school's changing demography and assimilation into Perth's metropolitan area, the wider area of Riverdale still includes pockets of socio-economically disadvantaged areas, and ICSEA values of all state schools in the City of Riverdale have remained below the national mean.

Jacqueline is in academic extension classes across all four core subjects and is a straight-A student. Jacqueline's mother, a small business owner, was keen for Jacqueline to take part in this research and Jacqueline herself was equally enthusiastic because she is a reader with many thoughts about the benefits of reading. Jacqueline identifies as a reader and a book collector. She lives in Riverdale with her mother and two younger siblings. There were few mentions of her father, who I assumed, based on her responses to some questions, lived elsewhere. When Jacqueline is not at school, she works part-time at a local shopping centre and plays in a regional sports team which trains five days a week. One of her life goals is to play the sport at state, and then national level.

In her leisure time, Jacqueline reads a broad range of young-adult fiction. She is often gifted books by her extended family and friends on special occasions and buys her own books with income from her part-time job. Jacqueline is certain that she will go to university and study "something science related", possibly nursing.

Participant 5: Theresa, Year 12, St Cecilia's College (AISWA School)

Theresa is a graduate of St Cecilia's, an elite private girls school in Waverly, a very affluent Perth suburb. Her ATAR results and future were very much on her mind when I met her. Theresa is multilingual, proficient in French and at least two Asian languages. Theresa identifies her mother as a reader because she often sees her mother read both Vietnamese and English language novels. She describes her father as a non-reader because she has never seen him read a book. Her parents run a successful small business in a neighbouring suburb to Waverly. Theresa's mother commented that she sent Theresa to St Cecilia's because she and her husband believed that the school would make up for any deficits at home. Neither she nor her husband are fluent speakers of English and it is unclear what level of education they had completed either in Vietnam or Australia.

Theresa was accepted into St Cecilia's not long after starting her primary school education at a lower fee AISWA school. Theresa fondly recalled her mother showing her St Cecilia's promotional brochures and when she saw the school's "big water fountains" Theresa told her mother that she wanted to transfer immediately to St Cecilia's. She did not know anyone at her school who was on a non-university pathway but said that there might be a few VET students studying stereotypically "female" areas, such as hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Theresa considers herself to be a reader even though she has had less time to read in Year 11 and 12. Her English teachers encourage and inspire her to read more of the type of books she has been studying in Literature. Theresa said that like many of her peers, she listed a course at UWA as her first preference but she is somewhat worried about her job prospects if she undertakes a non-professional degree. She is also contemplating studying a degree in Business or Science at Curtin.

Participant 6: Angelina, Year 12, St Cecilia's College (AISWA School)

I suggested to Angelina that we meet at the Art Gallery café and while waiting for her to arrive, I observed the well-heeled gallery patrons and wondered whether I would have suggested this venue had Angelina *not* been a St Cecilia's girl. Angelina is part of Theresa's friendship group and was also awaiting ATAR results at the time of our interview.

Angelina and her brother were still in primary school when their family migrated to Perth in the 2000s, at the beginning of WA's mining boom as her father is an engineer. The decision to send Angelina to St Cecilia's was made before the family migrated to Perth. Angelina said that her mother, a former nurse, had Googled private schools in Perth, and St Cecilia's came up as one of the top schools. The family decided to settle in the house they live in due to its proximity to St Cecilia's.

Reading is central to Angelina's identity and she enjoys reading popular novels and literary fiction in her leisure time. Like many of the other participants who identify as readers, Angelina collects books and is gifted books by friends and family. She recalled her delight in receiving a \$100 book voucher from her parents for graduating from high school. Angelina believes that being well-read and thus well-educated "opens up a lot of doors", even though she acknowledged that there are many jobs which do not require people to be "super academic". My interview with Angelina lasted over an hour, during which she disclosed that she had sought comfort in books when she had a serious illness and believes that book reading played a major role in both her physical and psychological recovery.

Participant 7: Michael, Year 11, St Isidore College (Catholic)

Michael lives with his university educated parents in Ashview, an inner-city suburb which borders Waverly; his mother works in the arts sector and his father is an

engineer. He thinks of his mother as a non-reader because Michael only sees her reading women's magazines but considers his father a reader because he is always reading books. At the time of the interview, Michael had recently decided to discontinue participating in an AFL development squad because he was not prepared to dedicate his life to the sport.

Michael strongly identifies as a non-reader because he only reads for academic purposes. Like most of the interview participants, Michael read fewer books when he went to high school, but unlike most other participants, he did not enjoy reading the *Harry Potter* series as a child. He preferred realistic fiction and books about "kids who are like me". His parents continue to encourage him to read more by buying him books that are about things he is interested in, such as memoirs by athletes. Michael says he has not read any of these books because he does not enjoy reading and prefers spending his leisure time with friends.

Michael reads purely for academic purposes and often "skims" texts set by the English teacher. Despite the lack of in-depth reading, he manages to attain "decent marks" in English and achieves solid B grades, sometimes As, because he knows how to pass assessments. Michael's very pragmatic strategies for reading reflects his approach to education in general. Michael believes that there is a possibility he will read more frequently when he is older and ready for a more solitary activity. He is confident about gaining direct entry to university where he will most likely study business or engineering. He excels in maths and science subjects.

Participant 8: Aylish, Year 11, Robertson College (State School - IPS)

Aylish's mother found out about my study from a university classmate and suggested to Aylish that as a reader she might be interested in taking part in this research. I conducted my interview with Aylish in her living room while the rest of her

family were in the kitchen area of their spacious home. At the time of the interview, Aylish had just completed her end-of-year exams. Aylish lives with her family in Newton but attends Robertson College as a GATE student because although Newton College is also a GATE school, it does not offer all the specialist courses that Robertson College does.⁴

Aylish identifies as a reader even though she reads less than she did in primary school, due to time constraints. Aylish recounted how as a child she used to love to be seen reading “big impressive books.” These days, she continues to read when she has time and some of the recent titles Aylish had read included Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*. Aylish described how she often finds books from her mother’s bookshelf to read when she has the time, which is usually over the holidays. Aylish thinks of her mother as a reader, but considers her father, an engineer, a non-reader even though he reads science-fiction. Aylish also reads books suggested by friends and does not discriminate between genres. She is one of two participants who read peer fiction on *Wattpad*, a social media application best described as YouTube for writers. She had recently had a positive work experience at a medical research centre which was something her father organised for her. After she graduates from high school she wants to study science at UWA. At no point in the interview did I have to modify my register to ensure that Aylish understood my questions.

Participant 9: Lucas, Year 10, St. Francis College (Catholic)

Lucas strongly identifies as a reader but has read fewer books since starting high school at St Francis College because of an increased academic workload and his

⁴ Students in Western Australia can study at schools that run GATE programs regardless of whether they live within the local intake area. Entry to these schools are dependent upon entry test results. GATE programs fall into three categories: academic, arts and language (Department of Education 2018b).

extra-curricular commitments, which include music lessons and sports training. Lucas' mother invited me to interview Lucas at their cottage in Venice, one of Perth's most expensive coastal suburbs and a short drive from St Francis. She explained to me that their family could afford to live in Venice despite their modest incomes because their house was a cheap rental earmarked for redevelopment by the elderly landlord's family. Both of Lucas' parents are employed in education, although at the time of the interview his father had recently decided to change careers. Their local state school is one that is oversubscribed but has a good community reputation and offers a comprehensive range of subjects.

Lucas has very strong views about what makes one a reader and dismisses his parents as non-readers because they read too infrequently. For Lucas, only those who read "certain types of literature that makes you use your imagination" are readers. He does not include reading for academic purposes in his definition. Although he makes the effort to read books set in the English classroom most of the time, he has sometimes used online study guides to help him write an essay because he does not always have time to read a set-novel "properly". Lucas appeared embarrassed when he recounted that he received an A for the essay he wrote about a book he did not read. Although at the time of the interview Lucas had only started Year 10, he was already familiar with the senior school curriculum and pathways beyond secondary school. Lucas was, at the time of the interview considering undertaking a science degree at UWA

Participant 10: Nick, Year 11, Waverly Senior High School (IPS State School)

Nick's mother invited me to interview Nick at their home, which is within five minutes of St Cecilia's College. Nick is an energetic and confident teenager and ardent non-reader who claims that he has not read a book in years, possibly not since he read S.E Hinton's *The Outsiders* in lower secondary school. Like Michael's parents, Nick's

continue buying him books in the hope that he will read more. Both his parents place a high value on reading, most probably because both are teachers. Yet Nick views his mother, an English teacher, as a non-reader because he only sees her reading magazines and very rarely sees her reading “just for fun.” He “definitely” thinks of his dad as a reader because his father “just *loves*” reading and buying books.

Nick does not think that being a non-reader it is a disadvantage within the academic context. He loves creative and essay writing and does well in written assessments, and regularly receives A-grades for writing essays about books he has not read. He believes his writing has developed independently of his reading practices and that he is a successful student because he engages in broad range of literacies other than reading. He attributes his love of words to his love of listening to music from his parents’ generation and deems the song lyrics equal, if not superior to what he would read in a book. At school, Nick enjoys most humanities subjects and at the time of the interview was considering studying humanities at university because English, Politics and Economics are his favourite subjects.

Participant 11: Michelle, Year 11, Birchtown College (IPS State School)

Michelle transferred to Birchtown College at the beginning of Year 11. She had previously attended Williams College, a low-fee paying independent school, and before that, St Anne College, a school not dissimilar to St Cecilia’s. During the interview, Michelle identified different attitudes towards reading at the three schools, and noted that there was a stark contrast between reading cultures at St Annes and Birchwood.

Michelle initially declared herself a non-reader but she revealed later in the interview that she still reads regularly, simply not the types of books she thinks qualify her as a reader because they are “romantic” and “girly” books. She thinks of readers as

those who read more sophisticated books such as the novels read in the English classroom. Although Michelle likes English and loves her English teacher, she dislikes reading English set-texts. However, she perseveres with set-texts and often listens to the audio-book version of a text. Although her responses were guarded, Michelle was considerably more animated when she described her affection for her English teacher, a grandmotherly type. Michelle identified deficits in the teacher's skills and knowledge but said that she does not mind because the teacher was someone she wishes were a family member. Her English teacher considers Michelle's time-consuming part-time job, and allows her to complete assignments from other subjects during English class time. Michelle wants to study Law at university, preferably at UWA. As a student of Birchtown College and resident of Birchtown, a socio-economically disadvantaged area, she has access to alternative pathway programs at all WA universities.

Participant 12: Marlow, Year 12, Birchtown College (State School)

Throughout our interview, Marlow presented as a sensitive young man who was very unsure of himself, and I was reluctant to ask probing questions about his reading because he revealed early in the interview that he struggled with reading in primary school. Marlow does not read because he is a weak reader. As it was very likely that he still struggled with reading, I was careful not to request information that might trigger intense feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. During this interview, I had to think on my feet more than with the other interview participants because although my aim was to elicit substantive answers, I had to consider Marlow's level of comfort even in asking seemingly innocuous questions. I spent much of this interview on rapport building.

When Marlow is not at school, he works at a fast-food restaurant and in the little leisure time that he has, enjoys playing first-person shooter games online.

Marlow's confidence grew as he explained to me the different types of computer games and formats for playing. It was clear that Marlow does not have many positive experiences at school neither in nor outside of the classroom. He does, however, make the effort to read set-texts in the English classroom because he feels that he must. He described how the teacher gives him and other "slow readers" extra time to read and rewards them with chocolate when they complete a chapter. Marlow enjoys the viewing component of English, and enjoys "analysing logos" and watching the films such as *Boys of Abu Ghraib* which he simply described as "psychological".⁵

Marlow professed that he wishes he was in higher level courses because he believes that the students in ATAR classes are "more civilised" and differ vastly from students in his own non-ATAR classes. He also perceives that teachers in ATAR classes take their work more seriously than they do in his classes. He revealed that he once visited a university and thought it looked "interesting". However, he was unsure of what his plans were after Year 12 and unlike Michelle, had not been selected by Birchtown College to participate in any programs that enabled direct or alternative pathways to university.

Participant 13: Mia, Year 12, Hillingdon Christian College (AIS School)

Mia's mother found out about this study through recruitment flyers I had placed in a city bookshop. She invited me to interview Mia at their home in Hillingdon, a suburb that was until the mid-1990s zoned as a rural area but is now home to a culturally-diverse population. Mia's family are Anglo-Australians who live in one of the older developments in Hillingdon. They are practising Christians who strictly adhere to the teachings of their church. I interviewed Mia in her bedroom at her mother's suggestion because their home was undergoing renovation at the time. Upon

⁵ The film is a fictionalised account of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners that took place at Abu Ghraib prison during America's second invasion of Iraq.

entering the room, I gained a sense of Mia's interests and passions. Mia had recently renovated her bedroom, which was pastel-themed and decorated with black and white prints of places she had recently visited with her family.

Mia identifies as a reader because she has always loved reading and continues to read as many books as she did as a child. One of the reasons she finds the time to read for pleasure is because her religion dictates that followers must not work on certain days. Reading is no less central to Mia's life now than it was in primary school and she reads both Christian and mainstream novels as well as a range of online texts, including lifestyle and fashion blogs, and peer fiction on Wattpad. She is also a fashion blogger. She specified that she enjoys reading books and "not textbooks", but excludes novels read in English class from the latter category. She pointed to a copy of *The Wife of Martin Guerre*, which was the set-text for Year 12, and said that she often read books before she had to study them and this particular book was like nothing she had read before. She identifies her parents, who are both accountants, as readers who enjoy popular fiction, and named Bryce Courtney as one of their favourite authors. She also recalled how when she lost her copy of *Animal Farm*, her father replaced it with another edition that also included *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and suggested that she read both books, which she did.

Mia is an ATAR student and studies English because Literature is not available at her school. However, she claimed that given the choice she probably would have chosen English anyway because of the "variety" in the course. After Year 12 she intends to study primary education at a Bible college and develop her fashion blog.

Participant 14: Jack, Year 12, Atlantic School, (IPS State School)

I met with Jack at a café not long after he completed Year 12 at Atlantic School, a GATE school situated in the inner city. Jack identifies as a reader because he has

always made time for reading despite his busy schedule. At the time of our interview, Jack was reading a fantasy novel which he described as a “1000-page tome” and Stuart McIntyre’s *A Concise History of Australia*. The latter had been a school textbook which he was now reading again for pleasure and information. One of Jack’s favourite subjects at school was History and he believes that his interest in history led him to a broader range of non-fiction and fiction texts than most of his peers.

Jack had a very a positive experience at Atlantic and described his English teachers as progressives who are passionate about teaching critical literacy. Even though Jack had been accepted into a private school, he said that had he not gained entry into Atlantic, he would have gone to his local high school in East Wellington Heights. He preferred going to a state school because he dislikes the “born-to-rule” mentality of students who attend certain private schools. Although in the year Jack completed Year 12, there were no students from the lowest socio-economic advantage (SEA) quartile at Atlantic, and over 80% of students came from homes in the highest SEA quartile, it was evident that Jack made the distinction between his school, a state school, and private schools.⁶ Jack’s mother is a former teacher, and his father, who works in the media industry, has written and published genre fiction. He described both as readers. After taking a gap year, Jack planned to study Politics at a prestigious east-coast university.

Key Themes

Theme 1: There are many forms of reading, but not all are considered legitimate

⁶ Parallels can be drawn between the differences between school systems that Jack identified and the differences between British and American schools that sociologist Ralph Turner (1960) identified. Turner described American schools as “contest mobility systems” where all students have the chance to gain elite status through their own efforts and British schools as “sponsored mobility systems” where the established elite sponsor those they deem worthy of entry (1960, 856).

Early in the interviews, I asked participants to assign themselves a reading identity as I wanted to elicit a pre-reflexive response before exploring how they assigned value to different reading practices. Common to all the participants' definitions of reading is that only those who read books for pleasure in their own time are undisputedly readers. All participants, except for Jack, referred solely to recreational book-reading practices in their definitions of what made one a reader, and it was thus evident that participants had assigned themselves a reading identity based on the presumption that I was researching the reading habits of book readers specifically. Although I made it clear to them that I was interested in a broad range of reading practices, no participant modified their initial response except for Aylish, who took the opportunity to offer a more expansive definition of reading. She said that she understood that reading was not necessarily the reading of "a novel or book", and pointed to reading in other languages. Yet despite her more expansive definition of reading as an interpretive process and the practice of "being able to form ideas from the shapes on a piece of paper," Aylish's subsequent responses about reading referred to a narrower range of practices, and exclusively to the reading of literary fiction. For example, Aylish described her mother as a reader because her mother enjoys literary fiction and is part of a community book club, but classified her father as a non-reader because he reads mostly science fiction or non-fiction.

Jack's definition of reading includes the reading of non-fiction. However, he adds the caveat that readers must read with "a certain amount of regularity" and "read for pleasure as well as for information". Yet, as with Aylish, there were inconsistencies in Jack's definition of reading in his subsequent responses. While he refers to reading as the act of "lying down, reading a novel ...", he later points out that those who read serious, online articles are also readers, but then only allows for the reading of certain

online texts, such as op-ed pieces and political articles written by specialists in the field. Newspaper articles and magazines are excluded from Jack's notion of the types of reading practices that qualify someone as a reader.

Most participants also excluded newspapers and magazines in their definitions of readers, although not all specified which publication types. Nick, Jason and Michael dismissed their mothers as non-readers because they only saw them read popular women's magazines. Nick, who has similar reading interests and aspirations to Jack, does not consider that his regular reading of political opinion pieces or journal articles qualifies him as a reader because he does not read books. Nick's self-identification as a non-reader is based on his claims that he has not read an entire novel since Year 9.

Most participants also saw a clear distinction between reading for school or work, and reading for pleasure. Daniel, for example, classifies his father, who is an academic, as a non-reader because he only ever sees his father poring through materials related to his research. Daniel was one of many participants who thinks of reading as an activity practised by a minority, as he believes that most people do not read books "properly", by which he meant the thorough reading of a novel for pleasure. However, he did not limit his definition to highbrow fiction, and, although he takes pride in reading more complex adult thrillers, he also included people who read celebrity memoirs as readers. However, Daniel did not include "reading off the internet or reading the newspaper" as reading because it was something "most people do". He also excluded people who only read books for English or Literature.

Lucas' definition of reading is like Daniel's, as he also does not consider those who only read in school or those who read non-fiction, newspapers and magazines, as readers. For Lucas, readers are those who read fiction that is "more serious," and he did not exclude the reading of supernatural genre fiction if these books in some way

mirror the real world. Lucas explains how he makes this distinction between the types of fantasy books he reads and those read by others. He classifies books he likes, such as Andrzej Sapkowski's *Witcher* books as adult fiction because "it's pretty full on" and "has a lot of politics as well". He distinguishes between these books and "other fantasy books", including the popular *Game of Thrones* series, because of the intricate plot and chapters devoted to "just talking about different factions and stuff". He views other fantasy fiction as "a lot less deep" and the plot "isn't as hard to understand, it's just easier to understand. It's not as hard".

Angelina and Aylish both also spoke about the satisfaction and prestige of reading books that are more complex. Angelina believes that readers are people who regularly read books that are "challenging" and complex. Angelina classifies her mother as a non-reader because her mother does not persevere with difficult books but passes them onto Angelina, a habit that Angelina views as superficial perusal. Angelina makes distinctions between enjoyable page-turners that she can read overnight, such as the popular young adult novel *The Fault in our Stars*, and ones that she struggles with and does not necessarily enjoy yet completes reading nonetheless. She cites Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as a book she forced herself to read and explained that the pleasure derived from reading such books was from attaining an understanding of a previously incomprehensible text. She confessed to idolising an English teacher who made references to classical literature which made her want to "understand these books".

Angelina includes the reading of all fiction in her definition of what makes one a reader, whereas her classmate Theresa excludes academic reading, including the reading of set-texts in English. Theresa reported that she wanted to "get back to reading" over the summer break, and had asked her former teachers for book

recommendations because she had “obviously” stopped reading in high school. Her reading identity is based on the fact she loves reading and would read more books if she had the time.

Mia made a clear distinction between reading books for pleasure and reading for academic purposes, although the reading of a novel she was to study the following year at school disrupted her notion that reading had to be something that she “doesn’t have to learn.” Mia does not include the daily reading of online blogs or peer fiction on *Wattpad* as legitimate forms of reading, and referred exclusively to her book-reading practices in her responses about reading preferences.

Jason’s ideas about what makes one a reader differed from the other participants in that he does not privilege the reading of fiction and classified his father as a reader based on his reading of sales and motivational material. However, Jason formed his own reading identity on the basis that he does not read and excluded his recreational reading of woodworking books as marking him out as a reader. His friend Tania also included non-fiction book-reading practices in her definition of what makes one a reader and was the only participant to include magazine reading in her definition. She explained that when her mother has time, she “gets magazines” and buys books that are “usually” celebrity memoirs.

Overall, while reading is a contested concept, and some participants make allowances for a broader range of reading practices in their concepts of what makes one a reader, the consensus amongst participants is that readers are those who engage in the recreational reading of certain types of narrative fiction. Although all participants had subjective criteria for which reading practices qualify one as a reader, they all privilege texts that are literary or more serious in their definition. This finding highlights that although all participants read either in school or at home, only the

practices which are legitimised by the education system were included in the participants' definitions of reading practices that qualify one as a reader.

Theme 2: Home and school cultures shape reading preferences

Home environments and the transmission of cultural capital

My recruitment methods meant that this study attracted only participants who have a close relationship with at least one parent.⁷ Based on demographic data and responses, most participants come from homes that have varying levels of economic or cultural capital. All participants are from homes where parents encouraged and supported their child's reading when they were in primary school by taking them to local libraries, buying them books, and reading to them at bedtime. Both Theresa's and Michelle's parents sent their daughters to elite private schools to make up for their relatively low amount of cultural capital.⁸

Angelina, who comes from a household that was evidently high in both cultural and economic capital, has vivid memories of her parents teaching her not only to read, but also write before she started school:

My mum used to read in bed with me [books like] *The Magic Faraway Tree*. I remember her reading that [to me] before bed every night. [Mum and dad] did a lot teaching me how to read. My dad ... got a baby tray and filled it with shaving cream, and he made me write the letters in shaving cream and I remember learning how to read.

While not all the participants' parents were as involved in their children's early childhood learning, all participants except for Marlow recounted stories about being

⁷ As mentioned in chapter three, as this study involved participants under eighteen years old, I had to seek consent from their parents. Thus, parents who came forward were those who are actively engaged in the academic lives of their children.

⁸ See Appendix VI for additional notes about Theresa, participant 5, and Michelle, participant 12.

read to by a parent when they were very young. Aylish reported that even after she mastered the skill of reading independently at a very early age, her parents continued to read to her.

Many parents continued to support their children's book-reading practices well into secondary school. Aylish's mother continues to share books with her and plays an active role in supporting the reading habits of all her children. Aylish also reads some of her brother's books and shares books with all her younger siblings. Aylish identifies her brother as a reader, whereas her younger sister "struggles" with reading and is less of an independent reader, which is why Aylish's mother reads with her sister every day. Jacqueline also comes from a book-sharing household, with both her immediate and extended family supporting each other's reading practices. Both sets of grandparents support her reading and one grandmother takes the time to scrapbook newspaper and magazine clippings that might be of interest to Jacqueline.

Daniel also comes from a home enriched with books and other reading materials, and even as an older teenager, his parents have continued with the practice of recommending him books he might enjoy reading. Daniel has never had to frequent his local library because his home is filled with "hundreds of books." His family had

Just gotten rid of a lot of them [books] now but there
are still heaps on the book shelf. [As a child and now]
I would just walk in there and read a book.

He also recalled how as children, both he and his sister "would just walk into the study and read books". In addition to the home library, Daniel's mother also sometimes brings home books from the local library for him to read.

Both Michael and Nick have fathers who buy books regularly, and both sets of parents continue to buy their sons books to support their reading, even though both Michael and Nick claim not to read books. Nick's responses to questions about which

books and authors he is has heard of, reveal that he lives in a household filled with the types of books he is likely to encounter at school, and that on occasion, he skims through them.

Emily: [Have you read] *Animal Farm*?

Nick: I've heard of it. Read a lot of it, about communism with Napoleon and all that. The horse gets sent to the glue yard, I know that one.

Emily: So did you read it?

Nick: No, my dad bought it for me, and I just read it. yeah ... I didn't read all of it. I read ... like ... 50 pages of it.

Theresa, Tania, Jason, Michelle and Marlow made no mention of their parents playing a role in their book-reading choices once they were in secondary school. However, Tania did report that her mother went into a meeting at her school to discuss Tania's English course selection for Year 11 and 12, and Theresa's parents had specifically sent her to St Cecilia's to make up for lack of cultural resources at home.

Schools and the legitimisation of reading practices

All the participants and their parents have some awareness of their school's cultures, and it was evident that those who had the economic resources had put much thought into school choice. Michelle laughed in response to my question about whether reading is an accepted practice at Birchtown College:

Not at this school. [At my school] no one reads ... maybe like one person, and you kind of look at her and everyone is like, "why is she reading?" Everyone looks at you if you read and thinks certain things.

Michelle compared the reading cultures of schools she has attended. She noted that at St Anne's, an elite private school, "it would have been considered okay to read"

and that “no one would have made a big fuss about it” because her peers there were “all smarty buns and stuff”. Michelle noted that at William College, reading was “less of a thing”, and those who read could do so without being harassed by others in the playground. Michelle perceived that reading was not taken that seriously even in her English classroom at Birchtown College. Although she liked her teacher because the teacher genuinely cared about the students, Michelle acknowledged that the teacher was not necessarily a “great teacher” and cited the example of how the teacher introduced a book to the class about “some supernatural thing,” and only realised when she started teaching it, that it was about something else:

She was like, to tell you the truth, I didn’t read it [laughs], so we were like ... thanks miss! ... We kind of dragged through the whole thing. Nothing happened ... in the end it was a pointless book ... not any values [sic].⁹

This experience differed from Marlow’s in that his teachers took their work more seriously when they taught ATAR classes. Regardless of the perceived teaching quality at Birchtown College, both Michelle and Marlow reported that the teachers acknowledged the challenges the students faced and allowed them more time to read set-texts.

Robertson College, Aylish’s school, has a significantly higher proportion of socio-economically advantaged students than Birchtown College. Birchtown College has over 50% of its students in the lower ICSEA quartile, whereas Robertson College has fewer than 5%. Despite this vast difference, Aylish perceived that there was still a stigma, amongst her peers, attached to reading, and although she admitted that this is

⁹ The book Michelle spoke about is *The Gathering*. It is most likely that her teacher assumed that it was Isabelle Carmody’s YA dark fantasy novel that would appeal to her students, but the book they most likely read was Anne Enright’s *The Gathering*. Michelle did not identify the author. Whichever book it was, it was evident that the teacher had not read either.

less apparent now in Year 11, she still does not read on the bus to and from school if she is with them:

People who read on public transport on their way to and from school are considered by themselves and less sociable I guess. I wouldn't say it's cool to read in lower school ... it's kind of a general image ... Yeah, I really wouldn't really discuss what I was reading in high school. I still don't like it. It just doesn't come up in conversations.

Aylish only shares her love of books with those in her friendship group. I found this surprising given her school's academic reputation and that a large proportion of the student population are engaged in the arts. Similarly, Mia reported that at her school, reading is an acceptable activity only when practised in private. Those who choose to read at lunchtime or recess, or that go to the school library, are viewed as loners who do not want to "hang out." She said that if she chose to go to the library, her friends would question why she was going there.

In contrast, Jacqueline disregards students at Riverdale College who mock those who read, and views them as morally inferior. She observed that teachers at Riverdale do not encourage reading in the way her primary school teachers did, so Jacqueline takes it upon herself to encourage her school friends to read more because she wants them to gain the benefits that *she* does from reading novels. Not only has reading more books helped with her emotional well-being during a period of challenging life experiences, but Jacqueline attributes her recent academic success to reading, and explains how her recreational book-reading practices can be applied in the academic context:

If you can take in stuff [the ideas] in a book you can take in stuff [the ideas] on a worksheet ... you will also do much better in an exam that has big words in it. My

last couple of reports have been almost straight As except for 4 Bs.

Jacqueline believes that readers possess “a calmer nature” and “are usually more down to earth”, and pondered whether her former friends from primary school might have avoided mixing with the “druggies” if they read more.

Theresa and Angelina reported a supportive book-reading culture at St. Cecilia’s, both inside and outside their Literature classroom. Theresa identified that while in primary school it was her teachers who inspired her to read, in lower secondary school, it was her peers who had more of an influence, but in senior school it was once again her teachers who influenced her reading choices:

I was very much influenced by other people [at school], which is how I got into the Twilight saga because everyone was like talking about it! I was like ... arghhh, I have to read it. Now I’m more independent and consider [reading] a wider range of books in my life [*sic*]. I kind of started drifting away from what other people are reading ... popularity wise.

Theresa believes that without her teachers, she would not have thought of reading the types of books she now enjoys reading, such as Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, nor would she have the skills to value the more complex texts had her teachers not taught her about different reading approaches such as Marxist, feminist, and psychoanalytic perspectives.

Angelina acknowledged that her English teachers at St Cecilia’s had introduced her to many books she would not have thought to read. She spoke of discovering *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* through intertextual references made to these texts in the *Twilight* series; a book series she was a “fan-girl” of at the height of its popularity. Angelina could situate these nineteenth-century novels within the body of works she had encountered in English Literature, and thus, unlike some of the other participants

who read *Twilight* as younger teens, was not embarrassed about being a fan of this sometimes-maligned book. This illustrates how the value participants assign to different reading practices is largely informed by the school curriculum hierarchy and is reinforced at home by parents.

The two key findings of this study show that specific reading practices hold different values dependent upon the specific social space, or field, in which readers are situated. The ways in which participants identify themselves and others as readers or non-readers are based on the classification and evaluation of texts, not arbitrarily as it first appeared. Upon closer examination, the participants' seemingly subjective criteria for what makes one a reader and which reading practices are legitimate illustrates the multidimensionality within fields in which individual agents, groups, and both formal and informal institutions, negotiate and struggle for dominance. The rich and detailed descriptions of participants' individual and group habitus highlight that participants' reading practices do not occur within a vacuum. These findings align with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and will be further explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided in-depth profiles of the 14 participants and presented the two key themes that emerged from the interviews. The first theme explored how participants legitimise some reading practices and not others according to seemingly subjective criteria. The second theme explored how participants' home and school cultures influence how they value various reading practices. In this chapter, I discuss these two themes from a Bourdieusian perspective in order to untangle some of the complexities constituting the multidimensional field of reading. In doing so, I highlight the point that reading takes on many forms, yet a reading practice is only valued if it is recognised by other social agents (individuals and institutions) within a specific field, or, in other words, their socio-cultural context. I also argue that although not all reading practices hold their value when transposed into other fields, because the participants of this study are secondary school students and there is always some cachet attached to reading practices that align with those valued by the education system. Following this discussion, I reflect on the implications of the findings and offer recommendations to those with vested interests in the reading activities of older teenagers, such as teachers, parents, and teenagers themselves. Finally, I suggest future research possibilities in this area.

Discussion of Key Themes

Theme 1: There are many forms of reading, but not all are considered legitimate

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital posits that cultural practices are legitimised or disavowed, depending on which social agents dominate a field at a given time. There was no uniform definition of reading amongst participants but all participants agreed that reading classical literature or literary fiction is a legitimate

reading practice but that the reading of these highbrow texts is only legitimate when it is a *voluntary* activity. This finding highlights the central role that the English curriculum hierarchy plays in legitimising both in-school and out-of-school reading practices.¹ Even though participants might dislike, or are unfamiliar with reading literature, all of them recognise it as a valorised practice because it is consecrated in the school system and consequently within broader society, thus within the field of power.

Some participants took into account newer text forms when they considered their reading identities. For example, Jack includes his reading of online articles and both Jason and Nick include the reading of written text in computer games as legitimate forms of reading. Yet even for participants with a more inclusive concept of reading, engaging solely in these broader practice does not make one a reader. All participants adhered to the notion that readers must engage in the recreational activity of reading novels that are either recognised within the English classroom or are in some way more sophisticated. Only Tania and Jason included the reading of materials that are traditionally classified as “low-brow” (such as self-help books, celebrity memoirs and women’s magazines) in their conceptualisations of reading.

Most readers believed that few of their peers engaged in the same reading practices that they did. Amongst participants who identified as readers, there was a perceptible sense of pride and confidence when they described their reading of books that others thought of as complex and challenging. These attitudes align with Griswold

¹ Significantly, most participants referred solely to the reading of prose fiction in their responses about reading. Drama and poetry were only mentioned within the context of texts studied within the Literature classroom. However, the evolution of canonical forms over half a millennium lies outside of the scope of study. See Guillory’s (1994, 85-133) critical analysis of how poetry’s high culture status and prose’s low culture status shifted between the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, as he explains how the conceptualisation of the term literature itself changes.

et al.'s 2005 forecast that book reading would eventually be limited to an elite minority, just as it was in the days before the Industrial Revolution. Jacqueline's belief that readers are in some way morally superior and have "calmer" dispositions—citing that those who read are more "civilised" and less likely to engage in anti-social behaviours—distances her from her peers who engage in reading practices different from her own. Her self-positioning and positioning of others is akin to how the mothers in Butler's (2015) study distinguish themselves from those in their social space who they deem as morally inferior.

Daniel distances his reading preferences from those of his peers by excluding online reading from his conceptualisation of reading by labelling it as an everyday practice that "most [other] people do". His attitude illustrates how in the field of reading, texts that are too accessible and popular carry with them the "stigma of non-writing" and "mere orality" (Guillory 1994, 174). Similarly, Lucas regards his preference for complex literature as a marginalised practice that sets him apart, favourably, from the average reader of his age. Lucas is reluctant to classify *The Witcher* series as fantasy fiction and instead aligns it with literary fiction by highlighting the series' realist elements and political commentary. Lucas believes that there are critical differences between him and readers of the popular *Game of Thrones* (*GOT*) series because he believes that most people read *GOT* only because the television series currently dominates the public imaginary. This finding exemplifies how it is not so much the content of a book upon which symbolic capital is based, but rather a book's "marginal value" and as such, the value of a cultural practice produced for the mass market declines when it becomes too accessible (Bourdieu 1990, 136).²

² Since the interviews were conducted, video streaming provider *Netflix* announced that they were making an English language adaptation of *The Witcher* series.

Bourdieu (1993) points out that art created in the interest of profitability is assigned less cultural value (1993, 124) and traces this phenomenon to the Industrial Revolution when technological advances enabled the mass production of goods for a mass market (1993, 125). Yet ironically, participants who thought of themselves as engaging in a rarefied activity, are in fact reading books that are well known not only in Australia but around the world. In fact, the only books that participant might read which are less accessible are small-press publications, and they are more likely to find something rarefied online than in print. The literary fiction Angelina, Aylish, and Theresa read in their leisure time have long been in the public imaginary because they are promoted through the English curriculum, received high-profile literary awards, or have been adapted for film or television.³ Daniel and Lucas read books that are bestsellers, some of which are so popular there are films or gaming franchises associated with them. Daniel's favourite author, Matthew Reilly, for example, is a *New York Times* bestselling author and *The Witcher* is a successful multimedia franchise. The difference between book reading practices that participants consider legitimate and ones they do not is thus based on the institutional recognition and prestige attached to a specific book. Classical and modern literary fiction are sanctioned by the education system or successful franchises. Daniel and Lucas' favourite books are not endorsed by school system but have been recognised by respected media institutions such as the *New York Times*. The works of Lucas' favourite author, Andrzej Sapkowski, has

³ In my interviews, I asked participants to identify any authors or books they were familiar with. (See Appendix III). While I was not surprised that all participants recognised Frankenstein, I did not expect so many participants to recognise Oscar Wilde. I initially thought they had confused him with someone else until a participant pointed out that he might have encountered the name in a computer game but had forgotten which one. Oscar Wilde is a character in the popular computer game *Assassin's Creed* which is now a franchise with movie and book tie-ins. Wilde's play *Salome* is also a computer game (Tale of Tales 2009). Due to the scope of this project, I did not explore the relationship between the cultural capital of reading and computer gaming.

received numerous national and international literary and arts awards (Culture.pl 2017).

The boundary that participants draw between readers and non-readers is not only dependent on whether they read but by their ability to legitimise reading choices through broader cultural knowledge and linguistic competency. In other words, cultural capital enables certain participants to add value to reading practices that are otherwise disparaged. Michelle and Angelina both read YA romance novels but whereas Michelle internalises the symbolic violence directed at this genre, labelling them as “girlie” books or “just books about people like me”, Angelina proudly calls herself a “fangirl” of these books. Angelina legitimises her reading of books that others denigrate by harnessing her cultural resources. She can confidently identify the intertextual references to classical literature in books from the *Twilight* series and eloquently justify her love of the book and understanding of the milieu in which the book was celebrated by almost every teenage girl. The differences in how Angelina and Michelle categorise the same reading practice exemplifies how “minimum objective distance in social space can coincide with maximum subjective distance” (Bourdieu 1990, 137) in the struggle for dominance in a field.

Angelina’s diverse reading choices exemplifies “high-brow omnivorousness” (Patterson and Kern 1996, 906) and it is her possession of cultural capital that allows her to reclaim a maligned reading practice. In contrast, Jacqueline assigns little value to books in the *Twilight* series even though she is an aficionado of YA supernatural novels because like Lucas, Jacqueline cites a preference for reading more complex literature. She dismisses books in the *Twilight* series by comparing them unfavourably to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and the *Vampire Diaries*, a YA vampire series that predates

Twilight with a significant cult following. Jaqueline positions *The Vampire Diaries* above *Twilight* because she regards the former as more “adult”.

All other participants only thought of reading as a set of practices within a field that is shaped and regulated by the education system and thus most participants did not include their online reading practices in their definition of reading.⁴ Participants reported that they used computers in the classroom mainly for research purposes.⁵ Mia is aware of the legitimacy of fashion blogs and the existence of professional bloggers, yet her responses indicate that she views her blog-reading practices as subordinate to her traditional reading practices.⁶ Participants did not group e-books with other online reading texts, even though e-books are accessed online. This finding aligns with Singer and Alexander's (2017, 1060) supposition that e-book reading does not reconceptualise reading itself but rather the context in which reading takes place.

Theme 2: Schools and homes are sites where reading practices are shaped and formed.

Schools and the legitimisation of reading practices

Michelle’s unique experience of attending three very different types of schools offers insights into how school cultures shape individual habitus, which in turn influences reading choices. At St Anne’s, Michelle’s first school, reading was encouraged and valued beyond the primary school years. At William’s College, her

⁴ Although Jack’s initial responses indicated that his online reading practices are just as legitimate as his book reading ones, in subsequent responses about reading he defaulted to book reading practices.

⁵ Jason was the only participant who spoke about using laptops in the classroom. Theresa reported that although laptops were optional at her school for students in her year, this was not the case for other year groups.

⁶ It is beyond the scope of this project to explore the “rules of the game” in the field of fashion blogging. See McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips’s (2013) study on the “megaphone effect”, which explores the online phenomenon of fashion bloggers gaining legitimacy through amassing a large audience without institutional mediation.

second school, there was not the same level of support and encouragement, and most students were ambivalent about reading. Michelle perceives that at Birchtown College, the dominant group is made up of individuals who denigrate those who do read.^{7 8} Mia's experience at Hillingdon Christian College is comparable to Michelle's experiences at William's College where readers were subject to low levels of symbolic violence and were stigmatised as "anti-social". Aylish reported a similar experience at her school but noted that reading is more acceptable in senior school. Nonetheless, Aylish does not read on public transport to and from school for fear of being mocked.

As participants are still in formal education, school cultures and the education system heavily influence their evaluation and validation of certain reading practices. Participants who disregard those who disparage book reading are aware that these acts of symbolic violence lack meaning in the broader field of power because the prestige of reading books is maintained through its recognition by the school system (Guillory 1994, 174). Jacqueline identifies those with negative attitudes towards reading as "less civilised" and Angelina dismisses their views as illogical. Those who have the confidence to reject these views are not necessarily at schools that have an academic focus, but they are students who are on academic pathways.

Even though the definition of reading is socially contested, participants' belief that reading literature is undoubtedly a practice that qualifies one as a reader, highlights the influence of the hierarchically organised English curriculum, which positions ATAR Literature, a subject that involves reading classical literature and literary fiction, at the highest level (see Table 5.1).⁹ Within micro-spaces, participants might reject

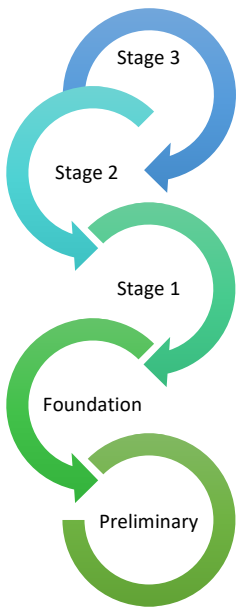
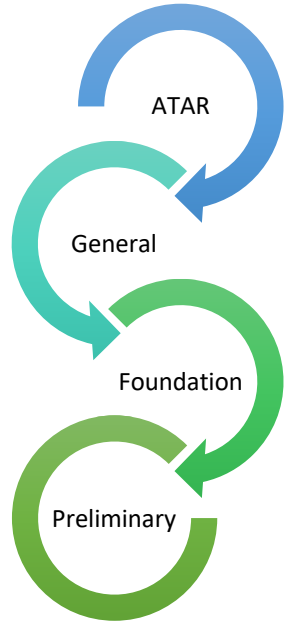
⁷ St. Cecilia's and Michelle's previous school St. Anne's are both K-12 single-sex elite private schools. The scope of this project does not permit me to closely examine how the intersectionality of class, race and gender affects individual reading choices within specific fields.

⁸ William College has an ICSEA that falls between 1000-1050. See Table 4.1 for comparable schools.

⁹ The latest version of the SCSA's English syllabus page places English above Literature (2018b). It is unclear whether the choice to position the categories in this fashion indicates a shift in the English

these dominant reading codes, but at a macro level, practices that are not legitimised by formal institutions struggle for recognition and status.

Table 5.1 Hierarchy of Senior School English Subjects in Western Australia

2010-2015	2016 onwards
 <p data-bbox="199 1164 718 1243">Literature, English and EALD were Stage 1, 2 and 3 subjects. English and EALD were subjects at all five levels.</p>	 <p data-bbox="758 1164 1276 1265">Literature is only available as a subject at ATAR or General level. English and EALD is a subject at all four levels. The current ATAR corresponds more to Stage 3 (SCSA, 2016).</p>

The English subject hierarchy creates intellectual boundaries in its streaming of students into university, VET, and other pathways. The division of students into different pathways within a school is a reproduction of the stratification of schools into grammar and trade schools.¹⁰ In theory, all students have the option of combining VET and university-pathway units to obtain their WACE. However, timetable gridlines do

curriculum hierarchy, or whether these interface design choices have been made because most students study English. See <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/syllabus-and-support-materials/english>

¹⁰ At the time of the interviews, all state senior high schools, that is schools that offered Year 11 and 12 subjects, offered both university and non-university pathways. However, in 2016 Clarkson Community College discontinued all ATAR courses due to low student demand and the belief that students cannot “achieve their best” in small classes (Wynne 2016).

not permit such subject combinations and there are different entry requirements for university and TAFE.¹¹ As such, students who have been streamed into lower level English classes, such as Marlow and Tania, are less likely to learn the so-called “higher order” skills of critical literacy and critical theory, and potentially miss out on acquiring the cultural codes of the dominant class (Guillory 1994).

Participants who have had the opportunity to study ATAR Literature but have chosen not to, take pride in being *deemed capable* enough by their Year 10 English teachers to study what they perceive as the more intellectually challenging course (Jack, Daniel, Michael, and Nick).¹² For some participants, ATAR Literature is not an option because in a marketised school system, budgetary constraints determine which senior school courses run at each school.¹³¹⁴ Participants who wanted the opportunity to undertake ATAR pathways but were streamed into VET courses, expressed a sense of disappointment and consider themselves less capable than their ATAR-pathway peers. Jason was not affected by his placement in a lower-level class, as he claims to have no university aspiration, but he pointed out that there were many students in his VET stream who could have chosen an academic pathway but chose not to. There were no VET students at Jack’s school and Theresa reported that there were perhaps only one or two students who were not ATAR students at St. Cecilia’s (see Table 5.2 for statistics on all participants’ schools’ ATAR cohorts).¹⁵

¹¹ University pathway ATAR students must study at least four ATAR subjects, and VET students sometimes take part in off-campus training.

¹² Aylish is the only Literature student who attends a co-educational school. She notes that there are only two boys in her class and that there is broader gender imbalance at her school because of the arts focus. It is outside of the scope of this project to explore the role of gender in English curriculum selection and its broader implications.

¹³ Although Jacqueline is in AEP English, she will not have the opportunity to study Literature at Riverdale College. She will however, have the opportunity to study ATAR English.

¹⁴ The IPS system allows school communities to function as private schools and “respond to the needs of the child” and “reflect the aspirations of their students” (Department of Education 2018c).

¹⁵ Students who do not qualify for either VET or ATAR pathways and are at secondary school to complete their high school qualifications undertake foundation English courses with the aim of passing the minimal English requirement to achieve a WACE qualification.

Table 5.2 Percentage of ATAR Students at Participants' Schools 2014–2015

School (System)	Participant	Percentage of Year 12 with an ATAR in 2014/2015*
Stewart College (IPS State)	Jason	35%
Rutland Quay Senior College (State IPS)	Tania	50%
Jacaranda SHS (IPS State)	Daniel	80%
Riverdale College (IPS State)	Jaqueline	20%
St. Cecilia College (AISWA)	Theresa, Angelina	100%
St. Isidore College (Catholic)	Michael	30%
Robertson College (IPS State)	Aylish	70%
St. Francis College (Catholic)	Lucas	90%
Waverly SHS (IPS State)	Nick	60%
Birchtown College (IPS State)	Michelle, Marlow	0%
Hillingdon Christian College (AISWA)	Mia	60%
Atlantic School (IPS State)	Jack	100%

*These statistics are taken from published TISC data. The percentages are average 2014 and 2015 data and rounded to the nearest 5% in order to anonymise participants and their schools. In 2014 and 2015, the year interviews were conducted, all Year 12 students with an ATAR had studied either ATAR stage 2 or 3 English, Literature or an EALD course of study.

In some micro-spaces—such as in the Birchtown College’s schoolyard or on the bus Aylish catches to and from school—people who are seen reading are subject to symbolic violence because the dominant agents in these spaces do not value reading. The value of acquiring traditional forms of cultural capital through reading literature is mitigated in contemporary Australian society where traditional class structures are upended. However, students who do not have access to higher level English subjects are denied the opportunity to read critically, a skill that is a component of modern understandings of literacy, and learn reading approaches that equip them with the skills that generate “intellectual pleasure” (ATAR Literature, 2018). The skillset taught in

lower-level English subjects focuses more on functional rather than critical literacy. Although individuals might pick up these so-called higher order skills at home or later in life, this is not always a given, and such inequality of opportunity is worrying given that Australia is a liberal democracy.

Parents and the transmission of cultural capital

Many studies find a correlation between traditional forms of reading and academic success (Brown and Sullivan 2007; Cunningham and Stanovich 1997; Nuttall 1996; Stanovich 1986; Sullivan 2002) but do not explain why those who do not read still achieve academic success. Through a Bourdieusian perspective, however, it is apparent that Nick and Michael's aliteracy is not a barrier to school success because their habitus is similar to that of participants who identify as readers and are successful at school, such as Daniel and Lucas. Both Nick and Michael understand the "rules of the game" and know how to read effectively for academic purposes. Michael attributes his success in book-based English assessments to his ability to skim and scan texts, his attentiveness in the English classroom, and teachers who teach him test strategies. Similarly Nick knows how to read for academic purposes and is aware that his strategic reading and research skills have enabled him to achieve high grades in English. Although Nick refuses to read set-texts, he reads key passages when he reads about these books in online study guides and other support materials.¹⁶ However, Nick does not classify this practice as "reading" because, like most other participants, he bases his definition of reading on traditional notions of reading. Nick is aware that that he is constantly exposed to words and ideas in his leisure time through his engagement

¹⁶ Lucas, Michael and Nick all reported that they do not always read entire set-texts and instead employ reading strategies which are taught at university level. See "Chapter 8: Academic reading" in *Academic culture* (Brick 2011).

with multimodal texts—such as playing computer games, reading online articles, listening to Bob Dylan, and conversing with relatives in his family’s European language (one that he recognises as a root language of contemporary English)—and understands how he can transpose this skill and knowledge-set into academic assessment tasks.¹⁷

Participants who attain good grades at school are not necessarily readers, but they have at least one parent who knows cultural codes of the dominant class and continues to practise “concerted cultivation” (Laureau 2011). Both Michael and Nick have university-educated parents who possess the economic and cultural resources to provide their children with not only material resources such as a comfortable physical space to study, computers, unrestricted internet access, books for recreational and academic purposes, and of course financial support, and also a supportive and intellectually stimulating home environment. Even though Nick and Michael might not read, they continue to engage in other cultural activities with their parents, such as overseas trips which involve cultural excursions or listening to their parents talk about books. Their inherited cultural capital accounts for why many of the assumptions underlying reading studies do not apply to all aliterates.

Tania, who identifies as a reader, is not a high achieving student and has been streamed out of university pathways. Tania’s home culture is more aligned with those of Jason, Michelle, Marlow and Theresa, who also have home cultural practices, that are not necessarily aligned with those privileged by the school system. Theresa and Michelle (until external factors changed her life’s trajectory) come from homes where

¹⁷ Since my interview with Nick, Bob Dylan achieved institutional recognition in the literary world as he was awarded in 2016 a Nobel Literature Prize for “poetic expression” in his song writing (The Nobel Foundation 2017).

their parents choose to use their economic capital to buy into elite school systems to make up for their lack of cultural capital at home. Although Jason's home cultural practices do not align with a school that privileges university pathways, they do not contradict and in many ways align with Stewart College, an IPS school, which is arguably shaped by perceived community needs.

Conclusions

The objective of this dissertation has been to provide a rich descriptive and critically reflective account of how an individual's habitus informs their reading choices and shapes their attitudes towards and evaluations of various forms of reading. Regardless of the legitimacy of participants' reading practices, all participants engaged in academic reading to varying degrees because they were, at the time of the interviews, secondary school students. All participants, including those who claimed to be non-readers, engaged in other reading practices because of their engagement with social media.¹⁸ Participants' reading choices are largely informed by their habitus, which in turn is shaped by a broader range of practices shared by others in their social space, or group habitus. Participants' attitudes towards different reading practices are informed by agents sharing the same field (their parents, teachers and peers) who have had *their* attitudes shaped over time by their individual and group habitus.

Most participants were reluctant to classify their reading of digital texts, other than e-books, as legitimate forms of reading, which suggests that their notions about reading are based on practices sanctioned by the education system. In micro-spaces—which for participants include the schoolyard, bus, or a church community—reading practices

¹⁸ Although I was unsure of Marlow's reading ability, his disclosure that he spends most of his time working at a fast food franchise indicated that he has the reading level required to partake in work place training. He would also need basic literacy to access some of the YouTube channels he regularly watches.

are valued or devalued according to agents populating these micro-spaces, and these preferences are not necessarily legitimised by any formal institution. According to the working definition of cultural capital that I use in this thesis, these practices are forms of cultural capital because they can be exchanged for social capital but only with that specific space. These practices might currently lack meaning in the field of power because of the lack recognition by a formal institution, however, this does not mean that they will not be legitimised in the future. Over time, the constitution of agents within the field of power is diversified through an individual's accrual of cultural capital thus changing the characteristics of the field. However, to compete with the existing dominant players, these newer perspectives must be legitimised by other formal institutions which are themselves populated with their own set of players. Without the power of institutional recognition, there can only be small movements within the field, and these are not sufficient enough to change the rules nor the boundaries of the game.

Implications and Recommendations

The idea that within micro-spaces, individual and group habitus informs reading preferences—and reciprocally these preferences shape habitus—explains why participants who come from homes or communities whose habitus is incongruous with those who dominate the field of power are disadvantaged at school. Students who do not prove to schools that they are capable of academic reading are barred from taking higher-level courses after Year 10, which limits their opportunities. Given that state schools in WA are moving towards an IPS system, a school with a significant cohort of students from homes with lower levels of cultural capital, could potentially have a significant population streamed into non-ATAR pathways and consequently cease to

offer ATAR English or Literature where students have the opportunity to extend their reading practices and are exposed to critical literacy.¹⁹

Reading is an intimate leisure activity, but it is also a literacy mode that is regularly taught and assessed in schools. Readers of this thesis who are teachers, parents, or older teenagers themselves, should reflect upon their own definition of reading, why they might privilege some forms of reading over others, and how their positions are negotiated within the field of power and micro-spaces. They could also contemplate the benefits that they derive from their various reading practices as well as the investment they put into these everyday practices that they might perhaps take for granted.

Further studies on the reading practices of primary and secondary school teachers would offer insights into how individuals working within education systems position various reading and other cultural practices, and how this might play out in classrooms. Similarly, a qualitative study of parental reading practices would also deepen understandings of how cultural capital is transmitted and inherited. Indeed, issues of race, ethnicity, immigration, and gender of all social agents could also be further explored. Researchers, whose habitus differ from mine, could replicate this study and perhaps place more of an emphasis on digital reading practices.

¹⁹ Guillory notes that early twentieth-century Italian philosopher and politician Antonio Gramsci was prescient in expressing his concerns about the “paradoxical social effects” of a more democratic education system, which streams students into vocational and non-vocational schools (1994, 48). Gramsci argues for the establishment of “unitary” schools where the curriculum is a balance of technical skills and intellectual knowledge required for participation (1994, 48-49).

Epilogue

Developed as one part of a creative and critical thesis and through a Bourdieusian lens, the dissertation has interpreted the findings of semi-structured interviews with 14 older teenagers at Perth metropolitan schools. The two key themes presented in this qualitative study are also embedded in the creative component. Through the latter, I explored, in another language and through different fictional genres, the ways in which reading, in its diverse forms, practices, meanings and significance plays out (or might play out) in our lives and communities.

My overarching claim for this thesis is that the language of critical scholarship (reflective, descriptive, questioning and evaluative) and the language of the imagination (observant, dramatic, emotive, and even satirical) can be read productively alongside, and in conversation with, one another. In this way, we may more deeply appreciate the pervasive, intimate, and inexhaustible ways that reading has played and continues to play in our individual, social and political lives.

Reference List¹

ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority). 2011. *Guide to Understanding ICSEA*. Sydney: ACARA.

http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/Guide_to_understanding_ICSEA.pdf

— 2013. *Guide to Understanding ICSEA 2013*.

http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/Guide_to_understanding_2013_ICSEA_values.pdf

— 2014. *What Does the ICSEA Value Mean?*

http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/About_icsea_2014.pdf

— 2018a. *Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia*.

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/asia-and-australia-s-engagement-with-asia/>

Adelaide, Debra. 2014. "The Ministry of Reading". *Review of Australian Fiction*, 9(5).

Andrews, Virginia. 1979. *Flowers in the Attic*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Alvermann, Donna E. 2001. "Reading Adolescents' Reading Identities: Looking Back To See Ahead." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 44 (8): 676-690.

Aristotle. (349 BCE) 1919. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by W.D. Ross.

Cambridge: The Internet Classics Archive.

<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.mb.txt>

¹ This list also includes all texts, including multi-modal ones, such as operas and television series, that participants mention in the critical component and that the characters or I mention in the creative component.

- Atkinson, Will. 2016. "The Structure of Literary Taste: Class, Gender and Reading in the UK." *Cultural Sociology* 10 (2): 247-66.
- Atwood, Margaret. (1985) 2011. *The Handmaid's Tale*. London: Vintage Classics.
- Baker, Sarah Elsie, and Edwards, Rosalind. 2012. "Introduction." In *How Many Qualitative Interviews Is Enough*, edited by Sarah Elsie Baker and Rosalind Edwards: 3-7. Southampton: National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) Review Paper. http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/4/how_many_interviews.pdf.
- Baron, Naomi S., Rachele M. Calixte, and Mazneen Havewala. 2017. "The Persistence of Print Among University Students: An Exploratory Study." *Telematics and Informatics* 34 (5):590–604. doi: 10.1016/j.tele.2016.11.008.
- Bavishi, Avni, Martin D. Slade, and Becca R. Levy. 2016. "A Chapter a Day: Association of Book Reading with Longevity." *Social Science & Medicine* 164 (Supplement C): 44–48. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.07.014.
- Baymoo. n.d. <http://www.baymoo.org:4242/>
- Bennett, Tony, John Frow, Ghassan Hage, and Greg Noble. 2013. "Antipodean Fields: Working with Bourdieu." *Journal of Sociology* 49 (2-3): 129–50. doi:10.1177/1440783313480929.
- Better Beginnings. 2018. *Better Beginnings*. <https://www.better-beginnings.com.au/>
- Beinloff, David, and D.B. Weiss. 2011. *Game of Thrones*. Television series. United States: HBO.
- Blume, Judy. 1975. *Forever*. New York: Dell Publishing.

- Blyton, Enid. (1943) 2011. *The Magic Faraway Tree*. London: Dean and Son.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.
Translated by Richard Nice. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- 1985. “The Market of Symbolic Goods.” *Poetics* 14 (1):13–44.
[https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X\(85\)90003-8](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(85)90003-8).
- 1986. “The Forms of Capital.” In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson, 241-258, New York: Greenwood.
- 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- 1993a. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Translated and introduction by Randal Johnson, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- 1993b. *Sociology in Question*. Translated by Richard Nice. London: Sage Publications.
- 2002. “Forward”, in James D. Le Sueur *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonisation of Algeria*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1990. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Translated by Richard Nice. London: SAGE Publications.
- Brick, Jean. 2011. *Academic Culture. A Student’s Guide to Studying at University*. 2nd ed. South Yarra, Victoria: Macmillan.

- Brinda, Wayne. 2011. "A 'Ladder to Literacy' Engages Reluctant Readers." *Middle School Journal* 43 (2): 8-17.
- British Sociological Association. 2016. *The Contemporary Relevance of the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: Book of Delegates' Abstracts*.
<https://bsabourdieu.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/delegates-book-of-abstracts3.pdf>
- Bronte, Charlotte. (1847). 2012. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin Classics.²
- Bronte, Emily. (1847). *Wuthering Heights*. London: Penguin Classics.³
- Brown, Wendy. 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books.
- Bryman, Alan. 2012a. "Expert Voices: Alan Bryman." In *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough*, edited by Sarah Elsie Baker and Rosalind Edwards, 18-20. Southampton: National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) Review Paper.
http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/4/how_many_interviews.pdf.
- 2012b. *Social Research Method*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burnett, Mark. 2005. *The Apprentice – UK*. Television series. London, UK: BBC.
- Calhoun, Craig. 2006. "Pierre Bourdieu and Social Transformations: Lessons from Algeria." *Development and Change* 37(6): 1403-1415.

² *Jane Eyre* was first published under Currer Bell, Charlotte Bronte's pen name.

³ *Wuthering Heights* was first published under Ellis Bell, Emily Bronte's pen name.

- Butler Rose. 2015. "Schools, 'Ferals', Stigma and Boundary Work: Parents Managing Education and Uncertainty in Regional Australia." *Ethnography and Education* 10 (3): 340 – 355. doi: 10.1080/17457823.2015.1051071.
- Carrington, Vicki, and Allan Luke. 1997. "Literacy and Bourdieu's Sociological Theory: A Reframing." *Language and Education* 11 (2): 96–112. doi: 10.1080/09500789708666721.
- Chang, Benjamin and Peter McLaren. 2018. "Emerging Issues of Teaching and Social Justice in Greater China: Neoliberalism and Critical Pedagogy in Hong Kong." *Policy Futures in Education*. April: 1-23. doi: 10.1177/1478210318767734.
- Chua, Amy. 2011. *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Chua, Amy and Rubefeld, Jed. 2014. *The Triple Package: How Three Unlikely Traits Explain the Rise and Fall of Cultural Groups in America*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Cockerham, William C. 2005. "Health Lifestyle Theory and the Convergence of Agency and Structure." *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 46 (1): 51-67.
- Coffey, Amanda and Paul Atkinson. 1996. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Coffey, Anne, Richard G. Berlach and Michael O'Neil. 2011. "Transitioning Year Seven Primary Students to Secondary Settings in Western Australian Catholic Schools: A Description of the Process." *Journal of Catholic School Studies* 83 (22): 7-17.

- Connell, Robert W. 1987. *Gender and Power*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.⁴
- Cope, Bill and Mary Kalantzis, eds. 2000. *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. London: Routledge.
- Creswell, John. W. 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five traditions*. London and New Dehli: SAGE Publications.
- Cumming-Potvin, Wendy. 2013. “‘New Basics’ and Literacies: Deepening Reflexivity in Qualitative Research.” *Qualitative Research Journal* 13 (2): 214-230.
- Cullinan, Bernice E. 2000. “Independent Reading and School Achievement.” *School Library Media Research* (3): 1-23.
http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslpubsandjournals/slr/vol3/SLMR_IndependentReading_V3.pdf
- Cunningham, Anne. E. 2001. “What Reading Does For the Mind.” *Journal of Direct Instruction* 1 (2): 137-149.
- Cunningham, Anne E. and Keith E. Stanovich. 1997. “Early Reading Acquisition and its Relation to Reading Experience and Ability 10 Years Later.” *Developmental Psychology* 33 (6): 934-945.
- Danielsen, Bartley R., Joshua C. Fairbanks, and Jing Zhao. 2015. "School Choice Programs: The Impacts on Housing Values." *Journal of Real Estate Literature* 23 (2): 207-232.

⁴ Robert W Connell is now Raewyn Connell.

- Davies, William. 2014. *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington, DC: SAGE.
- De Graaf, Nan Dirk, Paul M. De Graaf, and Gerbert Kraaykamp. 2000. "Parental Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment in the Netherlands: A Refinement of the Cultural Capital Perspective." *Sociology of Education* 73 (2): 92-111.
- Denzin, Norman K. 1986. *Interpretive Biography*. Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publications.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonne S. Lincoln eds. 2013. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.
- Department of Education Government of Western Australia. 2018a *Per Capital Funding*.
<http://www.des.wa.gov.au/schooleducation/nongovernmentschools/info-ngs/financial%20assistance/Percapitagrants/Pages/default.aspx>
- 2018b. *Gifted and Talented Secondary Selective Entrance Programs*.
<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/web/at-school/gifted-and-talented-programs>
- 2018c. *Independent Public Schools*. <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/web/our-schools/independent-public-schools>
- Department of Home Affairs. 2018. *Studying in Australia*.
<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/trav/stud>
- DeWalt Darren A., Nancy D. Berkman, Stacey Sheridan, Kathleen N. Lohr, and Michael P. Pignone. 2004. "Literacy and Health Outcomes." *Journal of*

General Internal Medicine 19 (12): 1228–1239. doi: 10.1111/j.1525-1497.2004.40153.x.

Dessaix, Robert. 1998. ... *And so Forth*. Sydney: Macmillan.

Dolin, Tim, Joanne Jones, and Patricia Dowsett., eds. 2017. *Required Reading: Literature in Australian Schools Since 1945*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing.

Douglas, Jack D. 1985. *Creative Interviewing*. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.

Dowsett, Patricia C. 2016. "The History of Curricular Control: Literary Education in Western Australia, 1912-2012." PhD dissertation. UWA. http://research-repository.uwa.edu.au/files/8919540/Dowsett_Patricia_2016.pdf

Eikeland, Olav. 2008. *The Ways of Aristotle: Aristotelian Phronesis, Aristotelian Philosophy of Dialogue, and Action Research (Studien Zur Berufs- Und Weiterbildung; Studies in Vocational and Continuing Education)*. Bern: Peter Lang Publishers.

Ellingson, Laura L. 2009. *Engaging Crystallization in Qualitative Research: An Introduction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

doi: 10.4135/9781412991476.d3

Erikson, Erik Homburger. 1963. *Childhood and Society*. 2nd ed. New York: Norton.

Fenech, Paul. 2014. *Bogan Hunters*. Television series. Directed by Paul Fenech. Pyrmont: Seven Network.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. 1925. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Charles Scribner's Son.

- Forsey, Martin. 2015. "Blue-collar Affluence in a Remote Mining Town: Challenging the Modernist Myth of Education." *Ethnography and Education* 10 (3): 356-369. doi:10.1080/17457823.2015.1051072.
- Freebody, Peter, and Allan Luke. 1990. "Literacies Programs: Debate and Demands in Cultural Context." *Prospect: An Australian Journal of TESOL* 5 (3): 7-16.
- Frost, Mark, and David Lynch. 1990. *Twin Peaks*. Television series. United States: ABC.
- Gates Jr., Henry Louis. 1996. "Notes on the Globalisation of Culture." In *Field Work: Sites, in Literacy and Cultural Studies*, edited by Majori Gerber, Paul B. Franklin and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 55-66, New York and London: Routledge.
- Gerber, Marjori, Paul B. Franklin and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, eds. 1996. *Field Work: Sites, in Literacy and Cultural Studies*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Glesne, Corrine. 2016. *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction, 5th edition*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Golding, William. 1954. *Lord of the Flies*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Goop. 2018. goop (website). <http://goop.com>
- Goldthorpe, John. 2007. "Cultural capital': Some Critical Observations." *Sociology Working Papers: Paper Number 2007-07*.
https://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/materials/papers/swp07_07.pdf
- Gomm, Roger. 2004. *Social Research Methodology: A Critical Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Green, John. 2012. *The Fault in our Stars*. New York: Dutton Books.
- Griswold, Wendy, Terry McDonnell, and Nathan Wright. 2005. "Reading and the Reading Class in the Twenty-first Century." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (August): 127-141. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.31.041304.122312.

- Guillory, John. 1994. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hage, Ghassan. 2013. "Eavesdropping on Bourdieu's Philosophers". *Thesis Eleven* 114 (1): 76-93. doi: 10.1177/0725513612463036.
- Hinton, S.E. 1967. *The Outsiders*. New York: McClelland & Stewart.
- Holstein, James A. and Jaber F. Gulbriim. 2004. "Active Interviewing." In *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, edited by David Silverman, 140-161. London: SAGE Publications.
- Hong Kingston, Maxine. 1989. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* New York: Random House.⁵
- Howard, Vivian. 2011. "The Importance of Pleasure Reading in the Lives of Young Teens." *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 43 (1): 46-55. doi:10.1177/0961000610390992.
- Huxley, Aldous. (1932) 1979. *Brave New World*. St. Albans: Granada.
- Inghilleri, Moira. 2005. "The Sociology of Bourdieu and the Construction of the 'Object' in Translation and Interpreting Studies." *Translator: Studies in Intercultural Communication* 11 (2): 125-45.
- Kidd, David Cormer, and Emanuele Castano. 2013. "Reading literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind." *Science* 342 (6156): 337-80.
- Kovic, Ron, and Oliver Stone. 1989. *Born on the Fourth of July*. Film. Directed by Oliver Stone. United States: Universal Pictures.

⁵ Hong Kingston is sometimes referenced as Kingston, Maxine Hong. I have referenced as Hong Kingston as she is usually referred to as "Hong Kingston". Hong is her maiden name and Kingston, her husband's surname.

IEA. 2018. PIRLS. *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*.
<http://www.iea.nl/pirls>

Lafia, Marc. 1991. "Black or White". Music video. Directed by John Landis.
California: Epic Records. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2AitTPI5U0>

Linden Lab. 2003. *Second Life*. <http://secondlife.com/>

Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Lives*. 2nd ed.
California: University of California Press.

Lareau, Annette. 2015. "Cultural Knowledge and Social Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 80 (1): 1-27. doi: 10.1177/0003122414565814.

Lareau, Annette, and Elliot B. Weininger. 2003. "Cultural Capital in Educational Research: A Critical Assessment." *Theory and Society* 32 (5-6): 567-606.

Lewis, Janet. (1941) 2013. *The Wife of Martin Guerre*. Ohio: Swallow Press.

Lovell, Terry. 2000. "Thinking Feminism With and Against Bourdieu." *Feminist Theory* 1 (1): 11-32.

Luke, Allan. 1995. "When Literacy Might (not) Make a Difference: Textual Practice and Capital." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 20 April
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED384001.pdf>

—2000. "Critical Literacy in Australia): A Matter of Context and Standpoint." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 43 (5): 448-461.

- 2012. “Critical Literacy: Foundational Notes.” *Theory into Practice* 51 (1): 4-11.
doi: 10.1080/00405841.2012.636324.
- Liu, Ziming. 2005. “Reading Behaviour in the Digital Environment: Changes in Reading Behaviour Over the Past Ten Years.” *Journal of Documentation* 61 (6): 700-712.
- Malsch, Bertrand, Yves Gendron and Frédérique Grazzini,. 201. “Investigating Interdisciplinary Translations: the Influence of Pierre Bourdieu on Accounting Literature.” *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 24 (2): 194-228. doi: 10.1108/0951357111110068.
- MacIntyre, Stuart. 1999. *A Concise History of Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marangos, John. 2009. “Evolution of the Term ‘Washington Consensus’.” *Journal of Economic Survey* 23 (2): 350-384. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6419.2008.00565.x
- Mar, Raymond A., Keith Oatley, Jacob Hirsh, Jennifer dela Paz, and Jordan B. Peterson. 2006. “Bookworms Versus Nerds: Exposure to Fiction Versus Non-fiction, Divergent Associations with Social Ability, and the Simulation of Fictional Social Worlds”. *Journal of Research in Personality* 40 (5): 694–712.
doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2005.08.002.
- Matsumoto, David, and Linda Juang. 2013. *Culture and Psychology*. 5th ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- McKenna, Michael C., Kristin Conradi, Camille Lawrence, Bong Gee Jang, and J. Patrick Meyer. 2012. “Reading Attitudes of Middle School Students: Results of

- a U.S. survey.” *Reading Research Quarterly* 47 (3): 283-306.
doi:10.1002//rrq.021
- Mcquarrie, Edward, Miller,, Jessica, and Barbara J. Phillips, Barbara. 2013. “The Megaphone Effect: Taste and Audience in Fashion Blogging.” *Journal of Consumer Research*. 40: 136-158.doi:10.1086/669042.
- Meisel, Perry. 2009. *The Myth of Popular Culture: From Dante to Dylan*. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons.
- Mandell, Jonathan. 1991. “Her Mother, Her Muse.” *Newsday*. July 15, 1991: 42.
- Merga, Margaret K. 2014. “Are Western Australian Adolescents Keen Book Readers?” *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 37 (3): 161-170.
- Merriam, Sharan B. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Montgomery, Lucy Maud. 1908. *Anne of Green Gables*. London: Puffin Classics.
- Moran, Luke. 2014. *Boys of Abu Ghraib*. Film. Directed by Luke Moran. United States: Rebel One Pictures.
- Moustakas, Clark E. 1994. *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Mullis, V.S., Michael O. Martin, Pierre Foy, and Martin Hooper. 2017. *ePIRLS 2016 International Results in Online Informational Reading*. Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED580351.pdf>

Murdoch, Walter. 1937. "The Tyranny of the Low-brow." *The Australian Quarterly* 9 (1): 40-7.

My School. 2018. <http://myschool.edu.au>

Nield, David. 2016. "15 Memorable Milestones in Tablet History." *Techradar*. July 5, 2016. <https://www.techradar.com/news/mobile-computing/10-memorable-milestones-in-tablet-history-924916>

NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council). 2007. *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council.

NAPLAN. 2016. *2016 Information for Parents and Caregivers*.

https://www.nap.edu.au/_resources/NAPLAN_2016_information_for_parents_web.pdf

— 2018. "FAQs". <https://www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/FAQs>

The Nobel Foundation. 2017. *Bob Dylan: Facts*.

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/dylan-facts.html

Nuttall, Christine. 1996. *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Oxford: Heinemann.

O'Donoghue, Mary. 2013. "Putting Working-class Mothers in their Place: Social Stratification, the Field of Education, and Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 34 (2). doi: 10.1080/1080/01425692.2012.710006.

Orlikowski Wanda J. and Jack J. Baroudi. 1991. "Studying Information Technology in Organisations: Research Approaches and Assumptions." *Information Systems Research*. 2 (2): 1-28.

Orwell, George. (1945) 2013. *Animal Farm*. London: Penguin Books.

—(1949). 2008. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin Books.

Parlette, Melanie, and Vivian Howard. 2010. "Pleasure Reading Among First-year University Students." *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 5 (4): 53–69.

Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Pavlidis, Eleni. 2013. *Un-Australian Fictions: Nation, Multiculture(alism), and Globalisation: 1988-2008*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholarly Publishing.

Perrini, Andrew. 2016. *Book Reading 2016*. Washington: Pew Research Center.
http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/08/PI_2016.09.01_Book-Reading_FINAL.pdf

Powell, Mary Ann, Anne Graham, and Julia Truscott. 2016. "Ethical Research Involving Children: Facilitating Reflexive Engagement." *Qualitative Research Journal* 16 (2): 120-144.

- Pini, Barbara, Paula McDonald, and Robyn Mayes. 2012. "Class Contestations and Australia's resource boom: The Emergence of the 'Cashed-up Bogan'". *Sociology* 46 (2): 142–58. doi:10.1177/0038038511419194.
- Pritchard, Katherine Susannah. (1929) 1973. *Coonardoo*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
- Pitcher, Sharon M., Lettie K. Albright, Carol J. DeLaney, Nancy T. Walker, Krishna Seunarinesingh, Stephen Mogge, Kathy N. Headley, Victoria Gentry Ridgeway, Sharon Peck, Rebecca Hunt, and Pamela J. Dunston. 2007. "Assessing Adolescents' Motivation to Read." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 50 (5): 387- 395. doi:10.1598/jaal.50.5.5
- Prieur, Annick, Lennart Rosenlund, and Jakob Skjott-Larsen. 2008. "Cultural Capital Today: A Case Study from Denmark." *Poetics* 36 (1): 45–71.
- Prieur, Annick, and Mike Savage. 2011. "Updating Cultural Capital Theory: A Discussion Based on Studies in Denmark and in Britain." *Poetics* 39 (6): 566-80.
- Prokofiev, Sergei. (1936) 2001. *Romeo and Juliet, Suite No. 2, Op. 64ter: Study Score*. New York: Hal Leonard. Corporation.
- Resnik, Julia. 2008. "The Democratisation of the Education System in France after the Second World War: A Neo-Weberian Glocal Approach to Education Reforms." *British Journal of Educational Systems* 55 (2): 155-181.
- Rigney, Daniel. 2010. *The Matthew Effect: How Advantage Begets Further Advantage*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Roy, Arudhati, 1997. *The God of Small Things*. New York: Random House.

Russell Group Universities. 2018. <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/our-universities/>

SCSA (School Curriculum and Standards Authority). 2017. *Literature ATAR Course Year 12 Syllabus*.

https://wace1516.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/8620/Literature-Y12-Syllabus-AC-ATAR-GD.pdf

—2018a. *Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA)- Frequently Asked Questions For Students*.

https://wace1516.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/76408/Online-Literacy-and-Numeracy-Assessment-OLNA-Frequently-asked-questions-for-students-March-2018.pdf

—2018b. *English*. <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/syllabus-and-support-materials/english>

Sellen, Abigail. J. and Richard Harper. 2003. *The Myth of the Paperless Office*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Schulman, Tom. 1989. *Dead Poets Society*. Film. Directed by Peter Weir. United States: Touchstone Pictures.

Shakespeare, William. (1623) 1997. *King Lear*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1128>

— (1623) 2000. *Macbeth*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2264>

— (1623) 2000. *A Midsummers Night's Dream*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2242>

— (1623) 2000. *The Tempest*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2235>

—(1623) 2009. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/27761>

—(1632) 2012. *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1112>

—(1609) 2017. “Sonnet 130.” *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Touch Press Inc.

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/shakespeares-sonnets/id528646395?mt=8>

Sparks, Richard L., Jon Patton, and Amy Murdoch. 2014. “Early Reading Success and its Relationship to Reading Achievement and Reading Volume: Replication of “10 Years Later.”” *Reading and Writing* 27 (1): 189–211. doi:10.1007/s11145-013-9439-2.

Singer, Lauren M., and Patricia A. Alexander. 2017. “Reading Across Mediums: Effects of Reading Digital and Print Texts on Comprehension and Calibration.” *The Journal of Experimental Education* 85 (1):155–72. doi:10.1080/00220973.2016.1143794.

Stanovich, Keith. E. 1986. “Matthew Effects in Reading: Some Consequences of Individual Differences in the Acquisition of Literacy.” *Reading Research Quarterly* 21 (14): 360-407.

- Stanovich, Keith. E., Anne E. Cunningham, Anne. E., and Richard F. West. 1998. "Literacy Experiences and the Shaping of Cognition." In *Global Prospects for Education: Development, Culture, and Schooling*, edited by Scott G. Paris and Henry M. Wellman, 253-288. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Stow, Randolph. 1965 (2009). *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*. Sydney: Penguin Books.
- Sullivan, Alice. 2001. "Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment." *Sociology* 35 (4): 893-912.
- 2002. "Bourdieu and Education: How Useful is Bourdieu's Theory for Researchers?" *The Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences* 38 (2): 144-166.
- 2015. "The Life-long Benefits of Reading for Pleasure." *The School Librarian* 63 (1): 5-6.
- Sullivan, Alice, and Matt Brown. 2014. *Vocabulary from Adolescence to Middle Age: CLS Working paper*. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, University of London.
- 2015. "Reading for Pleasure and Progress in Vocabulary and Mathematics." *British Educational Research Journal* 41 (6): 971–91. doi:10.1002/berj.3180.
- Sullivan, Kevin. 1985. *Anne of Green Gables*. Television series. Directed by Kevin Sullivan. Toronto: CBC.
- Sultana, Farhana. 2007. "Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research." *ACME: An*

International Journal for Critical Geographies 6 (3): 374-85. <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/786>.

Sykes, Helen. 2011. "Suggested Text for Australian Curriculum." Australian Independent School Association NSW. <https://aisnsw.edu.au/Services/PL/EnglishSecondary/Documents/Suggested%20Texts%20for%20Australian%20Curriculum%20-%20Helen%20Sykes.docx>

Tale of Tales. 2009. *Fatale: Exploring Salome*. <http://tale-of-tales.com/Fatale/>

Tan, Amy. 1989. *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Tan, Amy, and Ronald Bass. 1993. *The Joy Luck Club*. Film. Directed by Wayne Wang. United States: Buena Vista Pictures.

Tarulli, Laurel. 2014. "Pleasure Reading: Exploring a New Definition." *Reference & User Service Quarterly* 53 (4): 296-299.

Thompson, Greg, and Allen G. Harbaugh. 2013. "A Preliminary Analysis of Teacher Perceptions of the Effects of NAPLAN on Pedagogy and Curriculum." *Australian Educational Researcher* 40 (3): 299-314. doi: 10.1007/s13384-013-0093-0.

Thompson, Patricia. 2008. "Field." In *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* edited by Michael Grenfell. 64-81. Durham: Acumen.

Thomson, Sue, Kylie Hillman, Marina Schmid, Sima Rodrigues and Jessica Fullarton. 2017. "Reporting Australia's results PIRLS 2016", Canberra: Australian Council for Education Research Ltd.

TISC (Tertiary Institution Service Centre). 2017. *Information For Year 12 students*. <https://www.tisc.edu.au/static-fixed/download/tisc-presentation-for-year12.pdf>

- Tolstoy, Leo. (1877) 2003. *Anna Karenina*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Tramonte, Lucia, and Doug Willms. 2010. "Cultural Capital and its Effects on Education Outcomes." *Economics of Education Review* 29 (2): 200-213.
- Trenwith, Courtney, and Lucy Rickard. 2011. "Shake-Up Puts Year 7s in High School." *WAtoday.com* December 8, 2011. <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/shakeup-puts-year-7s-in-high-school-20111208-1oknc.html>
- Trigg, Andrew B. 2001. "Veblen, Bourdieu, and Conspicuous Consumption." *Journal of Economic Issues* 35 (1): 99-115.
- Trimmer, Karen. 2013. "Independent Public Schools: A Move to Increased Autonomy and Devolution of Decision-making in Western Australian Public Schools." *Childhood Education* 89 (3): 178-84.
- Turner, Ralph. 1960. "Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System." *American Sociological Review* 25 (6): 855-867.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2089982>
- Lexile. 2018. "Understanding Lexile Measures". The *Lexile Framework for Reading*.
<https://lexile.com/educators/understanding-lexile-measures/>
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization). 2004. *The Plurality of Literacy and its implications for policies and programmes*. Paris: UNESCO.
- 2006. *Education for all global monitoring report*. Paris: UNESCO.
- 2014. *Reading in the Mobile Era: A Study of Mobile Reading in Developing Countries*. Paris: UNESCO.

- United Nations. 1948. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
- Veblen, Thorstein. 1899. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.
<http://moglen.law.columbia.edu/LCS/theoryleisureclass.pdf>.
- Walsham, Geoff. 2006. "Doing Interpretive Research." *European Journal of Information Systems* 15 (3): 320–30. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ejis.3000589.
- Wattpad. 2006. <http://wattpad.com>
- Wee, Lionel. 2005. "Intra-language Discrimination and Linguistic Human Rights: The Case of Singlish." *Applied Linguistics* 26 (1): 48-69.
- Wharton, William. 1978. *Birdy*. New York: Knopf.
- Wilhelm, Jeffrey D., and Michael W. Smith. 2016. "The Power of Pleasure Reading: What We Can Learn from the Secret Reading Lives of Teens." *English Journal* 105 (6): 25-30.
- Woodward, Ian, and Michael Emmison. 2009. "The Intellectual Reception of Bourdieu in Australian Social Sciences and Humanities." *Sociologica* 2-3: 1-22. doi: 10.2383/31370.
- Wynne, Emma. 2016. "Perth High School to Stop Offering Pupils a Pathway to University Due to Declining ATAR Interests." *ABC News*. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-23/clarkson-high-school-students-lose-university-entrance-option/7537990>
- Yiannakis, John. 2014. "A Possible Literary Canon in Upper School English Literature in Various Australian States, 1945-2005." *Issues in Educational Research, 2014* 24 (1): 98-113. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier24/yiannakis.html>
- Zickhur, Kathryn., Lee Rainie, Kristen Purcell, Mary Madden, and Joanna Brenner. (2012). *Younger Americans' Reading and Library Habits*. Washington: Pew Research

Center's Internet and American Life Project.

http://libraries.pewinternet.org/files/legacy-pdf/PIP_YoungerLibraryPatrons.pdf

Appendix I: List of Acronyms


ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
AISWA	Association of Independent Schools Western Australia
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DER	Digital Education Revolution
EALD	English as an additional dialect
GATE	Gifted and Talented Education
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
IPS	Independent Public School
OECD	Organisation for economic co-operation and development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
SCSA	School Curriculum and Standards Authority (Western Australia)
SEA	Socio-Economic Advantage
SES	Socio-Economic Status
TAFE	Technical and further education
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UWA	University of Western Australia
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WACE	Western Australia Certificate of Education
YA	Young Adult

Appendix II: The Qualitative Continuum

Using Laura Ellingson's (2009) concept of crystallisation, I situate this study as one that uses interpretivist phenomenological, critical, and creative analytic qualitative approaches. The following table (adapted from Ellingson 2009, chapt 1, Figure 1.1) is a summary of the three main areas of Ellingson's qualitative continuum that researchers can blend and move amongst. Ellingson suggests that crystallisation suits all research paradigms except for positivist researchers and the process fits within both social constructionist and critical approaches. The methods used in my study are both middle ground and art/impressionist approaches. In thematically coding interview data I adopt processes that Ellingson classifies under the science/realistic stance.

The Qualitative Continuum

	Art/Impressionist	Middle Ground Approach	Science/Realist
Goal	Unravels and construct accepted truths; explore the specific and generate art	To construct situated knowledge, explore the typical. generate description and understandings.	To discover objective truth, generalise to larger population, explain reality “out there,” generate scientific knowledge and predict behaviour
Questions	How do we cope with life? What other ways can we imagine? What is unique about my or another’s experience	How do participants understand their world? How do the participants and author co-construct a world? What are the pragmatic implications of this research?	What does it mean from the researcher’s point of view? What behaviours can be predicted? What is the relationship between factors?
Methods	Auto ethnography, interactive interviewing, participant observation, performance, sociological introspection and visual arts	Semi-structured interviewing, focus groups, observation and ethnography, thematic, metaphoric and narrative analysis, grounded theory, case studies, participatory action research and historical/archival research	Coding textual data, random sampling, frequency of behaviours, measurements, surveys and structured interviews
Writing	Use of first person, literary techniques, stories, poetic transcription, multi-vocal and multi-genre texts, layered accounts, personal reflections, personal reflections and open to multiple interpretations	Use of first-person voice Incorporation of brief narratives in research reports Use of “snippets” of participants’ words Single interpretation with implied partiality and positionality Some considerations of researcher’s standpoint(s)	Single authoritative interpretation Meaning summarised in tables and charts Objectivity and minimisation of bias highlighted
Researcher	Researcher as the main focus or as much of the focus of research as other participants	Participants are the focus, but researcher’s positionality is key to inform findings	Researcher is presented as irrelevant to results
Criteria	Do these stories ring true, resonate, engage, move? Are they coherent, plausible, interesting, aesthetically pleasing?	Flexible criteria, clarity and openness of process, clear reasoning and use of support, evidence of researcher’s reflexivity	Authoritative rules, specific criteria for data similar to quantitative, prescribed methodological processes.

 Highlighted boxes indicate my research approach.

Appendix III: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

(a) Semi-structured Questions (with follow-up, probing and specific questions)

I used the set of questions below, to guide my interviews with the first two participants (Jason and Tania). After conducting my first two interviews, I realised that I needed to reorder my line of questioning and include more follow-up and probing questions for reasons I outlined in chapter three.

Age –

Date of Birth-

School -

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and why you chose to take part in this project?

- o What year are you in school?
 - a. If in Year 11/12 What subjects are you taking this year? If in Year 10 What subjects are you thinking about taking next year?
- o Why did you volunteer yourself for this project? Or why do you think your mum/dad suggested you take part in this survey?
 - a. Is it because you consider yourself a reader/non-reader?

- I'm going to ask you a few questions that will help me find out about what sort of things you liked to read when you were younger

Can you tell me about the types of books you liked to read when you were in primary school?

- o Did you have a favourite book or story, and can you remember what it was that you loved about it?
- o Did you ever follow a book series? If yes, could you tell me a bit about that?
- o When you were younger, where did you get your books from?
 - Did you have a school or local library that your teacher or parent took you to?
 - Can you tell me a little about when you read at home or at school whether you did it independently? That is did teachers or parents read with you?
 - What do/did your parents do for a living?
 - What is their cultural/ethnic background? Eg. Were they born here, do they speak another language?
 - Would you call your parents (mum or dad) “readers”? What sort of books do they read?

- How would you compare your reading habits now to when you were younger?
 - o Do you think you read more or less?
 - o Could you tell me a bit about the last book that you read and could you tell me what they were about and how much you enjoyed or didn't enjoy it?
 - i. For fun
 - ii. For school
 - iii. For information
 - o How much of an influence do friends and other people have on what you read?
 - o How do you access your reading material?
 - iv. Do you go to the school or local library, do you go on-line, bookshops, friends

- I'm now going to ask you a few questions about your attitudes towards reading these days.
 - v. Would you say you enjoyed reading more when you were younger than you do now?
 - 1. If you think your enjoyment has changed, could you explain to me why you think you enjoy it more/less.
 - vi. Given a choice between reading a paper book or an on-line text, which would you choose and why?
 - vii. How much time would you spend surfing the internet or on social media? What sort of websites do you visit and how many of these do you think would involve a lot of word text?
 - viii. How often do you read fiction these days and how does this compare to when you were younger?
 - ix. Would you agree with the following "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one." (George R.R. Martin)
 - 1. Why or why not?
 - a. If you agree with this statement, has there been a book that has opened up your world? Could you tell me about that book.
 - b. If you disagree with this statement, can you explain why you don't agree?
 - x. Would you agree with the following quote "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." (Dr Seuss).
 - 1. Why or why not?
 - a. If you agree with this statement, has there been a book that has opened up your world? Could you tell me about that book. It doesn't have to be fiction or non fiction. It can be any text type.
 - b. If you disagree with this statement, can you explain why you don't agree?

(b) Semi-structured Questions (with follow-up, probing and specific questions)

The document below is what I brought with me and used in subsequent interviews. I included a question about participants' familiarity with specific books to stimulate further conversation about reading practices. Although these books were mostly randomly selected, I included titles that I predicted that participants would be familiar with, either from reading the book itself, viewing the screen adaptation, or in popular discourse.

<p>State research purpose and what I intend to do with the data.</p> <p>Write it up into my thesis and for publication in academic journals where I can share the ideas to improve teaching practices and curriculum.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You do not have to answer the question if you don't want to. 2. Some of the questions I'll ask later on in the interview might be similar to an earlier question, so you can go more in depth. It is likely that towards the end, you might be thinking about earlier questions and feel free to take your time to think about what you want to say. 3. If you feel that I'm rushing through too many of the questions and wish to return to an earlier question, just let me know. 	
<p>READ out and ask participant to sign consent form.</p>	
<p>Intro Warm up questions A few questions about your age, school, hobbies and family background.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your date of birth? 2. What year are you in at school? 3. Which school do you go to? 4. Do you go to school in your area? If not what was the decision for going to your current school? 5. What subjects are you taking at school? (if Year 11/12) If you are in Year 11, what subjects will you take next year in school. If end of Year 12, what plans do you have for next year? 6. What do your parents do for a living? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Mum b. Dad 7. Were you born here? 8. Where are your parents from? 9. Do you speak a language other than English? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Can you read/write in that language? ii. What languages do your parents speak or are literate in? 10. How many siblings do you have? If any.

	11. Who lives in your household?
First question	What is your favourite story of all time? (Doesn't have to be a book—can be a movie, short story, other text types, etc.)
More questions about participant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are some of your hobbies—things you like to do in your spare time? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Do you participate in after school activities or clubs? Private music lessons, sports (organized) ii. How long have you been doing this activity for? 2. When you heard about this research, did you think of yourself as a “reader” or “non-reader”? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Can you explain why you call yourself a reader/non-reader? ii. How would you define reader? When you hear the word “reading” what do you think of? iii. What other words or ideas or activities do you associate with the word “reading”?
<p>The next few questions will help me find out about the types of books you enjoyed reading when you were younger.</p> <p>Please take your time to think back to this period in your life.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you tell me about the types of books you liked to read when you were in primary school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did you have a favourite book or story, and can you remember what it was that you loved about it? b. Did you ever follow a book series? If yes - could you tell me a bit about that? c. How did you get into that series? (That is, did a teacher introduce you to it, did you hear about it from friends or family members.) 2. When you were younger, where did you access your books from? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Did you have a school or local library that your teacher or parent took you? ii. Can you tell me a little about when you read at home or at school? Eg. Did you read independently? Did your teachers or parents read with you? 3. Would you call your parents “readers”? Can you explain why you gave that answer? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. what sort of texts do your parents read? ii. Do they read on-line or paper books? iii. Can you tell me about the types of texts they read?
<p>Current reading habits. Now I'm going to ask you a few questions to get an idea of your current reading habits. Some of these questions might cover the same territory.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you define “reading”? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would you consider reading the back of a cereal packet “reading”? 2. List as many examples as you want. 2. What forms of reading do you do these days? For example, where do you read and for what purpose? 3. Or another way of looking at it, how often do you have to read during the course of a day from the moment you wake up to when you fall asleep? (weekday or weekend) 4. How would you compare your reading habits now to when you were younger? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you read more or less these days?

	<p>5. Can you tell me about the last book that you read?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was it for school or for leisure? 2. What was it about? 3. Prompt to discuss more about the book – if it was for school, ask participant how the teacher taught it to them? What follow up activities did they have to engage in? 4. Is it important to you that you can relate to the characters in the books that you have read in the past? 6. Can you tell me more about the last book you read for <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. school ii. Fun iii. Information What was it about? What happens in it? How did you discover it? <p>Do you read novels in other humanities subjects? Eg. Social studies?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. How much did friends or other people have on what you read? 8. How influenced are you by other forms of media when it comes to reading paper books or e-books. 9. How do you access books these days? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School library 2. On-line 3. Bookstores 4. Gifts <p>10. Would you say you enjoy reading more or less these days?</p> <p>11. Is it cool to read at your school? Is reading an acceptable activity at your school? Or if you are in Year 11/12 – before you got into senior school.</p>
Multicultural and Indigenous texts	<p>Have you read any books by Indigenous writers about their experiences? Could you tell me a bit more about that? Have you read books by people who are from other cultures? [Cultures other than English/Anglo-Australian]</p>
Digital text types/ICT	<p>Next few questions are for me to get an idea of how you use digital media. As you may or may not know you are a “digital native” in that you probably have not known of a world before the computer. Would you say that this is true?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you read online? 2. Did your school give you a laptop to use? Do you bring your own device? 3. Have you heard of Watt Pad? 4. If not, did your school give you access to a personal laptop during school hours? Was this connected to the WIFI? 5. How much time do you spend on-line? (Include both home and school) 6. What websites do you visit? Can you tell me a bit about them? 7. What youtube channels do you follow? 8. Can you tell me about the types of social media you use? 9. How much of your time do you use to play computer games? (You can include other platforms such as Wii/PS3-4/ - are there other ones?) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Are you a gamer? 10. How often do you go to the cinema? Watch DVDs? Download movies? 11. Have your parents ever restricted your screen time? Either now or when you were younger?

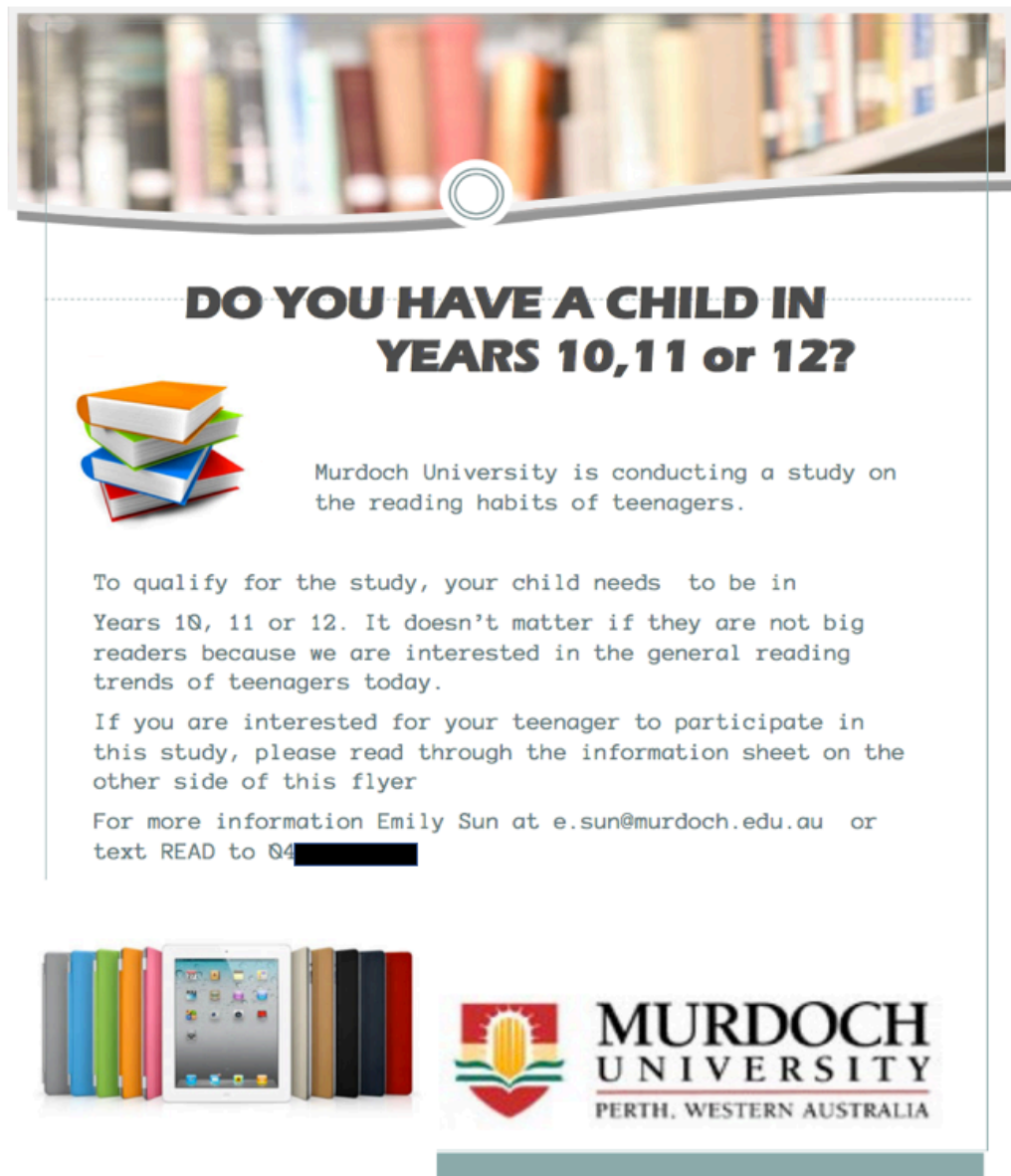
	<p>12. What devices/ICT do you use to access your digital media? Phone/laptop/tablet etc..</p> <p>13. Given a choice between a paper book version or an e-book, which would you choose and why?</p> <p>14. When you are on-line to look for information, which sites do you go to?</p> <p>15. What else do you read online?</p>
<p>In the English classroom</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you tell me about your favourite subjects at school – past or present. 2. Which English course are you taking? If you are in Year 10 – do you know how the teachers sort you out into separate English classes? Is it random or does it depend on whether or not you want to go to TAFE or Uni? 3. What have you studied in English this year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. books 2. films 3. print media 4. on-line media <p>If participant mentions specific books or texts, ask them to explain more about what they had to do with the text. How were they asked to respond to the text?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Do you enjoy English at school? 5. What are books or texts that you have been introduced to at school, that you probably never would have picked up on your own accord? 6. Did you enjoy these books? Why or why not? 7. What forms of writing do you enjoy? (This includes text messaging/writing notes in class) 8. If you are in Year 10, have you thought about which English course you will do next year? 9. ATAR versus VET 10. What are your plans for after you leave high school? [If any]
<p>Knowledge of texts and authors. [Use to further discussion on reading]</p>	<p>I'm going to name some authors and tell me if you have heard of them, or read their books.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Shakespeare ii. Charles Dickens iii. William Blake iv. Jane Austen v. Tim Winton vi. JR Tolkein vii. JK Rowling viii. Stephanie Meyers ix. TS Eliot x. Patrick White xi. Banjo Patterson xii. Henry Lawson xiii. John Marsden xiv. John Green xv. Phillip Pullman xvi. Gorge RR Martin xvii. Neil Gaiman xviii. Shaun Tan

	<p>xix. Enid Blyton xx. Oscar Wilde xxi. Nam Le xxii. Macbeth xxiii. David Copperfield xxiv. Paradise Lost xxv. Pride and Prejudice xxvi. Cloudstreet xxvii. Lord of the Rings xxviii. Harry Potter xxix. Twilight xxx. Frankenstein xxxi. Sherlock Holmes xxxii. The Sharknet xxxiii. Game of Thrones xxxiv. Nineteen eighty-four 1984 /Animal Farm xxxv. To Kill a Mockingbird</p> <p>If this list triggers conversation about an author or text they recognize or enjoy, ask participant to tell you more about it and where they read/heard about the text or characters from the text.</p>
Shakespeare	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which plays? 2. What did you enjoy about it? 3. What did you enjoy about it? 4. How was it taught to you?
General questions about recreational activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If time wasn't a factor, what would you do in your spare time? 2. If reading was is one of the activities listed, do you get to do it much? 3. If you still read recreationally, is it incidental or do you put time aside to read?
Attitudes towards reading and knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would you agree with the following "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one." (George R.R.Martin – on Twitter!) Why or why not? 1. If you agree with this statement, has there been a book that has opened up your world? 2. Can you tell me about that book?
Access to knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would you agree with the following quote "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." (Dr Seuss). Why or why not? 1. If you agree with this statement, has there been a book that has opened up your world? Could you tell me about that book. It doesn't have to be fiction or non-fiction. It can be any text type. 2. What are other sources of information? Prompt: television, other media, people—parents and teachers, institutions etc..
Final Thoughts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what way, if at all, has reading influenced your experience of the world? 2. Would you say it has offered you more knowledge, escapism, entertainment, ideas and views about the world? 3. What value do you place on reading? That is, is your reading incidental or do you set time aside to read for pleasure?


Final Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Anything else to add?2. Any questions?3. How do you see the future of reading?4. Google-glasses, paper books, virtual-reality etc..

Appendix IV: Consent Forms and Recruitment Flyers

These documents were used in recruitment and interview processes and have been reformatted so that the layout and font remain consistent throughout this dissertation. The margins in documents that feature Murdoch University's header image have been adjusted to accommodate the margins used in this document. Times New Roman font replaces the Arial font used in participant copies of the consent form.



**DO YOU HAVE A CHILD IN
YEARS 10,11 or 12?**




Murdoch University is conducting a study on the reading habits of teenagers.

To qualify for the study, your child needs to be in Years 10, 11 or 12. It doesn't matter if they are not big readers because we are interested in the general reading trends of teenagers today.

If you are interested for your teenager to participate in this study, please read through the information sheet on the other side of this flyer

For more information Emily Sun at e.sun@murdoch.edu.au or text READ to 04 [REDACTED]



**MURDOCH
UNIVERSITY**
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Research Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project on the reading habits of teenagers. The project is about finding out about what and how teenagers are reading these days.

What would I be asked to do?

If you agree to take part, I will interview you about your reading habits. The interview will take around 45 minutes and during this time, I will ask you questions about your reading habits. If you do not wish to answer some of the questions, that is ok. You will not have to say or do anything you are not comfortable with.

Do I have to take part?

No. You are completely free to say yes or no. The research team will respect your decision whichever choice you make, and will not question it.

Participating in this research will not affect your grades, your relationship with your teacher(s), or your school.

What if change my mind mid-way through the interview?

If you say yes, but then want to stop participating, that's OK. Just let me know and you can stop at any time.

What will happen to the information I give - is it private and confidential?

Your answers on the questionnaire will remain strictly confidential and will be seen only by the researchers. I will not use your real name, so we can't identify your answers. Your teachers will not see any of your answers.

After I have conducted all the interviews and analysed all of it, I intend to write about what I found in a thesis, which is like a big assignment that will be marked for my University degree. When I do this, I won't write or tell anyone your name, or the names of any other students or your school.

A summary of the project will be made available to you when it is completed. You can also ask your parent or guardian for a copy.

Will you tell anyone what I say while I am contributing to the project?

In almost all cases no. If you tell me or whoever is running your group, something that later we need to tell someone else because the law requires us to do so, then we will have to. We may also have to reveal something you say, if we think that you might be being mistreated by someone or if you are hurting yourself. If this happens we will discuss this with you first before telling anyone else and make sure you know exactly who we are going to tell and what we will say.

In all other situations, we will treat what you tell us as being private and confidential.

Is this research approved?

The research has been approved by Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Who do I contact if I wish to talk about the project further?

Please talk about the project with your parents first. Then, if you would like to talk with me more or ask some questions, please ask your parent for my contact details.

OK – so how do I become involved?

If you **do** want to be a part of the project, the please read the next page and write your name in the space provided.

This letter is for you to keep.

Researcher Emily Sun's *Working with Children* number is: 374733

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2014/66). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics

Participant Consent Form

Reading Habits of Teenagers

1. I agree voluntarily to take part in this study.
2. I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.
3. I understand that I will be asked to answer a series of questions about my reading habits.
4. The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.
5. I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to give any reason.
6. I understand I will not be identified in any publication arising out of this study.
7. I understand that my name and identity will be stored separately from the data, and these are accessible only to the investigators. All data provided by me will be analysed anonymously using code numbers.
8. I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

Name of participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date:/...../.....

If you are under 18 years old your parent or guardian also need to read and sign the form below.

1. I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of my child.
2. I give permission for _____ (name of participant) to be interviewed by Emily Sun.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date:/...../.....

Human Research Ethics Approval No: 2014/66

I confirm that I have provided the Information Letter concerning this study to the above participant; I have explained the study and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of researcher: _____ Date:/...../.....

Parental Consent Form

Reading Habits of Teenagers

I give permission for my child _____ to participate in this research.
I understand that:

1) The research will be conducted by Dr Anne Surma, Dr Wendy Cumming-Potvin and Emily Sun from Murdoch University.

2) Participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of my child's participation returned to me and remove from the research records, or destroyed.

3) The reason for the research is to investigate the reading habits of teenagers who are in Years 10, 11 and 12.

4) The benefits that my child and I may expect from the research is that feedback from the researcher might help them see their experiences in a different light and make them more self-aware about the choices they are making at this stage of their lives.

5) The procedures are as follows: My child will be asked a series of open ended questions that have been structured around eliciting responses related to their reading habits. This will be recorded on audio tape at a location agreed upon by the researcher and me. My child's answers will be transcribed and this transcription will not be sent back to my child for checking. A fact sheet will be sent back to us through email at the end of the research.

6) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

7) No risks are foreseen

8) The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form

9) Access to the audio tape will be restricted to the researchers directly involved in this research project. The recording will be stored in a secure cabinet and destroyed after they have been transcribed. The transcription records will be coded so that the anonymity of my child is preserved.

10) The researchers will answer any further questions about the research at e.sun@murdoch.edu.au or _____

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep on and return the other to the researcher.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date:/...../.....

I confirm that I have provided the Information Letter concerning this study to the above participant; I have explained the study and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of researcher: _____

Date:/...../.....

Appendix V: Example of Coded Interview And Transcripts

The example below is excerpted from Jason's (Participant 1) interview.

TRANSCRIPT ¶	COMMENTS ¶
<p>So you read mostly on a computer now? ¶ Well not like <u>pages</u>, but if there's an article that I'm interested in I'll read it on the computer. ¶</p>	<p>¶ ¶ Reads brief articles online ¶</p>
<p>Online you mean? ¶ Yeah... but it's not like a main thing. ¶</p>	<p>¶ Reads brief articles on line. ¶</p>
<p>Do you still read the books you sort of read when you were younger? ¶ <u>Nah, nothing</u>. Nothing in book form. I don't read anything. ¶</p>	<p>¶ ¶ Strongly identifies as non-reader. On-line reading not considered reading. ¶</p>
<p>So this means the next questions might be a harder to answer because you have to think further back, but can you tell me about the last book you read? ¶</p>	<p>¶ ¶ ¶ ¶</p>
<p>What was the last book that you read? You can take your time to have a think about it. ¶ Oh I don't have to think about it. I read it in English, at school. In Ecstasy? [pauses, sounds uncertain]. I can't remember who made it. A West Australian author. It was just about a teenage girl going through drug use. She had a problem. A play on words you know [laughs]. ¶</p>	<p>¶ Read book in English ¶ YA novel ¶ Local story ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶</p>
<p>So that was for school? ¶</p>	<p>¶</p>

Appendix VI: Additional Participant Information and Reading Position

Maps

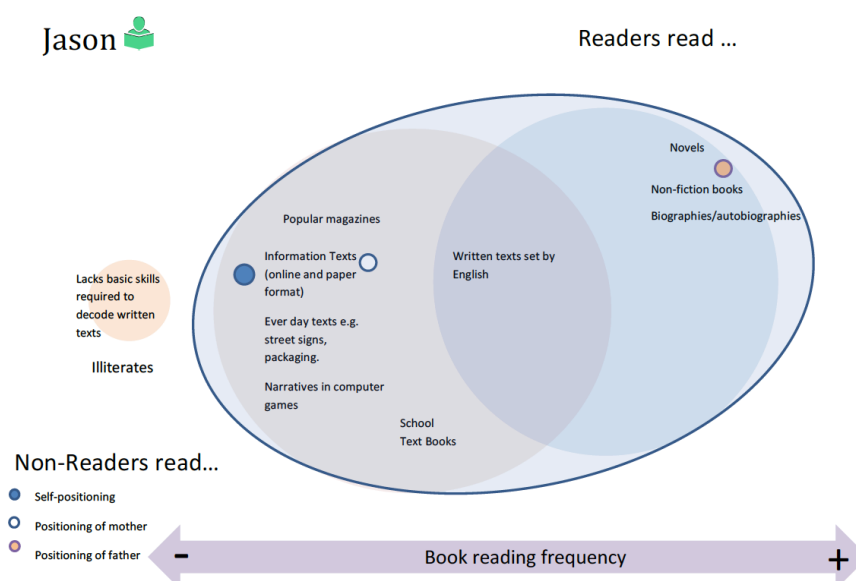
These notes include some additional information, observations and reflections pertinent to the whole thesis. The reflective process was central to my research method and informed both the creative and critical components. I include in this section graphical representations of how I interpreted and mapped out the participants' definition of reading and classification of reading practices. These maps allowed me to visualise the privileging of certain practices over others, but they are not Bourdieu's multi-dimensional fields.

The practices located within the pale blue circle indicate what participants' thought readers ought to read, and those in the pale pink circle indicate reading practices that non-readers engage in. Although these are not mathematically representations, the differences in the degree each dark blue elliptical outline tilts is intentional, and indicates how I interpreted each participants' conceptualised the hierarchy of reading practices. These diagrams do indicate the unconscious relational patterns of participants, they should *not* be confused with Bourdieu's own co-ordinate mapping of social practices and occupational groups within a social space, nor any other diagrams used by other researchers.

I include in each participant profile additional information relevant to the thesis that was relayed to me by the participant's parents during or after the interviews. I unintentionally recruited a few participants who came from an immigrant or non-English speaking background, but to all intents and purposes these participants are multilingual, native English speakers. Five participants were "people of colour", a term I use to describe participants who were not visibly "white" Australians, but this did not necessarily mean that they were from a culturally and linguistically diverse

(CALD) background. Many participants who were *not* visible ethnic minorities had at least one parent from a non-Anglo Celtic Australian background. Only five of the fourteen participants claimed an Anglo-Celtic Australian heritage, of which one made the clear that he was from an Irish, and not English background. Unfortunately, untangling the complexities of cultural identity and cultural capital in multicultural Australia is unfortunately beyond the scale and scope of this project.

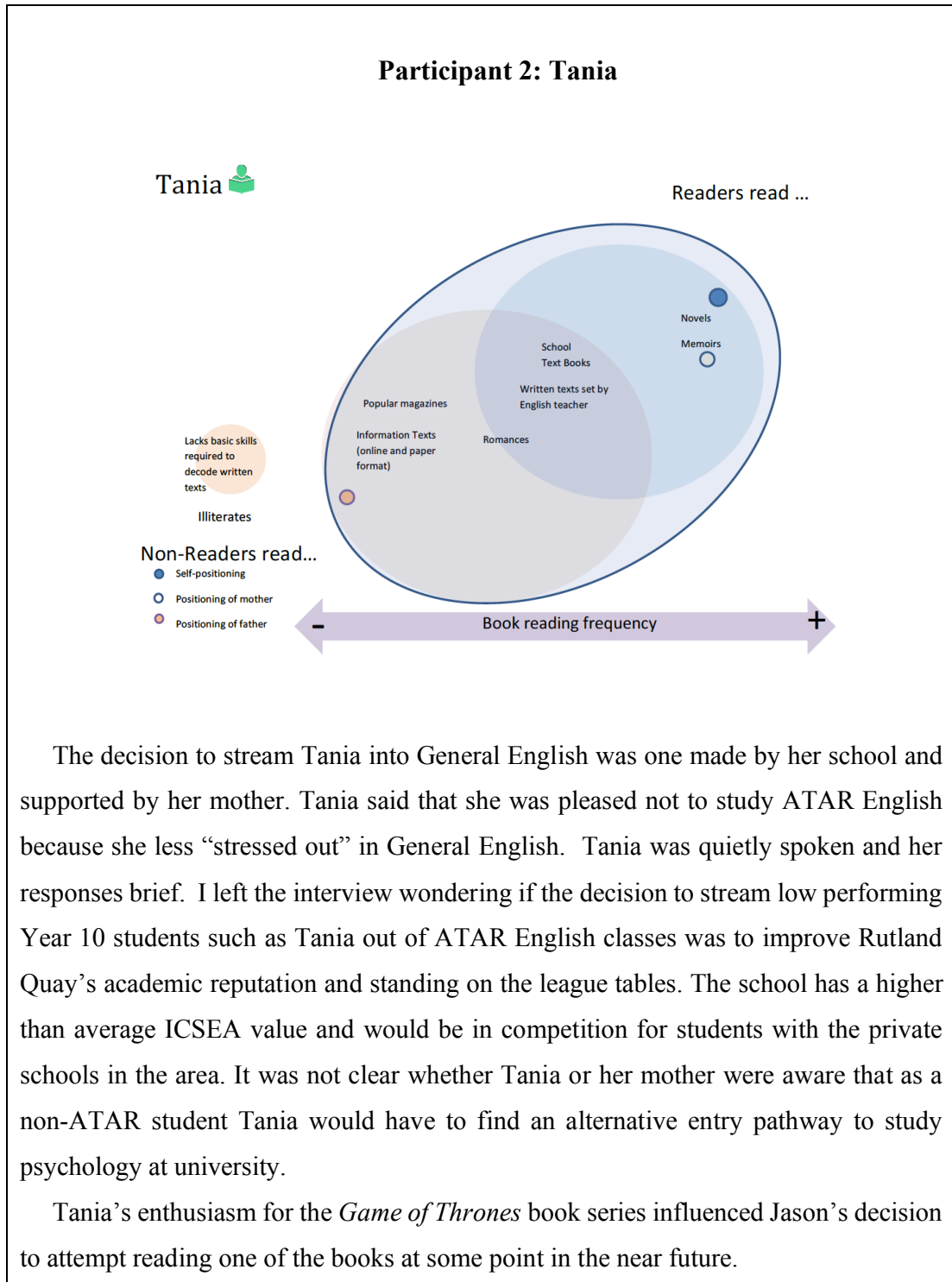
Participant 1: Jason



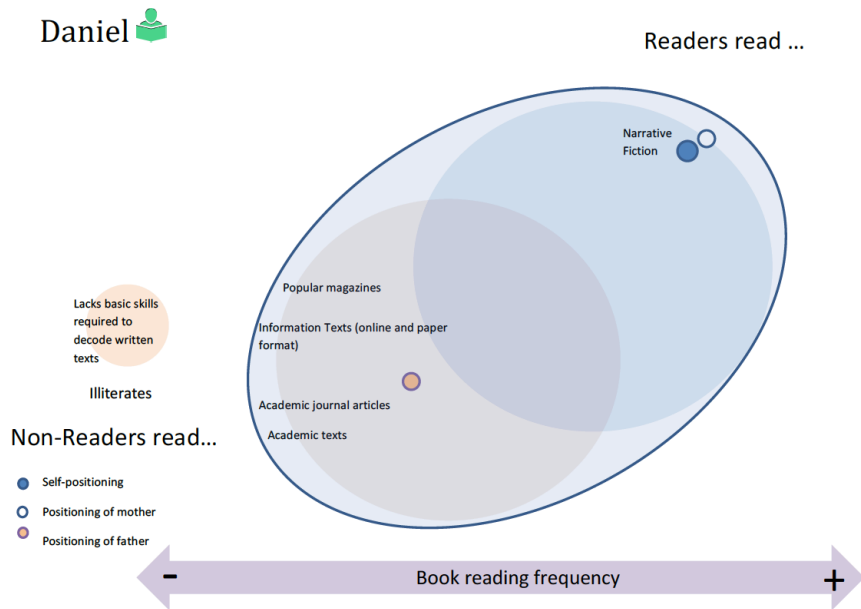
I interviewed Jason in his family's study, a room he uses to access his family's communal computer because his laptop is not powerful enough for computer gaming. During the interview, he pointed to some books that he used to love reading as a child, and these included books from the popular *Captain Underpants* series and *The Guinness Book of World Records*. He explained that inherited some of his older sibling's Enid Blyton's books including those from *The Magic Faraway Tree* series. Jason spoke to me and members of his family in standard Australian English. However, his mother spoke to me in a mixture of Singlish and various Chinese dialects. His older brother, a university student, was at home when I interviewed Jason and spoke to me in standard English, but to his family in Singlish. His mother spoke to Jason's brother in Singlish and Mandarin Chinese. Although the exploration of post-colonial identities and reading is outside the limits of the dissertation, after this interview I reflected upon whether young adults such as Jason—that is those who have multicultural, but not necessarily multiethnic, genealogies, but have grown up in the post-colonial but not entirely decolonised world—struggle to find narratives, including books, told from relatable perspectives.

My overall impression of Jason was that he is an intelligent young adult who is not yet aware of his capabilities. He showed me two of the award-winning pieces of furniture he created in woodwork and had he the cultural and social capital could have started a

boutique furniture business. When I congratulated Jason and suggested that he could perhaps one day make a business out of pieces commissioned by wealthy clients, he laughed off my suggestion and said that he could not imagine anyone paying so much for his pieces of furniture.



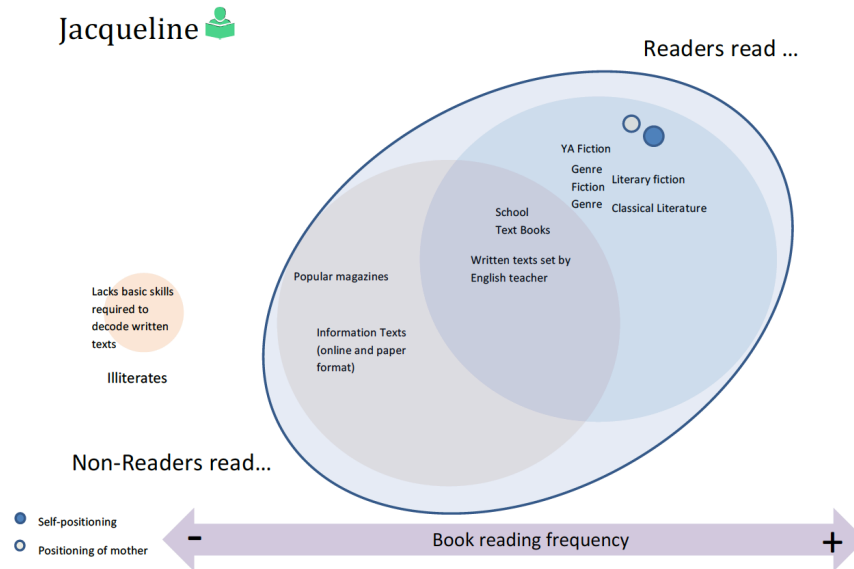
Participant 3: Daniel



I interviewed Daniel at his home in Bluegum, a suburb not far from where he attends school. When I walked into his house, I failed to notice that he lived in a “shoeless household” until after I had walked across the polished floorboards and clean rugs. I had been too busy taking in the setting, particularly the guitar that stood in the living area and how his household was noticeably more formal than the Jason’s. Even though I was dressed in smart casual attire, I felt that perhaps I should have worn something more formal for the occasion.

Daniel explained that his parents wanted him to attend Jacaranda to access the school’s Chinese language program; it was not clear whether this was because of one of his parent’s is an ethnic-Chinese or because Daniel’s parents see the benefits of learning Chinese in what has been termed “the Chinese Century”. I had a positive experience teaching EALD at Jacaranda in the mid-late 2000s.

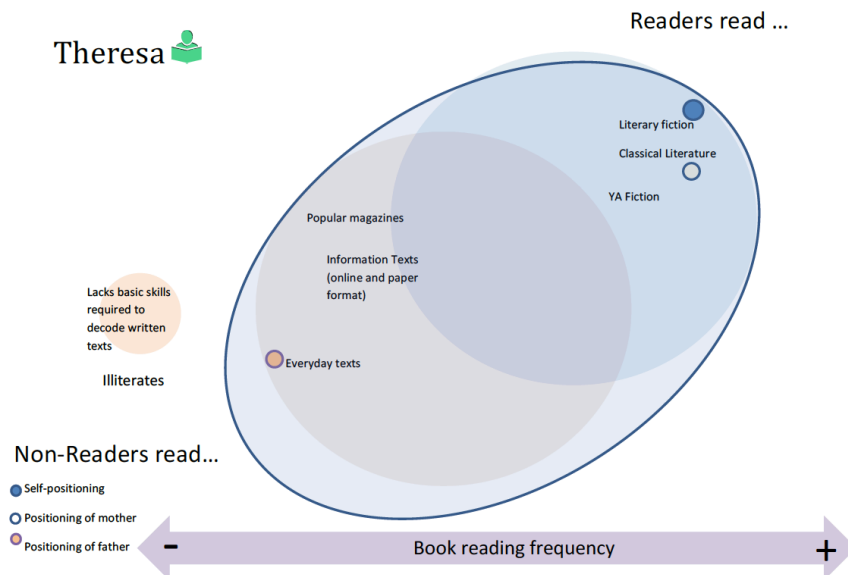
Participant 4: Jacqueline



At the time of the interviews, Riverdale saw an influx of international and interstate migrants because of WA's mining boom since housing is more affordable in Riverdale than in the suburbs closer to the city. I was troubled by my surprise at Jacqueline's enthusiastic and positive descriptions of her experiences at Riverdale College. Her responses made me question my presumptions as I reflected upon how I had interpellated her into the dominant narrative of the typical Riverdale student before meeting her. In my reflective journal, I wondered whether Jacqueline was aware of existing stereotypes about Riverdale students and had intentionally presented the positive aspects of her school to compensate for negative community perceptions. I noted in my journal how unsettling my realisation that I found it easier for me to accept at face value a negative media story about Riverdale College, than it was for me to take Jacqueline's descriptive recount of her positive school experience as genuine.

I later found out that Jacqueline's father lived in Wellington Heights, and that her younger sibling chose to attend secondary school at Robertson College instead of Riverdale College.

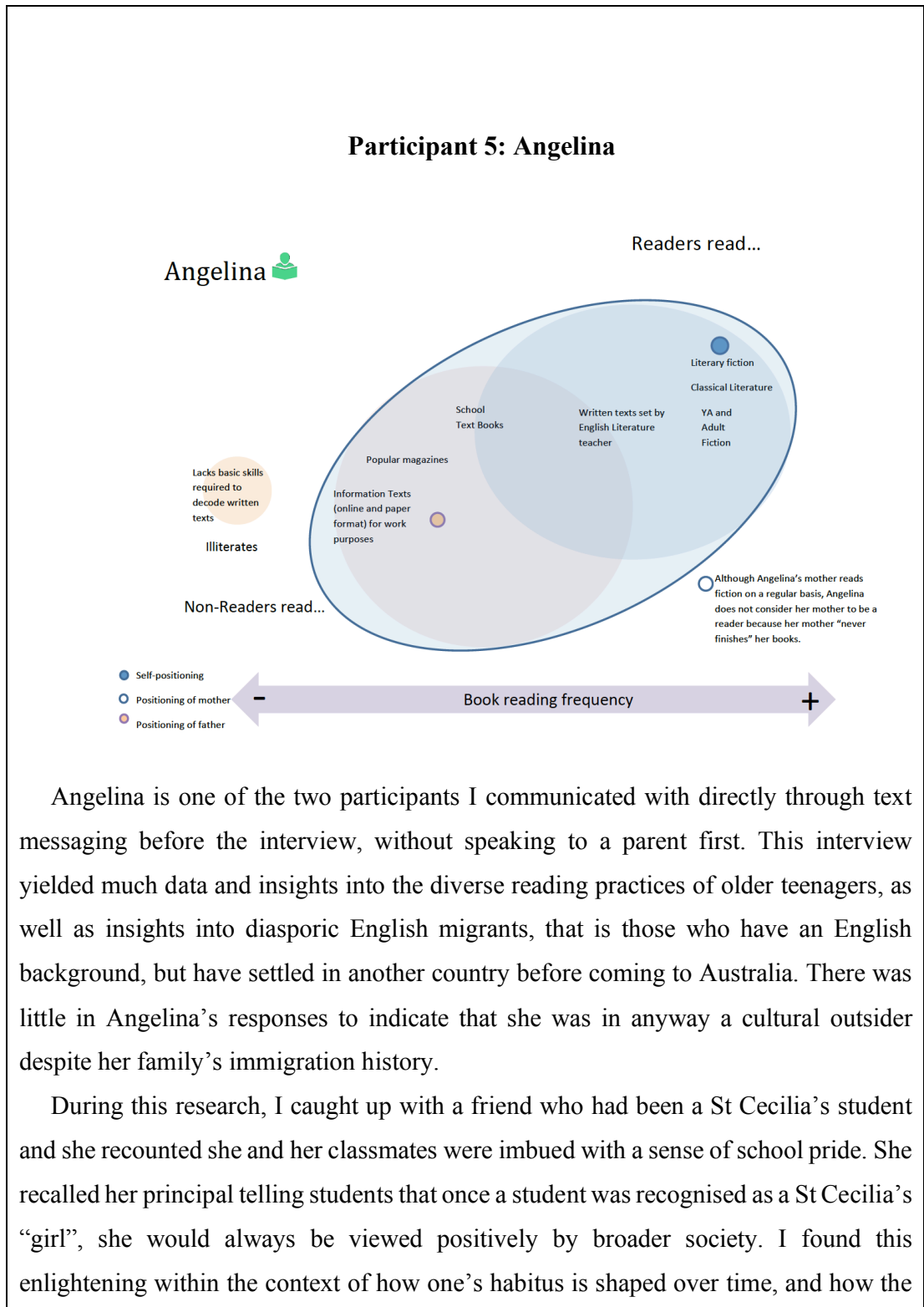
Participant 5: Theresa



I found Theresa’s description of her experience studying *Heart of Darkness* as one where her teacher “basically brain vomited it to us” amusing and apt. Theresa understood that her Literature teacher “couldn’t focus on what he wanted to focus on”, because of curriculum requirements and considered him a “really good” teacher.

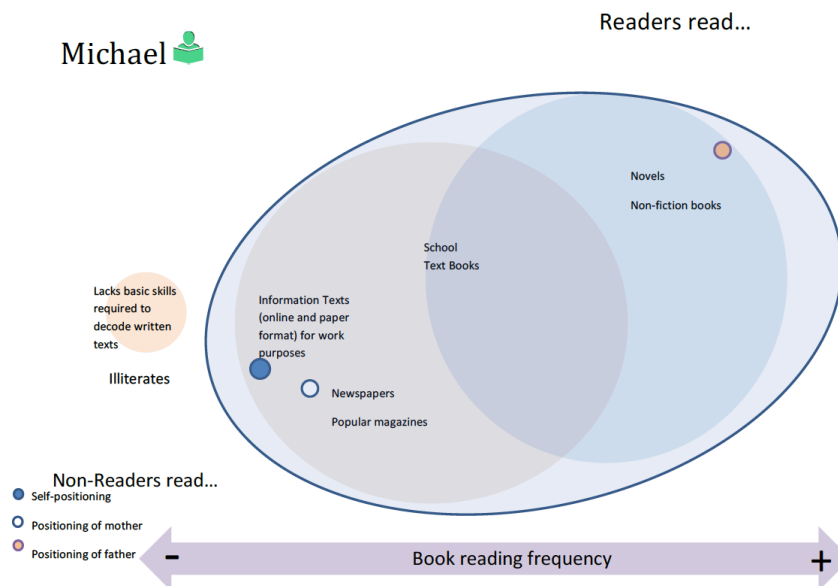
She was “thankful” that she chose Literature over English because she was introduced her to classical literature she otherwise would not have chosen to read. In a casual conversation after the interview, Theresa mentioned that she had enjoyed reading *Growing up Asian in Australia*, a book edited by author Alice Pung and gifted to her by a family friend, which she enjoyed, partly because it was “nice and short”, with “interesting” biographies. I did not think to delve deeper into it as she made no further mention of this. There is a tacit understanding that those of us who are identifiably from minority group may not always want to discuss our otherness.

After this interview, I questioned how aspirational migrant parents, or more specifically those who are from CALD backgrounds and countries that were once European colonies, value their culture of their former colonisers if at all.



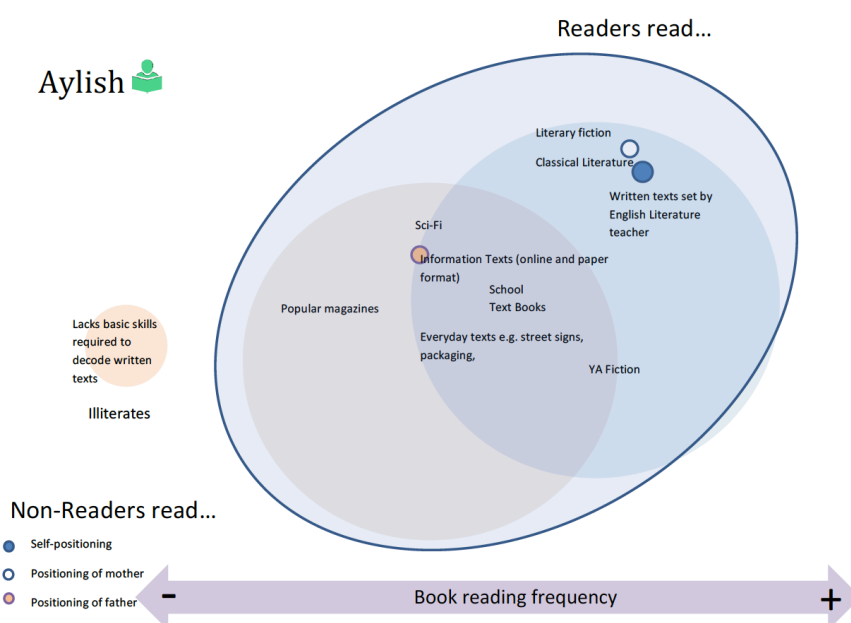
recognition and legitimisation of the value of a St. Cecilia's education differed vastly from the symbolic violence directed at those who attended "rough" schools.

Participant 6: Michael



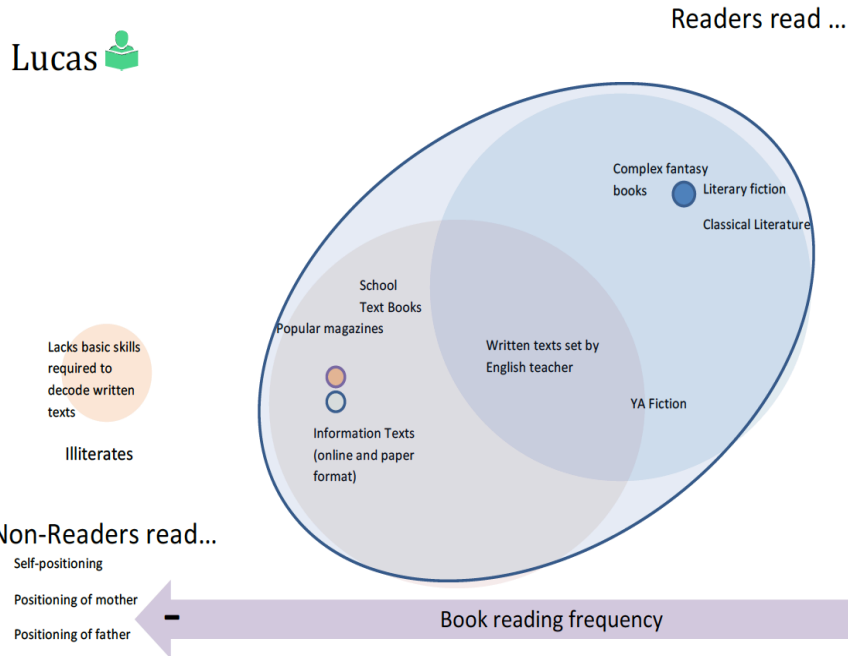
Michael wanted to be a professional footballer and dedicated many hours to training, but now that he is older, he realises that he is not prepared to commit so much of his time to the sport. Michael's mother recalled how in primary school Michael had been a very good artist, however, when I asked Michael about this, he minimalised this achievement and attributed his skills to having a very good teacher. This was like Jason's disinterestedness in visual art, something he also excelled at in primary school. Due to the scale of this study, I could not explore constructions of masculinity, gender expression, teenage boys and cultural practices.

Participant 8: Aylish



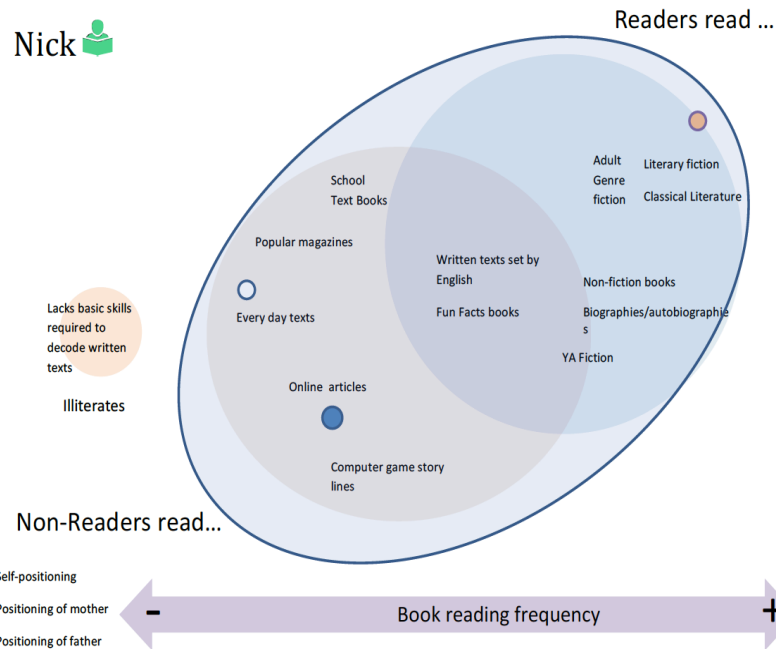
Robertson College, Aylish’s school, was rebranded a “college” after it was granted IPS status. The homes surrounding the school campus belie the wider area's high socioeconomic status, however, on closer inspection, one would notice that many of the rundown buildings are heritage-listed. Wellington Heights was once a working-class suburb and the school used to have a reputation for being a “rough” school. However, by the time of my interview with Aylish, its ICSEA value of the college mirrored that of a high-fee paying private school. I was surprised that Aylish was so nonplussed about the long journey to school, given that she often had to travel to and from Wellington Heights not only during but also outside school hours for her specialist arts programs. After conducting this interview, I had the opportunity to attend a performance of a Shakespearean play at her school and it surpassed my expectations of a secondary school production.

Participant 9: Lucas



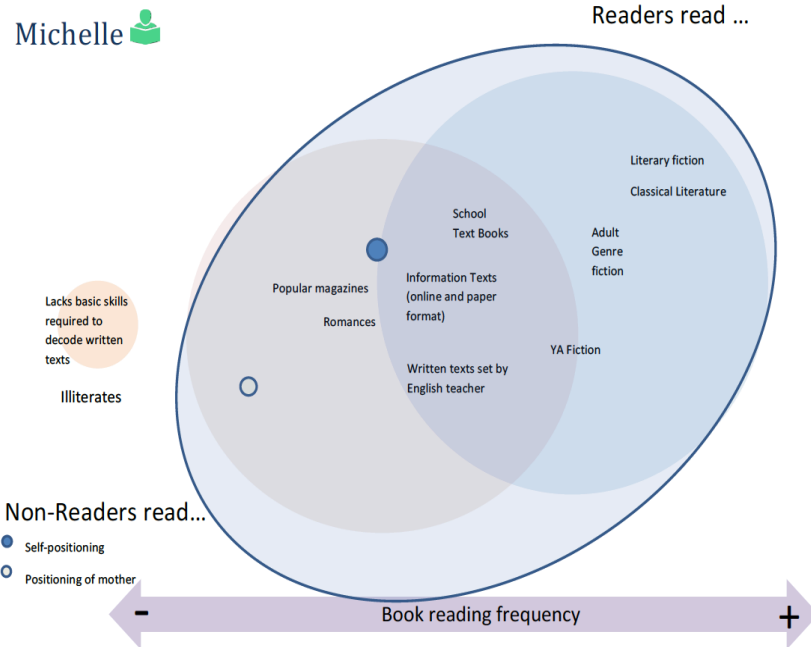
When Lucas' mother spoke about the financial strain of renting in Venice, I wondered why Lucas' parents had chosen to there *and* send their children to high-fee paying Catholic schools. It was possible that this seemed natural to his mother, who had also grown up and attended private school in the area. From my casual conversation with his mother, it seemed as if both she and her husband felt that living in Venice was a worthwhile investment given its proximity to Lucas' school.

Participant 10: Nick



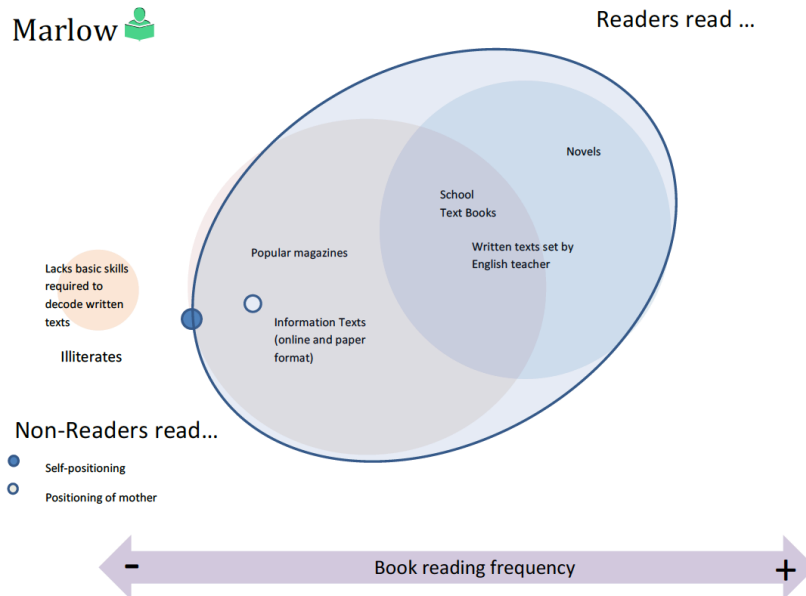
Nick lives in a relatively newer part of Waverly where many older homes have been knocked down for subdivision and redevelopment. The sight of empty quarter-acre blocks awaiting redevelopment is not unusual in Perth's older suburbs. I spoke with Nick's mother at length as we awaited his return home from school. I disclosed that I had briefly attended Waverly and she was curious about my experiences at the school. Nick named Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen as his favourite singers which I found surprising given his age. Nick is bilingual and when he was in primary school spent his weekends in learning the European language that his father speaks at a community centre.

Participant 11: Michelle



The recent mining boom saw an increase in house prices in Birchtown and the opening of “boutique” estate developments and the building of several fee-paying independent schools. I knew little about Birchtown College at the time of my interview, but had the opportunity to teach Birchtown College students in the alternative pathway that Michelle mentioned. Although both ATAR and non-ATAR students began the course, by the end, only a small cohort of ATAR students from Birchtown remained. Michelle’s first school, St. Anne College, is an elite single-sex school with one of the highest ICSEA values in the country, and her second school William College ICSEA value is close to that of St. Isidore College.

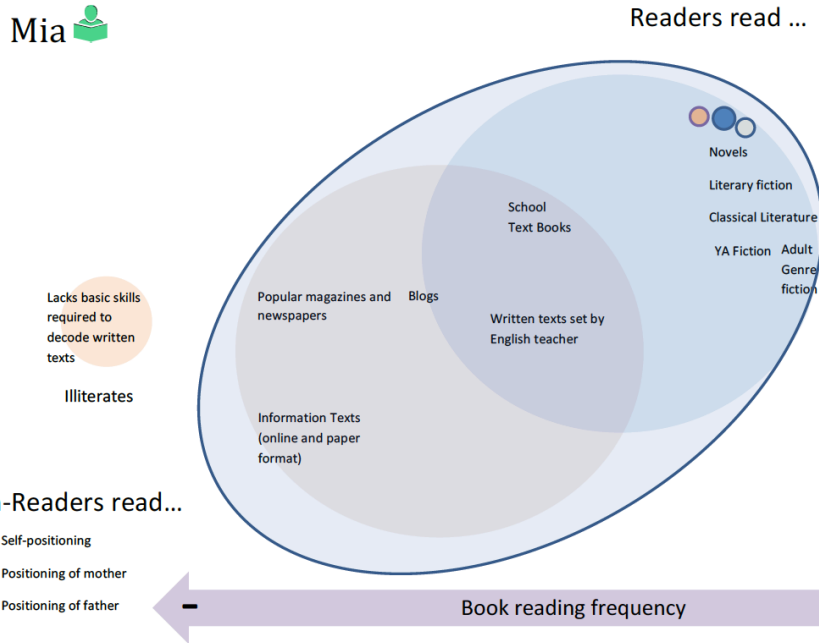
Participant 12: Marlow



When I calculated all the hours Marlow spent at work and considered the number of late shifts he worked, I was impressed by the fact he made the effort to attend school. I ascertained that it was highly likely that he contributed to household expenses. Throughout this interview, I steered conversations to topics he was comfortable with and his responses indicated that he had very negative school experiences. It is possible that he had struggled with reading early on in his education, and his responses indicated that he at times felt like a fish out of water at that Birchwood.

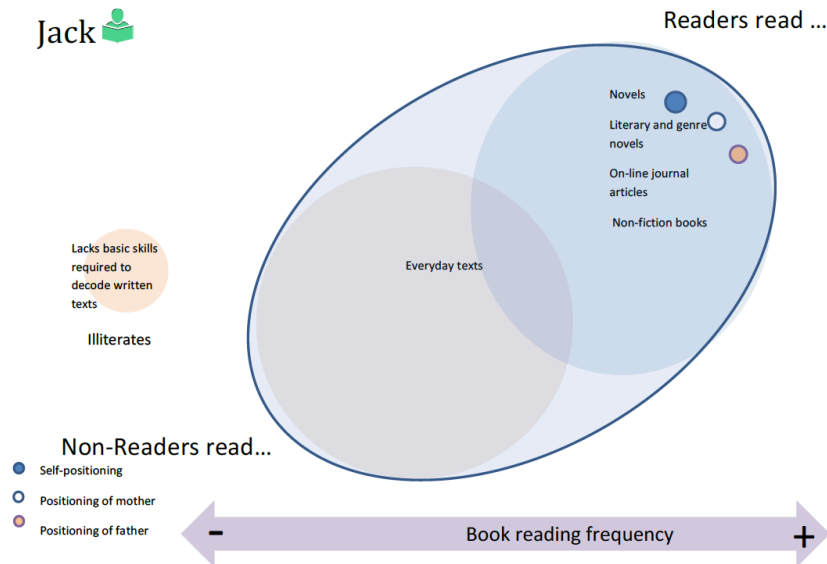
I had the opportunity to tutor a Year 10 student not long after I conducted my interview with Marlow and Michelle and this experience reaped further insights into community perceptions of Birchtown College. The mother of the student wanted her son to study ATAR English but the private school he attended felt that he would cope with the higher level class. I suggested that she could perhaps approach other schools in their area to see if they would allow him into ATAR English. She made it clear to me that there was no other option because their local school was Birchwood College. One of the work samples that the student showed me at our initial meeting was a fictional feature article he had written about gang violence on Birchtown College campus. He confessed that he based his article on what others had said about Birchtown College and had not actually interacted with anyone from the school.

Participant 13: Mia



Mia is the creator of a fashion blog that she regularly updates. She is the only participant who has read the Bible. Mia's responses did not indicate whether her family subscribed to all the fundamental beliefs espoused by her church, but it was evident that they were active in their religious community. Hillingdon Christian College is run by a church with similar beliefs to Mia's church. I speculated whether one of the reasons Mia's school only offers English is because Literature includes critical theory which requires students challenge some beliefs advanced by fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible. I also pondered whether familiarity with the New and Old Testament advantaged English students in the contemporary context.

Participant 14: Jack



I was a student at Atlantic and had worked there at the beginning of my teaching career. I disclosed my past and present association with Atlantic at the beginning of my interview with Jack. This proved to be a successful conversation starter and both found it amusing that we had the same memorable science teacher.

When I was a student at Atlantic, it was a local-intake school that was held in high esteem because of its location, illustrious history, heritage buildings, and GATE program. Before its recent transformation into an elite state school, it housed English language programs for new migrants and refugees. I noticed that in Atlantic's promotional material, there is a partial erasure of the years where the school cohort was more diverse and did not have an elite academic program.