

NARRATIVE JOURNEYS: PARALLEL STORIES OF RESEARCHER AND  
PARTICIPANTS EXPLORING READING IDENTITY THROUGH MEMORY,  
EXPERIENCE AND OWNERSHIP

By

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
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**Of**

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**Karen Boyd @ 2007**

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### **Abstract**

Reading is complex. Most people in our society begin a reading journey. The documentation of this journey is their reading story. This study documents the reading stories of three participants and the researcher. Through these stories, the events and experiences of readers' journeys begin to shed light on how they have arrived at their current place as adult readers. The issue of reader as part of a person's identity rather than an activity that a person is involved in is explored through the perspective of emotional memory and ownership. Implications for parents and educators who guide people on their reading journey are identified. This study also explores the need for researchers to document their own stories.

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Dedication

To my family, the most important characters in my story

And

To Dane, reader extraordinaire

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## Introduction

Sometimes when you do something for the wrong reasons, it ends badly: the marriage on the rebound, the baby too early, the decision made in anger. But sometimes the end defies the beginning: the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the couple who should never have made it, the child who is the light of the family, and the risk that was taken because of the anger. When success comes from a difficult beginning, there is less chance of a cry of “I told you so”; the victory is quieter, subtler, and sweeter. This is because a success that began for the wrong reasons requires humility, reflection, and many right decisions to overcome the first wrong.

I started this research to prove others wrong and maybe more importantly to prove myself right. I wanted to destroy something. This journey from destruction to creation has been humbling, tiring, frustrating.

It began with a conversation about reading with a seven year old. It was my common practice as an administrator in a large inner city school to do daily rounds into each classroom. During this time I tried to take time to speak to children about the work that they were doing. On one occasion, I sat with a student who was choosing books for home reading. I asked, “What kind of books do you like to read?” The answer I anticipated was a version of the answer I had heard many times. I expected to hear about favourite authors, favourite genres, or even my least preferred answer, favourite series. The answer was not as I predicted, Van Allsburg, or mysteries, or Junie B. Jones. The answer given was, “I like to read “J” books”. The “J” referred to the level of the books in the

classroom used for direct reading instruction or guided reading. As is often the case in education, a pendulum has begun to swing in terms of reading in the classroom. Guided reading and leveled books have become commonplace in classrooms.

Over the last few years I have heard teachers talk more and more about reading instruction. I think this focus is based on research about how students learn to read and the need for direct instruction of skills. The danger is in the assumption that skilled readers will read. Even in upper elementary classrooms, teachers were encouraged to present their libraries in guided reading levels. Children were identified by their level and read only at their level until it was identified that they could move up. While these levels may work well for instruction for some students, they do not represent a structure that works for reading for pleasure. Avid readers may read both below and above their reading level, just as athletes may cross train or vary workouts. What I saw was students who were spending more and more time learning the skills of reading, but rarely reading. And certainly not reading with the quality or variety that I had seen in the past. Teachers told me that silent reading time was replaced by more structured reading time because there just wasn't time in the day to let students "just read". In previous drafts of this work I wrote that these observations made me "consider, and worry that we were creating readers who do not read." Now for the truth. I was not "considering" or "worrying." I was angry. I was angry with my colleagues who, it seemed to me, were looking for a sterile way to teach reading.



Reading is messy, and complex. I was angry at a system that believed that reading could be reduced to an input/output model. I'd show them!

My original idea for research was to "prove" that guided reading was not helping to create lifelong readers. My plan was to survey hundreds of people and find out how they were taught to read. Then I would tally up the results and find that those people who had had a rich literature based classroom experience would be adult readers and those who had been taught in a sterile systematic way would not be readers. I would show this research to teachers and they would change what they were doing. This from the person who felt that guided reading was simplistic!

The first discouraging discovery when I started my Masters was to find out how little I knew. I came back to the Faculty of Education, after a twenty-year absence, with my own bias intact. The Faculty was about theory and was disconnected from the field. We in the field knew how things were done and did them right. I'm sure as a reader, you are recognizing the irony in my statements. I came back to prove my colleagues wrong, but when I got there I pretended that they were all doing the right thing. One of the first courses that I took was the Study of Teaching. I wrote an amazingly naïve paper on the way to fix the Teacher Education Process. In retrospect, it is very similar to a paper my six year old wrote on how to build a rocket. However, in the same course I wrote a professional autobiography that remains one of the most personally powerful pieces that I have written. Without having it named for me, this was my first introduction to narrative inquiry. Throughout the last three years of study I have

learned some lessons. I need to listen better and judge less. My research is not new. I remember the first steps that my children took. The sense of accomplishment was so great that you would have thought they were the first ones in the world to ever walk. That feeling was allowed. I so appreciate that no one said to me as I talked through my study, that it had all been done before. Surprise! Someone else had already had those questions. When I first began to read the research that was out there, I was mortified. Here I thought I had an original idea, and others were already writing and thinking about it. And then I was helped to realize that I needed to learn for myself, not to teach someone else a lesson. My research may not change the world, but it may change something that one day might change the world. It will be a small part that contributes to a large whole. I needed to trust my own beliefs. When I started this process I believed with all my heart that reading was important and we, as a school system, should be promoting the love of reading. This belief has constantly been questioned. During one conversation, a professor that I greatly respect told me a story about folk dancing. He told me that he had learned to folk dance in school but never folk danced as an adult. Did that make a difference in his life? He thought not. Some people learn to dance and continue to dance, others will learn to read and continue to read. Is it necessary for everyone to become readers? These questions and this analogy shook my beliefs and I had to consider whether I was trying to impose my own interests and passions on everyone or whether this was an actual issue for the education system. I don't know if I have the answer to that question yet. I believe that we need to do everything we can to give people the

opportunity to become lifelong readers. Maybe not everyone needs to be a reader, but those who are, are enriched by the experience. Maybe the school system can't do all of that, but at the very least, we need to do our best not to discourage or limit this opportunity.

This is how I came to this research. These are my initial baby steps on this journey. Even after a short period of time I had learned to question. Instead of saying my thesis will prove that reading is important. I asked, "Is reading important?" "Why is it important?" "Are there ways that we can encourage a lifetime reading habit?"

These initial questions framed the beginning of my research.

### **Initial Literature Review.**

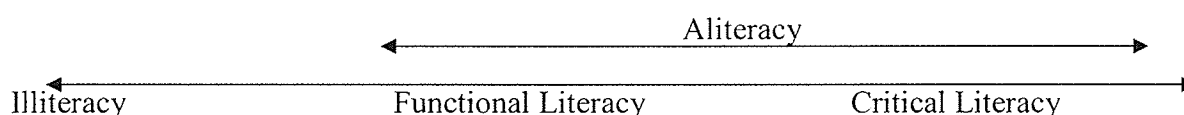
Naming is powerful. When I came back to begin my graduate studies, I often said that I was concerned that we were creating people who could read, but wouldn't. In a course called Research in Language for Learning, I began to learn how to do an ERIC search and started to search for this idea, and came across the term: Aliterate. My idea was named. At once I felt both relieved and embarrassed. Relieved that others had a similar worry. Embarrassed that I hadn't known that before. I prided myself on being a fairly well read educator. I thought that I had been keeping up with the latest ideas and theories. Having this idea named for me was a little like being Alice and going through the looking glass and finding another world that had existed all this time. This naming became so important to me that I had difficulty letting it go for a long time. I thought the word "aliteracy" would give me the answers that I was looking for. I read and researched for a long time about why people were not reading, why they didn't read. My initial literature review focused on the facts about who was reading and how much they were reading

The review focused on research that considered the factors that may create readers, the impact of aliteracy on both the individuals and society, and the benefits of literacy.

#### *Benefits of Literacy*

One of the questions that guided my thinking in this study is "Is it really important for society to have adults who read?" Literacy is defined by The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998) as "the ability to read and write"(p. 836). The

definition of literacy is constantly being expanded and used in a variety of contexts. Terms such as “media literacy”(Andersen, 1992), family literacy (Auerbach, 1989), and “information literacy”(Breivik, 1994) extend the use of literacy from a focus on basic reading and writing to a focus on meaning making and purpose from a variety of information sources. In order to define the reading that this study refers to I considered the literacy continuum used by Goodwin (1996).



Those who cannot read fall on the far left of the continuum. In the middle are those who have the skills to use literacy to function. They may read e-mails, labels, advertisements, travel brochures, or work related material. On the far right of the continuum are those who have, what Goodwin defines as, critical literacy. They read to inform or to make meaning from text, either fiction or non-fiction. At any point along this continuum, there are those who do not use the skills that they have. They are referred to as alliterates, those who can read, but don't. This study focuses on those adults who go on to choose to use their literacy skills for more than just survival. They continue to read fiction or non-fiction to inform or entertain them. These are the adults who continue on their reading journey.

The research (Krashen, 2004; Gersten, 1996) continues to support this type of reading as a crucial part of literacy and important to both the individual and society.

Several studies conclude that reading and literacy skills affect many areas of a person's life. The Report of the Commission on Reading in the United States (1985) says, "Reading is a cornerstone for success, not just in school, but throughout life". Literacy skills also have an impact on the earning potential of adults. The ALL (2003) survey reports that "those who score at higher levels on the document literacy scale had a higher likelihood of re-entering employment sooner".

The benefits of reading are cyclical. Readers not only have more opportunities for success in their life, but they become better readers while they read, giving them further opportunities (Krashen, 2004). In Canada, reading habits depend on factors such as gender, level of education, and household income. According to the Book Publishing Industry Activity Report (2001), females read more books compared to males, and eighty-six percent of those holding doctorate or master's degrees reported reading books, compared to only fifty-four percent of those with an elementary or secondary school education. The most active book readers were those with annual household incomes between \$30 000 and \$40 000.

Gersten (1996) refers to "ludic" readers, or people who read for pleasure. These readers are skilled, derive pleasure from reading, and the reading experience changes them both physiologically and cognitively. These changes positively reinforce reading behaviour, which then affects skills.

Krashen (2004) makes a case for what he calls FVR, or free voluntary reading. He defines FVR as "the kind of reading highly literate people do all the

time” (p. x). The research on the use of FVR in the school system suggests that the type of reading that “highly literate people do” results in gains in reading achievement, improved writing style, developed vocabulary, increased spelling scores, and better grammatical development. The evidence also supports reading as a positive, pleasurable activity. It finds that “reading influences cognitive development” (p. 35). People who read more also do better on cultural literacy tests. They have a better understanding of the content that is assumed to be known in our culture.

Readers become better readers (Krashen, 2004). Better readers become more successful individuals in terms of education and income potential (Book Publishing Industry Report, 2001). As a whole, these successful individuals have a positive impact on society: “Literacy ... knits people together, giving them a common culture ... and provides people with the intellectual tools used to question, challenge, understand, disagree, and arrive at consensus” (Baroody, 1984).

This research indicated to me that reading is more than an activity. To return to the folk dancing analogy, it does matter if you don’t continue to read after you learn how. If I were to make a better comparison, reading would be like eating. It is something that everyone has to do to survive, but some do it better than others. Those who make healthy and varied choices in the food they eat, reap many other benefits in their life and find that eating can be a social, pleasurable activity. Similarly, those who choose to become critical readers, not

just functional readers, reap similar benefits. They become more active citizens; they develop cognitively, and have more opportunities for success in their lives.

### *Impact of Aliteracy*

The research supports the idea that reading has benefits for both individuals and society. Yet, in Canada, reading appears to be on the decline. The Book Publishing Industry Activity Report for 2000-2001 reports a 30-minute decline per day of the time that Canadians spend reading. Canadians spend an average of 6% of their free time reading compared to 36% watching TV. This decline in people's choice to read does not, however, correspond to people's ability to read. The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2003) reports that, in fact, the average literacy score for Canadians remained virtually unchanged between 1994 and 2003. The gap between the lowest rates of literacy and the highest declined, and 58% of Canadian adults were in the top three literacy levels of the scale. The conclusion that can be made is that the school system is teaching people to read. What is not being developed is the habit of reading. Mikulecky (1978) defines this as aliteracy, a "lack of the reading habit; especially, such a lack in capable readers who choose not to read". Are there negative impacts of aliteracy to both individuals and society?

Hoopes (1984) considers the impact of aliteracy on the decision making abilities of the population: "an intelligent- certainly a wide- public participation in the political decision making process is jeopardized by a decline of reading among what are thought to be our educated classes" (p. 36). Baroody (1984) states that "aliteracy leads inexorably to a two-tiered society: the knowledgeable



elite and the masses. It makes a common culture illusory or impossible; it erodes the basis for effective decision making and participation in the democratic process". The report *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literacy Reading in America* (2004) found that literary reading, defined as the reading of novels, short stories, plays or poetry during leisure time, strongly correlates to other civic activities. It found that "literary readers are more likely than non-literary readers to perform volunteer and charity work, visit art museums, attend performing arts events and attend sporting events" (p. xii).

As a society, we need to be concerned that critical reading is on the decline. Just as we are concerned with obesity levels in children because of the long-term effects on society as a whole, the long term effects of an illiterate population needs to be addressed before these children reach adulthood.

#### *Factors That May Help to Develop the Reading Habit*

Literacy is an important part of a well-functioning society and illiteracy habits can erode parts of that society. The creation of readers, therefore, needs to be supported and encouraged. Where is the habit of reading formed? Is it in the schools? At home? Are some people just born readers?

There is considerable research that looks at developing the affective domain of reading (Cramer & Castle, 1994). These studies consider how teachers and parents can make reading pleasurable for children and young adults. Few studies make the connection between these early supportive reading environments and lifelong reading habits. The assumption could be made that those who read as children will read as adults, but this would be only an assumption.

Some studies do attempt to make this connection. The methodology used to teach students to read may have an impact. Goodwin (1996), in a study of college students who had self-identified as non-readers, found that “the reading methodology employed in these early years seemed to have contributed to negative reading attitudes. The emphasis placed on repetitious skill work and the over-analysis of literary works later in the educational process seem to have successfully killed any enthusiasm these student might have had for reading” (p. 14). Trelease (1989) refers to this as “creating school time readers rather than lifetime readers”. The more the skills were focused on, the less the student liked to read.

Beers (1998) found the cycle works the other way as well. The less students liked to read, the more they viewed reading as a skill. Gersten (1996) says “methodologies and teaching styles that ignore or are not aware of individual learner’s prior knowledge doom the students to adult lives without active literacy” (p. 8). Research seems to indicate that both the mechanics of reading and the affective domain need to be developed.

Beyond specific methodologies that teach students to read, teacher attitudes and expectations may play a role in students’ continued development as readers. Teachers who identify students as non-readers “rarely recommended new books or asked them what they had been reading. Instead she paired them with nonreaders for class projects and offered them minimal class time for free reading” (Beers, 1996 p. 2). These teacher expectations affect how students view themselves as readers. Lowered expectations further distance dormant readers

from future success as readers. Gersten (1996) states that a “large part of a reader’s self concept is based on future consideration” (p.13). If people do not see a need for reading, either in the present or the future, their reading skills will not develop, and non-reading will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hoopes (1984) makes a similar conclusion about self-fulfilling prophecies. He states that there is an “inextricable connection between a failure to read and an inability to write and this deterioration produces a semi-literacy. These ‘semi literates’ read very little for their own enjoyment, spend more time watching TV, and prefer movies to books” (p. 37).

The influence of the home can have a similar cyclical effect on reading habits. Beers (1996) found that “students who dislike reading become parents who dislike reading. Consequently they spend little time reading to, with, or in front of their own children. This in turn creates a new generation of students who often, taking their cues from home, see little use for reading beyond completing their school work” (p. 2).

A transition from home to school needs to be smooth and connected. Gersten (1996) notes, “when schools allow children to develop school language slowly so they do not lose their natural language beginnings, most children can become successful, lifelong readers” (p. 7). Belzer (2002) studied the disconnect between school literacy and other types of literacies that adults may use in their everyday life. She suggests “school teaches literacy in isolation from important social contexts of learners” (p. 105). The perception of reading that is developed

in school needs to be connected to the reading that is seen outside of school to avoid alienating learners from “the act of reading” (p. 105).

Teachers’ attitudes and “too much television, too little parental modeling, too much emphasis on a skills approach to reading” (Beers, 1998) can impact the creation of lifelong readers. The home and school both have a role to play in lifelong reading habits.

### *Summary of the research*

The research contends that readers who “voluntarily choose to read for their own pleasure or information” (Cramer & Castle, 1994, p.4) benefit more than purely functional readers. These active readers are more active participants in society and their skills continue to develop and further improve their literacy skills. Aliterates’ skills deteriorate, making them less likely to enjoy reading and therefore less likely to read or to enjoy the benefits of reading.

There was evidence that the schools can have an impact on the attitudes that students develop towards reading. Specific methodologies, teacher attitudes and expectations influence how students view reading. The research did not clearly connect the school impact to future reading habits only to reading habits while in school. More research is needed to consider the possibilities of connections between this complexity and lifelong reading habits.

## **Evolving Questions**

This research began to answer some of my initial research questions. I felt that my own belief that reading was important both to individuals and society had been validated. I was overwhelmed by the complexity of reading. There seemed to be evidence that factors in the home and in school influenced the development of lifelong readers, but this complexity did not lend itself to a quantitative study or a simplification of these factors. The clear linear “proof” that I had initially set out to find was going to elude me. I disliked the simplistic approach that was being taken towards reading in schools, yet I found myself grieving that I would not be able to discount it as easily as I first thought. I was at a loss as to where to go next. How could I represent the complexity? I was introduced to the idea of narrative inquiry as a research methodology. This exposure sent me into yet another disequilibrium. Narrative inquiry looked very different from what I had considered “research”. I thought that I would need to be looking for “proof” and that my research would clearly find a right and a wrong answer. I also believed that I needed to have a well-developed hypothesis and be somewhat of an expert before embarking on my study. My reading on narrative inquiry made me consider that I needed to leave things open, that my research should inform, not necessarily prove something to others. I would use narrative inquiry to learn and then I could share that learning with others and contribute to a larger picture. Words such as share, inform, learn, and big picture fit much better with my own beliefs about education than words like prove, hypothesis, right and wrong, and therefore narrative inquiry should be a better fit with my educational research.

Although I was immediately drawn to it, I struggled to meld my previous perceptions with my new learning. I've always learned through story. Could I research through story? To begin, I documented my own reading story to see what it could teach me.

## My Reading Story

Reading is important in my life and I want it to be important in the lives of my children. I have always been a reader. I read early, at seventeen months if you listen to my mother. The story of me “reading” *The Night Before Christmas* while turning the pages is part of our family history. The fact that this story was retold throughout my life illustrates the importance that reading had in my family. We had a book in our house called *365 Bedtime Stories to Read Aloud*. I remember thinking that this was a ridiculous title because reading happened in the morning. My dad would bring my mum a cup of tea in bed and she would read me the story of the day. My brother and sister were several years older than I, so this routine was repeated for many years. On April 1st, the story was about two brothers who put salt in the sugar bowl and tricked their father. Every year after hearing this story, I would put salt in the sugar bowl and trick my father, who surprisingly, fell for it year after year. On road trips, it was my older sister who read aloud to me. Going to Toronto reminds me of *The Borrowers* by Norton. A trip to Riding Mountain lets me relive *Charlotte's Web*, *What Katy Did*, and *What Katy Did Next*.

When I went to school, I learned to read quickly and easily. It was a relief to finally read the cereal box at breakfast. I remember being able to decipher the word photography on a building on Portage Avenue. Passing that building gives me that same sense of accomplishment. I started reading the Nancy Drew books in grade two. My prized possession was a yellow bound copy of the first three in the series, in one book! I loved to read out loud in class but was incredibly

frustrated listening to my classmates who faltered or read too slowly. The SRA kits were a great game for me. I finished all the cards as quickly as possible and couldn't understand why some children were still on the orange level.

In junior high, the questionable books in the library were kept behind the counter and you had to have a permission note from your parents to access them. My mother sent a note that said that I was allowed to read anything I wanted and no books were off limits to me. This made me somewhat of a hero in my circle of friends, because, of course, as soon as I got hold of *Forever*, or *The Chocolate War*, or *The Cheese Stands Alone*, I read it as quickly as possible and passed it on to others before it had to be back at the library.

Then reading became work. The required reading books in high school were torturous. I struggled through *Steppenwolf*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and Shakespeare's plays. My ability to read quickly and fluently worked well for popular fiction but did not prepare me to actually think about what I was reading, or make other meanings from it. I would finish a book and listen in confusion to class discussion because I hadn't made connections or understood the symbolism within the stories. My comprehension was fine. I could retell the story and recall the details; I just didn't understand that the book held more than that. I had to reteach myself to read. I lost my confidence in myself as a reader and read less for pleasure. I redeemed myself in the speed-reading block where words and sentences were flashed on the screen in increasing speeds. Here I still reigned supreme.



By the time I entered university, I knew how to play the game. At least, it felt like a game to me. I knew the rules. I could dissect a book with the best of them. My essays clearly demonstrated my understanding of the books and made me a successful student. I didn't like it. I didn't see value in it at the time. The purpose was not articulated to me. I was becoming an academic reader, but with no metacognition that it was happening. I was still reading very little for pleasure, reading was work. My mother and my sister and I had always shared books. We read all of the Danielle Steele, Catherine Cookson, and Janet Dailey that we could get our hands on. Suddenly, I couldn't get through these anymore and I didn't know what to replace them with. I read a lot of magazines (which continue to be my addiction) but very little else. Books "with meaning" were for school and books with little meaning held no pleasure for me. I didn't know what I was supposed to read. One summer, I was pacing the house, looking for something to read. I picked up *Stone Angel*, which had been on a reading list for a Canadian Literature course but because it was a choice assignment I hadn't read it. In desperation I started reading it. And loved it. I read Atwood, Ondaatje, Tolkien and Lewis. Reading wasn't about school reading and home reading, it was about quality. This was an amazing revelation to me. I liked to read good books, books that made me think. Reading was not just receiving a story, but making meaning.

I was a reader again. And I continue to be a reader. Every room in my home has reading material in it. I am married to a reader and my children love stories. With four young children I am often asked how I find time to read. I find

time the same way that I find time to eat, sleep, and breathe. It is important to me. It is a necessity.

I often wonder how I could do my job if I wasn't a reader. I am a teacher of reading. The most defining moments of my life as a teacher have a book at the centre. One Christmas, I was planning to read *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg to the class. I went to pick it up in the library and was disgusted by the condition of the book. The binding was breaking and the pages were loose. I mentioned to the librarian that it was time to renew this title. When we were almost finished reading the book, I turned the page to one of the most damaged. The binding cracked and binding glue showered out of the pages. One student said with awe, "Mrs. Boyd, the book is snowing!" It was one of those magical teaching moments. These are the moments that I recall when I am writing this story. I know that I taught students to read. At the time, I did what teachers of reading did. I taught word attack skills and strategies. I provided individualized instruction to certain students and diagnosed and responded to problems with reading. But what was important to me was the literature. We read families of stories, made connections, responded, discussed. I wanted them to love books, but I don't think I really considered whether they would become lifelong readers and I don't know if they did. Could I have known? Were there indications? Were these students going through a process similar to the one I had gone through? Were they learning to be readers but could they continue on that journey if they didn't know why? Could I have made this learning more transparent? Did my students know why reading is important?

This is my reading story. Over the past three years I have thought about it, talked about it, analyzed it, and written about it. McCarthy (2001) says that life story methods are based on the belief that the self is socially constructed and that personal stories are the means through which individuals create their identities. My own interpretation of my reading story informs me that “reader” is part of my identity and that the concept of myself as “reader” is constantly evolving. Before recording my reading story, I would have said that I had always been a reader but the story says otherwise. Reading has had different meanings for me over my life, and my reading has had many influences. My family encouraged the reading habit because they were readers. Reading was never assigned in my home. My natural ability to read easily gave me many more options to define myself as a reader. The school had both positive and negative influences on my reading habits. The more that was imposed on me, the less I took ownership for my own reading. I learned from this story.

It is common practice for children to be told stories and to be read to. Parents are encouraged to expose children to nursery rhymes, songs, folk tales, and traditional and contemporary stories. Early Years classrooms are filled with books that children have the opportunity to read themselves or have read to them. Middle Years and high school courses come complete with reading lists. Stories are read, analyzed and discussed. In the school system we are all readers. That is what we do. Because of this we all have a reading story. Not everyone has the opportunity to tell his or her reading story. If these stories were told, if these stories were analyzed, if the path of the journey were documented through story

would it help us to understand how people end up at different points in their reading? Does my reading story shed light on why this research is so important to me? When I consider my reading story in partnership with the reading stories of the participants in my study, I learn not only what makes me unique and helps me to construct my identity, but I also learn what contributes to my identity as part of a community of readers. What follows are stories to understand stories; this seemed to be a good fit.

## **Narrative Inquiry**

### *Conceptual Framework*

As an Early Years teacher I relied heavily on anecdotal records to collect data that informed me about students' learning. These notes recorded observable behaviours, snippets of conversations, and questions that emerged as I watched students engage in the process of learning. When it came time to write reports I had pages of anecdotal notes, work samples, and a mark book. The work samples and the mark book told me where the student was, the anecdotal notes told me why they were there and how they got to that point. This information was rich in children's stories. These stories guided my practice. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 31) state, "student achievement on a test does not in and of itself tell the tester or the teacher much of anything until the narrative of the student's learning history is brought to bear on the performance."

As a faculty advisor, I document stories of my teacher candidates. When I visit a room I observe and document conversations, interactions, and environments. Through these stories, teacher candidates are informed of their practice. The learning is qualitative and cannot be represented solely by a quantitative pass or fail.

I come to the process of narrative inquiry through experience. My research into this methodology has named and framed a process that I have used in many areas of my life. Naested, Potvin, and Waldron (2004) define narrative inquiry as "reading and inquiring into a story for what insight it provides" (p. 5). Narrative inquiry, with its development of plot and subplot, is the method that

will allow me to inquire into the stories of readers. This research seeks to find the common plot threads that are woven into readers' stories. In a similar study, Nadine Rosenthal (1995) collected seventy-seven personal responses to the questions "What is your reading history, and how does your reading affect the rest of your life?" Through the gathering of these stories Rosenthal was able to categorize readers into "literature readers, frustrated readers, readers influenced by childhood experiences, voracious readers, habitual readers, information readers, those learning to read as adults, those aware of their reading process". Each story was unique because each participant was different. The collection of those unique stories provided insight into the idea of reading and the complexity of the reading journey. The shared experiences, while different in detail, brought the participant to similar ends.

The anecdotal records that I collected about students informed my practice by giving me information to teach that student but also to teach students who had similar storylines. As Northrup Frye (1964) wrote, "All themes and characters and stories that you encounter in literature belong to one big interlocking family... You keep associating your literary experiences together: you're always being reminded of some other story you read or movie you saw or character that impressed you". Clandinin and Connelly (1990) say that all people lead "storied lives and tell stories of those lives". Narrative researchers then "describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience". These stories inform by allowing the reader to make associations between the stories.

Narrative inquiry is “increasingly used in studies of educational experience” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990). Education is the study of relationships between people. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) state that in “understanding ourselves and our students educationally, we need an understanding of people with a narrative of life experiences. Life’s narratives are the context for making meaning of school situations” (p. 3). Through this study I have sought to gather school and home reading experiences from a retrospective stance. Through these experiences the stories or relationships between teacher and student, student and readings, student and family were told. These stories were considered for the insight they provide on adult reading habits.

## **The Study**

The process of writing my own reading story and reading about narrative inquiry gave me the confidence to use this method for my own research. A narrative inquiry could help me to understand how reading is important to others, how they became readers or non-readers, and what influences they had in their reading life.

### *Participants*

The research has indicated that family culture plays an important part in the development of readers (Dix, 1976, Goodwin, 1996, Lowe, 2001). In order to explore that in this research, the participants for this study were members of the same family. Recruitment of these participants was through a book club. The use of members of the book club ensured that one member of the study did some reading for pleasure. Participants of the book club were presented with the information on the study and asked to consider if they had two other members of their family available for the study. Several families expressed an interest. One volunteer family was a mother and two children. Another was three siblings who had grown up in different decades and with different rural and urban experiences. The third family was three generational: a grandmother, her daughter, and grandson. The daughter and grandson were aunt and nephew. Another woman suggested that I interview her and her two friends. One had grown up in Canada, one in Australia, and one in Britain. They were interested in telling their stories to compare and contrast their experiences. I had initially presented the information asking for multiple generations. I was surprised and intrigued by



both the number and the variety of families that came forward. My concern that no one would volunteer turned into a bounty of riches. This alone suggested to me that people were interested in telling their reading stories.

I chose to interview the three generational family. This family best fit my initial image of this study. They provided the longest time frame to study and also gave me a gender mix. They were immediately available and all were anxious to participate.

#### *Time Frame*

Each participant was involved in two individual one-hour interview sessions and one one-hour family interview session. The sessions for the grandmother and her daughter took place simultaneously as this was most convenient and comfortable for the grandmother. The initial interviews took place in June and July of 2007 and the group discussion took place in November of 2007.

#### *Data Generation Process and Data Analysis*

The development of these stories began with an unstructured interview process designed to initiate discussion and have the participants recall important events in their reading lives. The questions were open-ended, dealing with the relationships between teacher and student, student and reading, student and family. The interviews were prompted by open-ended questions to encourage storytelling. Some of the prompts were:

What are your earliest memories of reading or being read to?

What do you remember about learning to read?

What do you remember about reading in school?

Tell me about the reading you do now.

The interviews evolved from initial questioning to conversation. As a researcher, I responded to the comments made by the participants in order to further develop stories.

Following this initial interview, the conversation was transcribed for analysis. The transcribed interviews were open coded based on themes that emerged to me from the data. Riessman (1993) suggests that after this initial rough transcription the researcher should “go back and retranscribe selected portions for detailed analysis” (p.56). These sections would shape the narrative. This narrative would be “linked to the evolving research question, theoretical/epistemological positions the investigator values, and, more often than not, her personal biography” (Riessman, 61). Once I had coded my interviews I began to develop the narratives by using the participants’ own words to retell the story. Once the stories were written, I re-analyzed them for themes that emerged. Some of the themes became apparent after re-reading them in narrative form. The emerging narratives were presented to the participants in a second conversation. The initial plan at this point was to have a third conversation that would be a member check for the family narrative. Once the narratives were completed, it was apparent that a fourth family narrative was not necessary. The three narratives, while they represent individual stories, when read together are the family narrative. Therefore the second conversation was used to further develop the key incidents, clarify misrepresentations, and add to the narrative. With

further transcription, analysis, and writing a developed narrative for each participant with plot and sub-plot, was defined. These final narratives were provided to the participants for feedback and to ensure that the participant's voice had remained central to the narrative.

Field texts that are developed through the interview process could be "so compelling that we want to stop and let them speak for themselves" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly speak to the importance of reconstructing these field texts as research texts. During this process the researcher revisits the texts and asks "questions of meaning and social significance" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The reframing of the participants' stories as research texts forces the researcher to deal with the tensions inherent in such writing. Will the texts provide insight into the initial research questions? If they don't, what questions do they address? Can the voice of the participants be maintained while composing text that considers "the audience and the social and personal impact of the work" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 139)? Certainly these tensions existed during the interpretation of these narratives. The role of the school, which I as the researcher had given central importance to, emerged differently than I expected. The initial coding of the transcriptions highlighted numerous possible themes: judgment, personal connection, ownership, memory, and ability. It was important for me as the researcher to maintain the integrity of each individual story. Although my own knowledge and bias would play a part in what I would see in the stories, I needed to be careful not to impose themes that were not powerful in the data. I am a reader who reads the end of stories first. My

family and friends find this highly annoying. They tell me that I am “ruining” the story. For me, knowing the end first allows me to relax and enjoy the process. It also allows me to interpret events within the plot based on where I know the story is going. This is how I approached the re-reading of the stories that had been created from the transcripts. I knew the ending. They all became readers. I love happy endings. Now my job was to look at the stories and consider the plot elements that brought them to that ending. As with all good stories, these plot elements should develop the themes. The initial research questions became the guiding purpose for re-reading the stories. I looked for indications that reading was important to my participants, why reading was important to them, and what events in their lives may have contributed to them becoming readers. In the form of narratives, many of the themes that seemed to be separated and isolated in the transcripts became parts of larger themes. The idea of personal connections was not a theme on its own. My participants made personal connections as a way to articulate their own memories and ideas of identity. Similarly, conversation that revolved around reading skills was a way that my participants defined their own identities as readers or compared and contrasted themselves to other readers.

The final larger themes of identity, ownership and memory were examined in light of current research on similar topics.

“Like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability. The language and criteria for narrative inquiry are under development” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990). Although generalizations such as “all readers” or “nine out of ten” readers cannot be made

through narrative inquiry, the stories and experiences of readers may resonate with others. This resonance can inform others. As Riessman (1993) observes, "Although a limitation, eloquent and enduring theories have been developed on the basis of close observation of a few individual (e.g., Breuner's Anna O, Garfinkel's Agnus, Piaget's children)" (p. 70). Other concerns about narrative inquiry come from forcing "the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990). There may be a tendency to seek a causal relationship between events in the narrative. The researcher must be careful to view the narratives as a whole and not link past events to present behaviours or future predictors. The researcher must listen carefully to the participant and document the narrative without a preconceived notion of causality. In order to limit this focus on causality, research questions were intentionally left open-ended, without a defined thesis position. These research questions evolved over the course of the inquiry. One of the things that changed was the focus of the questions. Rather than being concerned about what happened in schools, I became increasingly interested in what participants *remembered* about what happened in school. This was an interesting evolution because in my proposal I had identified the use of memory as a possible limitation.

I was concerned that memory would not be reliable. Although the researcher and the participant engage in the creation of the narrative together, the researcher has little if any observable behaviour to document to support the narrative. These stories are based on the participants' memories, which may be

altered by time or perception. Before beginning this process this was a considerable worry. To address this, I hoped to revisit the memories through several interview sessions. This was planned to allow the participant to reflect further on the memories that they recalled and add or change details through the retellings. This proved to be a false concern. The memories that the participants recalled were retold with clarity regardless of how long ago those memories were made. Stories were told with feelings, sights, sounds, and detailed descriptions. The ability of the participants to recall these memories with such accuracy became an important theme in the narratives and a focus for research.

## The Narratives

The three narratives that follow are the reading stories of three generations of one family, Irene, her daughter Linda, and Irene's grandson Robert.

### *Irene's Story*

*Irene is an 84-year-old widowed mother of four and grandmother of six. She has recently moved out of the family home and into a new suite. Irene has lived in Winnipeg for most of her adult life, but spent her early years in a small town in Manitoba. Linda is her daughter and Robert is her grandson. Irene also refers to her other children Dan, Shelly, and Rick, who is Robert's father.*

I'm 84 years old. I went to a country school. It was such a long time ago. We were very hard up, very poor. We didn't have any books to read in our house, and sometimes we couldn't afford to get the weekly paper, which we all liked in our family. My dad liked to read. He would read the newspaper, when we had one, right from top to bottom. It was important to my dad. My mom liked to read a little bit, maybe she would have read more if we had more things to read, I don't know. She worked really hard on the farm. She didn't have a lot of time to read and didn't have good light at night. My brother was a real reader. He had whole sets of Zane Grey and all those kinds of books. Everybody knew you could give a book and it would be welcome. When I was older, we had to buy our own books for school. My aunt would get these second-hand books. I'd have my history books read for the whole year before it was time to start school in the fall. I still remember reading a grade five history book that I got. I read about the Irish

settlers that came to Ontario. My grandfather came from there. He was Irish and I thought he was probably one of those people.

In grade three I first heard L.M Montgomery. The teacher read a chapter at noon to her 70 students. She read every day and I couldn't wait to get to school to be sure that I didn't miss a chapter. And when I changed schools, it was a long walk and the teacher there didn't read it. There were these people that owned the store. They had a daughter who was the same age as me. She had all the L.M. Montgomery books, all the ones about Anne, about Emily, about Pat of Silverbush. I can remember so wanting to read them. She was very generous about letting the rest of us read these books, because her mom and dad could afford to buy them. She would pass them on to me and I would pass them onto another one, and they would eventually get back to her. Linda, my daughter, and I have seen LM Montgomery books, not necessarily the Anne ones, but some that are just stories. One of them has many stories that LM Montgomery wrote. It's not too many years ago that I bought that or Linda bought it for me, I'm not sure which. I bought my sister the Anne books. She started with a set of maybe four. We kept on giving to my sister long after she'd grown up and had a family of her own, so that she would have a complete set. And not very long ago she said, "You know, I don't know what I'm going to do with these now." She has a daughter, Helen. Helen reads, but she said, "Helen's not really interested in having my Anne books. They're the old ones with the old binding and the old thick covers. I read all the Anne books, and I read all the Emily books. I think there were only three in the Pat of Silverbush series and I have read them. A



long time ago, but I have read them. I could still pick one up, and maybe read just a chapter or just open the book or something like that.

I like to read. I read mostly fiction. I like biographies and some mysteries, not all. Mysteries about Scotland and the police force there, and Wales, and detectives. I have all those books. It's just two now that I don't have and they're out of print. We have our name in at the mystery bookstore and if they ever come in, they're ours. I have a lot of books about skating and people who skated like Toller Cranston and Kurt Browning. I brought all of those books with me to the suite; we may not find room for them all. The other things that I didn't want to throw away were these two books that were like an encyclopedia. I said, "Don't throw that away, and don't send it to the book store!" I look up things. You can find almost anything. You can find the kings of Scotland and all the wives that Henry VIII had, all those things that sometimes come up from programs you're watching. It's just small concise stuff, so I didn't let them throw it away.

When I had children, it wasn't that I expected them to read. Books were something we could afford by then. We would buy books for them. The same as we did for our grandchildren. Shelly's oldest boy and Robert, they really liked nursery rhymes like "How I like to go up on the swing". They'd open the book at the same page all the time and read the same thing. We always got a few magazines. All my children read. Linda is the most voracious reader, and Shelly reads. When Linda was in grade two or three the teacher told me that she was reading at about a grade seven level. Dan and Rick did not read well in elementary school. Dan started reading in high school. I would buy him things

about Manitoba History and stuff like that and he would read. It was harder for him to read. He was not a good student; I don't know whether he didn't want to be. But now he reads. True stories, like about a ranch out in Alberta, he finished that not long ago, then there's a story from Clear Lake about rangers there and guys who ride the horses through the bush. That's the kind of thing he reads more of. And Rick doesn't read anything. Well, he reads the paper and the Auto Trader that sort of thing. When he was younger he would take home the Hardy Boys books. One of my grandchildren, he played all sports, he excelled at basketball and his brother, his older brother, well he didn't read as well or as much but he read sports magazines. He could talk to my brother about all the old hockey players and stuff like that. He read magazines and baseball cards. My daughter in law, Robert's mother, she used to read a lot of fiction, a real lot of fiction. But now, she doesn't read anything that isn't inspirational or something. I go to the Church every Thursday morning. I have been going since 1974. I belong to a group called TAB, take a bible or take a break. There's anywhere from 5 or 6 and sometimes 20 that show up. We're a close knit group, like I feel sometimes that I get more out of that group than I get out of church. I'm one of the ones who have been there the longest. We take turns reading from the bible. And some people, one that I'm thinking of, she has difficulty reading when it's her turn to read. She takes her turn and then she'll start over and do a sentence sometimes. My friend and I were talking about it the other day, she said to me, "Shirley's still having trouble reading isn't she?" It doesn't seem to bother her. It doesn't bother her one bit. I don't have any difficulty reading, and I pronounce

things right. It's easier to read in your head. Like you read a Russian spy novel and there's some guy with 45 syllables in his name, and you don't get stuck, you just keep going, so it flows in your head.

I worked at the hospital for years, in the gift shop. I started to take in used books. People in the hospital don't want to read anything serious, and if they forget the book, they don't want to worry about it. I used to collect them from the Church sales and from the block my friend lives in. I used to keep track of how many I sold. I would charge 1.00 to \$1.25 for them depending on what shape they were in. My sister would bring books and they were like brand new. I kept track for a couple of years and I had taken in more than 2000 books. They all sold and that was clear profit for the gift shop. One manager said, "Irene, do you know how much we made this month? We made more on books than we did on chocolate bars!" Then we got a new manager just about the time that we left, and I guess she wasn't very interested so they stopped doing the book thing.

I have *Flint and Feathers*, several copies, poems by Pauline Johnson. I also have her life story that's part of my stuff that I don't want to throw out. I like the rhythm of her poetry. I had a teacher in grade 10 and 11. He was a real medical history and Canadian history buff. He talked about seeing Pauline Johnson when she went through on the train. He'd gone from where he lived to Minnedosa just to see her on the back of the train. I have several copies of *Song of Sourdough*. My husband really loved that thing, and tried to memorize those poems. One time he was in for surgery and they were putting him out, and he started doing "The Cremation of Sam McGee". The next time he was in having

open-heart surgery, the doctor said to him, "Don't bring that poem with you this time!"

I have a book that I am reading and then I have a different book at my bedside table, but it's usually one that I've read before. I like to read books over. I just finished reading one over again. When I'm reading at night, I can just open it up in the middle and read a few paragraphs. Like the "Anne" books, I still pick up those books and read them.

### *Linda's Story*

*Linda is a fifty-five year old retired teacher. She currently runs a bed and breakfast with her husband. Linda has spent all of her life in Winnipeg. Irene is her mother and Robert is her nephew, the son of her brother Rick. Linda was the initial contact for this study. She had initially suggested that her niece would be interested, but she was unable to participate due to previous commitments. She approached her nephew, who agreed to be the third participant.*

I remember when I was in grade two or three. I got fourteen books for Christmas. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I loved to read.

I think lots about how I got to be a reader. As a teacher, I know the theory behind it, books in the home and stuff like that. Mum and dad were readers. They didn't necessarily read to me but they were always reading. I read the *Anne of Green Gables* books and all those Anne books when I was in grade two. I remember that. My teacher could tell that I was reading because I used the name of the characters in *Anne of Green Gables*. I'd use Gilbert. It would be Gilbert, it would be Anne. The Anne books must be a part of our family's culture or something. My aunt Alice, my mom's sister, she had the Anne books. My mom and my aunt had them, and so I read them. I don't know if it was just because they were the books that were available at the time. Those were the girls' books that you could get. That was fifty years ago. How many books were there for girls? It's a connection that we have, these Anne books. I went to Anne's house on Prince Edward Island and I thought, "OH!" We were on a cycling trip, my husband and I, to Prince Edward Island. He had no real desire to want to go and see L.M. Montgomery's house, but I dragged him there and said "you have to take my picture in front so I can show it to my mother."

We were pushed to get library cards. It was a huge deal. To my dad, having a library card was a privilege. He was a library user. My mom didn't go to the library but I did. I used to walk up to the junction, that's where the library was. I don't know how old I was. There was this row of orange books. One was Pocahontas and somebody. I read lots of them, lots of them. We always went to the library.

I read *Trixie Belden*, I had them all. I also read *Nancy Drew*. I have some of them upstairs in my little library. Those were my books and I kept them. In grade six I was reading pocket books, Harlequin Romance. I went through a huge Harlequin Romance phase; I read all kinds of stuff. I just couldn't stop reading. I just loved to read.

When I was in grade one there were reading groups. I was in the first group. The teacher said this word is "because" or something while she was teaching and I thought doesn't everybody know that. It was never a problem for me. I always got it, no matter what the lesson was. I was from the time of Dick and Jane and the teacher would say "that's Dick" and I said, "Well of course that's Dick. I never did not know what the words were. I never had to figure out the word. Teachers would read to me. Ms. Thompson, Ms. Lavallee. It was right after lunch, when you came in to school. It was so good, it was just the best and everybody was quiet. You could just colour. Sometimes we would do the round robin thingy in school. I felt really sorry for the kids who couldn't do it. I would be thinking "Oh, why does he keep asking them, because it's hurting them inside. I also had that feeling of frustration; you know "Oh God, is Crissey going

to read again?" I was feeling sorry for the persons that had to read out loud and everybody had to know that they weren't good readers.

I have a nephew who struggled to read, and to listen to him read out loud was painful. It's hard to read out loud. Harder than reading to yourself.

But, he knew exactly what he was reading. He has amazing comprehension so it didn't bother him, because he wasn't frustrated with the meaning. He could hear the story so what did it matter.

Mum and I are fiction readers and novel readers. My mum and I read these fictional Scottish mysteries. I go to the bookstore over on Wilkes, it's called the Neighbourhood Book Shop, they have all used books, and they also have dessert. I was sitting down with my girlfriend and right in front of me was one of these Anne books that my mom needed. And I thought, "I'm sure my mum doesn't have this one." My mum and I bought a book called *Anne's Christmas*. We just keep collecting.

At our house there were always magazines and there were newspapers. All my brothers and sisters read. I'm probably the most voracious. Ted, my nephew is a jock. He plays professional basketball over in Europe. He came home after the first summer and said, "Aunty Linda, I'm reading". My sister, Shelly, told me that over there there is nothing else to do. He asked her to bring him books from Chapters and Shelly took him a whole load of English novels. Now he's a reader. You can become a reader. You shouldn't give up on people. Now he reads regularly and there is a reason for him to. It's not like, "I have to read" There is nothing else for him to do. Even so, I remember having a

conversation with him that he isn't a scholar, he's a jock. He was a really good basketball player, why would he need to read. If you were to ask my brother Rick if he was a reader he would say no, but yet, he goes through the Auto Trader. His wife is a reader, she reads a lot of self-help but still it's a lot of reading, it doesn't matter what it is. My niece in law is really into Stephen King and that kind of Horror. That doesn't fit with my idea of fiction.

My husband is a reader. I didn't know that when I first met him. He's a jock. One of the first times he came over to our home, he read the newspaper. My dad had this thing with the newspaper. Even after he'd gone through it it was pristine the way it was folded up. Even after everyone had read the paper it was put back in order. My husband read the paper and then kind of just left it in a pile. My dad came down and said, "Who butchered the paper!" It was just such a different way of handling it. He still reads papers and stuff. And magazines, we always have lots of magazines. I'm addicted to magazines.

When I took over my job, the woman who was there before me got the early childhood journals and they started sending her stuff to me. There were some of those journals that still had the plastic on them. They hadn't been opened and read. I was really shocked! Then, six months into my job I knew why they hadn't been opened. God that was the last thing that you could do, keep up on your professional reading. That was the last thing that you could do!

I have a lot of books on the go. I've got one on the bedside table; actually I have four on my bedside table. I have a downstairs' book and an over the garage book. I have books everywhere. I try to read before bed. Sometimes it's



only a paragraph or two and then I'm asleep. It has to be something that doesn't require thought, or could be scary. When I moved my mom from her house, I didn't ever want to pack up another carton of books. We found skating magazines from the 1960s. And an ice capades program from 1949. My nephew, Robert, and I figure we could do an EBay business sometime. Reading is about the collecting and the owning.

When you're retired from teaching you have all of these books. I don't even want to know how many thousands of dollars I have spent of my own. I had to have my own books. I went to the library and I got books from the school library for the kids to use. But I had my own set. It's two years now since I retired and I'm only now ready to give some of them away. It's such a part of who you are, owning the books. That's part of your identity. Anna, who helps me clean everything, she's into purging. I told her, don't throw out my university physiology and exercise books. I know that they are dated and it's not even current. Those books tell a story. Those books tell your journey, about who you were and what you did. So I can't throw those out.

There are some authors who I can't wait until the next book comes out, like the Harry Potter one. I like mystery fiction and I have some authors that I watch for their new books when they come out. But if you were to ask me their names, I'd say "that's the one about the police woman who was married to the guy that..." It's all about the story. It's all about the story.

*Robert's story*

*Robert is a twenty-five year old real estate agent with a degree in business. He grew up in Winnipeg and recently moved into his own house. He is Irene's grandson, the son of Rick. Robert has one sister. Robert agreed to participate after being asked by his aunt. I think it was mostly a favour to her, but he was very open to the idea and participated actively.*

I'm a reader. Right now I'm reading *Why We Want You to be Rich* by Donald Trump and Robert Kiyosaki, and a thing on google advertising tools that I'm reading again. I try to have a general financial book, like a Robert Kiyosaki one; I've been a fan of Robert Kiyosaki for over a year. And then I try to have something more specific that I use to learn something like the google advertising tools, or *Multiple Streams of Income* by Robert Allan. Then I often have a spiritual book like *The Power of Now* or *Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. That's my mother's influence. . Once I find an author that I like, I stick with them. It's similar to buying a CD. When you buy a CD you might only know one or two songs on it, but you know that you will probably like the other half dozen songs. Sometimes I start a book and then part way through it stalls. Then I pick up another book. Sometimes it can be a challenge. For the last little while I haven't been reading as much as last year. I've just been too busy. I read a lot when I am traveling. I always take two books on the plane with me so I'm prepared depending on what I'm in the mood for reading.

I didn't start reading for pleasure until I was in University. My mom gave me *Rich Dad Poor Dad*. My mom has a pretty good library. When she reads a book that she appreciates, she wants me to read it. My mom has her genre, but from the financial side of things I'm probably more well read than my mom. My

dad reads the paper a lot but not a lot of pleasure reading. My sister didn't really start reading like I do until three or four years ago. She started to read more when she got into business. She is more diligent about reading on a regular basis than I am.

Usually I discover books through the people that I associate with. Once you start reading you seem to attract people in your life that read the same books as you do and then if they recommend a book and you recommend a book you know they are going to like it based on what they have read. My girlfriend reads. She started to read some of the books that I've given her or recommended to her. She gave me a book called *The Millionaire Next Door* by Thomas Stanley for my birthday. Someone had given it to her. I saw it on her nightstand and said "Oh that's on my list". Then she got it for me and we both started to read it together. I don't know if she finished it. She's a very studious girl so she reads a lot for school. She buys a lot more textbooks than I ever did. I was never good about reading textbooks. I read what I needed to get by in school. I did get by. I always had decent marks. They were top of the class in junior high and then by senior high I realized that I didn't really need that. In University I was a B student, I got through it. When I would start a class I would say that I should really be reading and then I'd get into the course and I knew that I should read this chapter but I could probably get by without reading it. I still learned the concepts from class. I was very good at attending class. I thought that was important. I got by just by doing that. There were some courses where I didn't read, but I knew there was value in the book. One of my personal financial

planning courses textbooks I didn't read religiously but I knew that it had good value so I kept it.

Almost all the books I read are non-fiction. I can't remember the last fiction book I read. It was probably in high school. That was when I had to read a book for class. I like to read something useful. I just don't have time for fiction these days.

My parents read to me before I could read. My dad would read *Just Me and My Dad* to me. My mom would read other ones. When I got to school I was one of the better readers in the class. We would have reading partners and take turns reading to our buddy. I knew I was a better reader because I would know the words and they wouldn't. I was pretty good from the get go, I was pretty blessed in that regard. I learned easily so I don't remember too much of the process. My sister had a favourite book at school. You were allowed to take the books home from the school library. Once you had read a book you were supposed to go on to another book, but my sister would pretend not to be able to read it so that she could keep it and read it again.

When I was younger I read comic books, Archie books. And then books by Gordon Korman. I read those for pleasure. We had lots of time to read in class, but I read at home as well. I had a few favourite series. The Gordon Korman books were about grade three and then the Matt Christopher sports books. That's when I was getting into more sports. By grade five we were playing more sports, basketball was on the horizon so I started reading a hoop series. I can't remember the author. I had a buddy who was big into Hardy Boys.

I read a couple of their books but it wasn't one of the series that I followed as much as he did. Sometimes when we would read out loud in class I would have read the whole paragraph through, ready to go, and then the person next to you would go to the washroom and you'd have to read their paragraph instead. I didn't like the whole class reading thing because it was so slow. I found it a waste of time because I could have read the whole thing on my own in half the time. I did appreciate it when the teacher read. In grade five, the teacher read a chapter a day about some kids jumping garbage cans on their bikes. Some of my friends went on to read more in that series because they were intrigued. No one read non-fiction out loud. There is a perception that it is too boring or too dry. Not everyone in the class would appreciate it. Teachers can't teach only to the kids that are going to get it. They have to have the bar to the lowest denominator. That's unfortunate, but that is how our whole education system is.

Then by junior high and senior high I would read what I was told to read, but usually I didn't care for them. *April Raintree* for example. I didn't pick up a book as often for pleasure when I knew that I had books that I had to read. I don't want to discount the books that we had in junior high but I never connected as well to them as when a book is up my alley. I'd read enough to get by on the test, skim here and there, and read here and there to get you through a little faster. There wasn't as much time to read at school in junior high. At that point there was more responsibility on us to have some homework and take the reading home. What I did appreciate is when I was in grade ten we could choose a book to read and write a report on any of those books. I really appreciated having the

choice. In high school all the reading had to be done at home. In grade ten I read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I read probably half of it and then quickly read the last bit of it. I managed to do all right on the test. We always had one book and one Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet* in grade ten, *Macbeth* in grade eleven, *Hamlet* in grade twelve. I appreciated that. I connected with Shakespeare. One of the books I have recently read is *The Richest Man in Babylon*. I liked that one because it was in old English. It kind of reminded me of Shakespeare. It had some great lessons in it.

I was very fortunate to have had great English teachers right through school. It wasn't the teacher that stunted my reading for pleasure. I guess I was just busy. Now I make the time. The types of books that I like to read now weren't introduced to me at school. The only introduction to those types of books was when I was at University. A professor in sales management did a five or ten minute thing at the beginning of each class on the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. I've read bits and pieces of it.

I keep a list of my reading. It's in my phone. I have a "books that I have read" list. I keep adding to it. There is a definite genre focus when you look at my list. One of the books on my list is *Eat that Frog* by Brian Tracy. It's about overcoming procrastination. Another book on my list is *Power of Focus* by Mark Victor Hansen, Les Hewit and Jack Canfield. There's also the *Power of Focus* for College Students. I wish I had read that before I graduated college. I had met one of the authors so I needed to read that book. My girlfriend read the *Power of Focus for Women*. Every time I read a book I try to put it on my list. I use it for

recommending to people. I can say, "I've read this, I've read this. I always have my phone with me.

The author of books is important to me. It's easier for me to categorize a genre if I know the author. Then I know the kind of book that it's going to be, generally speaking. I also think it is important to give recognition where recognition is due.

### Interpretation

I had spent considerable time over the last two years reading and learning about narrative inquiry, and it made sense to me. I knew the power of stories to inform. Therefore, I'm not sure why I felt such surprise as I watched these stories emerge from the transcripts. It was like reading about a science experiment and then seeing it actually work. I wrote the stories and I thought about the stories. I felt a sense of momentary relief and joy that there was something there to interpret. I say momentary relief because now I had to member check the stories. I knew that the idea of ownership was already going to be important to this study, but now I was struggling with the same issue. I felt that I "owned" these stories. I was excited about them. I was invested in them. I worried about what would happen if the participants did not see the same things in their stories that I did. Again, this process has been more about not knowing than it has been about the knowing. When I met with the three participants they were more interested in talking about each other's stories than they were about their own. They commented on what they read in the stories of each other that they had either forgotten about or had not heard before. There was a lot of laughing and joking. They asked each other questions and told each other stories of themselves and each other. I wanted to know if I had represented their story accurately. I think part of me wanted them to be impressed by the stories that I was able to create from our interviews. They didn't seem to be impressed or surprised. What I learned through this process is that I didn't "create" anything at all. Although the stories were new to me, they weren't new stories. They were their stories. I had



just recorded them. After the member checks, I realized that we had joint custody. I was the caretaker of the stories, not the owner. It was my job to represent these personal stories in a public way. Interpretation involved seeing what they saw as well as my own views and connecting this to the research.

The three narratives represent over eighty years in a family history. The participants vary in age, in gender and in occupation. Yet, despite these differences, I found some common themes in the stories. In some ways they are not themes that I anticipated. Although I had left myself open to possibilities, in my own considerations I thought that there would be clearer linear connections between past events and current habits. What I found was that the events did not stand alone as moments that affected reading behaviour. The events were parts of the plot of a longer story. Each event moved the plot along to a conclusion where the character read or didn't read as an adult. The participant or the character in the story used memories, experience, and book ownership to develop this reader identity.

### **Identity**

Gee (n.d.) talks about the idea of discourse as "being part of an 'identity kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize"(p. 1). My original working title, *Adult Reading Habits: The importance of having them, the factors that may contribute to them* now needed to be revisited in relation to this "identity kit". Are people readers because they have the habit of reading or do they have the habit of reading because they are a reader? In other words is the

act of reading part of the identity kit of a reader? And if it is, where does this identity come from? Being readers was something that they were. This theme of identity was the overriding theme in the data.

It was clear from my participants that reading was not just something that they did. Robert says, "I am a reader". He had the ability to use "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or a social network" (Gee, n.d. , p. 1). Reading, often thought of as a solitary activity (Long, 2003), is actually a highly social activity. Long (2003) refers to studies that conclude that "most readers need the support of talk with other readers", and that "social isolation depresses readership, and social involvement encourages it" (p. 10) For my three participants, reading was not an isolating activity; it involved belonging to a group of readers who had similar reading identities. All three participants discussed giving and receiving books. Irene speaks of getting "secondhand books" from her aunt for school. Linda and Irene give books to each other all the time. Irene has purchased books for her daughters, her sons, and her grandchildren. Linda searches for certain books to buy for her mother. Robert began reading by being given books by his mother. His girlfriend gave him "a book called *The Millionaire Next Door* by Thomas Stanley" for his birthday. "Someone had given it to her. I saw it on her nightstand and said, 'Oh that's on my list'. Then she got it for me and we both started to read it together". Robert clearly articulates this idea of social identity when he says, "usually I discover books through the people that I associate with.

Once you start reading you seem to attract people in your life that read the same books as you do and then if they recommend a book or you recommend a book you know they are going to like it based on what they have read”.

Irene came from a home where her dad read. Linda’s dad valued reading and library membership. Robert’s mother was an important influence in his adult reading habits. He “didn’t start reading for pleasure until university” and this was when his mother began introducing him to motivational/business books. Both Irene and Linda married men who were readers, and Robert’s girlfriend is a reader.

Irene belongs to a reading group at her church and she started a second-hand bookstore at the St. Boniface hospital. Linda belongs to the MYRCA (Manitoba Young Readers Choice Awards) Committee. Both of them have engaged in social reading activities.

What was clear in Robert’s story was not just the social aspect with other readers but the connection that he made to the authors of the books. Throughout the story, Robert does not mention the title of a book without linking it to the author. These writers are important people in Robert’s reading life. He says, “The author of books is important to me. It’s easier for me to categorize a genre if I know the author. Then I know the kind of book that it’s going to be generally speaking. I also think it is important to give recognition where recognition is due.”

The idea of identity is not just who you believe yourself to be, but how you believe you fit with other groups of people. McCarthey (2001) contrasts the

ideas that literacy can be defined as a “psychological process that takes place within the individual” or from a “social constructivist perspective” that considers that literacy “is a process of social negotiation that involves both cognitive/strategic and emotional/motivation dimensions” (p. 122).

Cherland (1994) found that while investigating why literature matters to girls that “the girls read fiction quite avidly (8-10 novels a month) to emulate their own mothers who were avid novel readers, to sustain their friendship with other girls in the group and as a means of expressing their emotions” (p. 126). Since its debut, the Oprah Winfrey book club has been responsible for 28 consecutive bestsellers, sold more than 20 million books, and earned publishers over \$175 million (Hartley, 2001). Without a doubt there has been some effect. According to Hartley (2001), one “46 year old woman confessed that until her conversion to reading through Oprah she had not read more than five books in her entire life”(p. 5). Readers speak to other readers about books, about authors, and about reading. This discourse allows them to “enact, recognize, and negotiate” (Gee, 2001, p. 412) with the social group called readers.

The three participants in this study have a well-developed sense of identity because their definition of literacy matches with their own behaviour. Their continued reading supports the further creation of their identity. Sumara (1998) suggests that the relationship between reading and a reading identity is reciprocal, “during and following engagements with literary fictions, readers produce new knowledge about themselves that continues to function alongside existing knowledge”(p. 205). These ideas about themselves become an identity. When

readers can identify themselves as readers, they read. As they read, they further develop their identity as readers. What happens when students define literacy behaviour as different from their own behaviour? In a qualitative study Belzer (2002) investigated the role of past experience as an influence on adult literacy behaviour. The women that she interviewed declared their dislike for reading and their own beliefs that they were not readers. Their actions, however, suggested differently. The women actually did engage in adult literacy practices, some quite actively. She found that for struggling readers:

The discrepancy between their words and actions relates to the definition of literacy that they internalized in school and brought with them into adulthood. They said they didn't read. In actuality they do read for reasons of practicality and pleasure. Hence, the women have two competing frameworks for thinking about reading inside and outside of school" (p. 111).

In a previous pilot study (Boyd, 2006), a participant who clearly spent a tremendous amount of time reading did not identify herself as a reader because she felt that readers read fiction, and she read non-fiction for academic purposes. Identity requires some judgment. We all have an idea of what the identity kit of a reader is, and our own behaviours must fit with that idea in order to identify ourselves as a reader. For Irene and Linda, reading is clearly about fiction. Irene says, "I like to read, I read mostly fiction", while Linda says, "Mum and I are fiction readers and novel readers". But even within that idea of reading fiction there is judgment. Linda's niece "is really into Stephen King and that kind of

horror. That doesn't fit with my idea of fiction." Irene's daughter in law "used to read a lot of fiction, a real lot of fiction. But now she doesn't read anything that isn't inspirational or something." For Irene this type of reading doesn't seem to have as much value as fiction reading, whereas for Robert "almost all the books I read are non-fiction. I can't remember the last fiction book I read. It was probably in high school. That was when I had to read a book for class. I like to read something useful. I just don't have time for fiction these days." His purpose for reading is different from Linda's. For her "its about the story, its all about the story."

Irene makes an observation about her son, "Rick doesn't read anything." Then she corrects herself, "Well, he reads the paper and the auto trader that sort of thing." This is not Irene's definition of reading. Linda's background as a teacher becomes apparent when she makes a similar observation about her brother, "if you were to ask my brother if he was a reader he would say no, but yet, he goes through the auto trader. His wife is a reader, she reads a lot of self-help but still it's a lot of reading, it doesn't matter what it is". Linda knows that the research says that fiction and non-fiction should be promoted as reading choices for students, but the use of her term "but still" indicates that she still has reservations about what is true reading. Robert's comment that "the types of books that I like to read now weren't introduced to me at school" speaks to those value judgments that are prevalent in the system. Linda speaks about "being really shocked!" to discover that a previous co-worker had not even opened journals she had

received. Others reading behaviour is judged against one's own reading behaviour.

Identity goes beyond the ability to read. Gee (2000) considers the 1998 National Academy of Science's report Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. This report suggests that a focus on "early phonemic awareness and sustained overt instruction on phonics" fails to develop the ability to do "real reading". Gee considers why children who learn to "real read" continue to experience a fourth grade slump: "These children never learned to read in the sense of being able to actively recruit distinctive oral and written social languages for learning within socioculturally recognizable and meaningful academic discourses" (Gee, 2000, p. 413).

The participants in this study have "reader" as part of their identity. It is something that they carry with them as a personal label and part of what they use to associate themselves within a group. Sumara (1998) notes, "identity is not some hard kernel that is embedded deeply inside of us, nor is it located in various bits and pieces of knowledge floating around outside of us. Identity exists in the remembered, the lived, and the projected relations of our daily experience" (p. 205). What do readers remember when they talk about their reading story? What helps them to remember? In all three narratives the themes of emotional memory and ownership contributed to the development of identity by developing the "identity kit" that readers use.

### *Emotional Memory*

Louise Rosenblatt (1938) writes:

The special meaning, and more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text.” (pp. 30-31).

When I considered this quote from Rosenblatt, I was reminded of another part of my own reading story. When my second son was due to be born I was put on bed rest for high blood pressure. A friend lent me a book by Guy Gavriel Kay, the first in the Fionavar Tapestry. Before I went into the hospital to give birth, I bought myself the second in the series. And when I was home with a newborn, I finished the series. Re-reading those books transports me to a joyous, sleep deprived memory. And recalling those memories of where I was and what I was doing when I was reading helps to recall the characters and the events within that novel. Is this important? When I discuss this phenomenon, people will say that they have the same experience with songs, or smells. Is it important to this research that the idea of reading and books creating memories seems to be a central idea with my participants who are all adult readers?



One possible limitation in this research is the reliance on memory.

Particularly in Irene's case when the memories are being recalled over almost a century. My concern when I planned for this research was what I thought might be the limited ability of my participants to recall memories about reading throughout their lives. If I had reflected on my own experiences with memories and books I may not have seen this as a problem. Even in my initial reading story I connected particular books to trips and other events in my life. I was recently cleaning my basement and found a horrendous novel called *Suffer the Children*. It was in no way worth re-reading, but I have kept it through three moves because it reminds me of a trip to Disneyworld with my sister. My participants not only were able to recall memories, but could recount many, and in great detail. Irene told a story of her husband reciting "The Cremation of Sam McGee" while he was being put out for open-heart surgery. In fact, the doctor told him as he prepared for an additional surgery, "Don't bring that poem with you this time." Linda remembers the importance of seeing L.M. Montgomery's house and making her husband take her picture in front of it "so I can show it to my mother." Robert remembers his dad reading to him before he could read. He even remembers the title, *Just Me and My Dad* by Mercer Mayer. These memories were not just recalled by the participants, but many were confirmed through conversations with the other two participants. The references to L.M. Montgomery and the Scottish mysteries were recounted in both Irene and Linda's stories. Their interpretation of others' reading habits was similar to each other. When we met for a final member check, the participants reminisced about many of the memories and built

on each other's recollections. I was able to see Linda's book collection that she spoke about and Robert went through his virtual book list with me during our conversation.

All three of my participants recall positive memories of teachers reading out loud to them. Irene was in grade three when she "first heard L.M. Montgomery. The teacher read a chapter at noon to her 70 students. She read every day and I couldn't wait to get to school to be sure that I didn't miss a chapter. And when I changed schools, it was a long walk and the teacher there didn't read it". For Linda, it was Ms Thompson and Ms Lavallee. They read out loud "right after lunch, when you came in to school. It was so good, it was just the best and everybody was quiet." Robert says that he "did appreciate it when the teacher read. In grade five, the teacher read a chapter a day about some kids jumping garbage cans on their bikes." For some of his friends, they were "intrigued" to go on and read more of the series. But Robert noted that no one read aloud the type of books that he liked. Only fiction was read aloud.

Generally, the memories that my participants recalled about reading were positive. But by their own assessment, all three were skilled readers. Irene doesn't have "any difficulty reading and I pronounce things right." Linda remembers clearly having reading instruction. When the teacher would say a word, she would think "doesn't everybody know that?" The teacher would say, "that's Dick" and Linda would say "Well of course that's Dick. I never did not know what the words were. I never had to figure out a word". Robert recognizes

that he was “pretty blessed” in his ability to read. Like his aunt, he was “pretty good from the get go”.

As well as having memories of their own reading. They all recall memories of struggling readers in their class. These memories range from frustration, “I didn’t like the whole class reading thing because it was so slow. I found it a waste of time because I could have read the whole thing on my own in half the time” or “I felt really sorry for the kids who couldn’t do it. I would be thinking ‘Oh, why does he keep asking them, because it’s hurting them inside.’ I was feeling sorry for the person that they had to read out loud and everybody had to know that they weren’t good readers”. These memories were not restricted to school time or childhood. Irene shared a recent memory of a struggling reader in her church group. Skilled readers and struggling readers continue to exist right into seniors’ groups. Adults have less opportunity to directly compare their reading skills to others. School is where these memories are formed for both types of readers.

The ability of my participants to recall memories with such detail was fascinating. Initially, I named this theme in the narratives “diarizing life”. Reading seemed to give road signs to my participants’ memories. They remembered when other things occurred by the books that they read. After many varied searches, I could not come up with research done on diarizing life. What I did find, was research on “emotional memory”(Dolcos, Lebar, Cabeza, 2004, Carver, 2007). This idea of memory being tied to emotions seemed to fit what I was seeing in both my own reading story and that of my participants. Emotional

memory occurs when the emotional centre of the brain, the amygdala, interacts with the memory related brain regions. Dolcos, Lebar, and Cabeza (2004) state that this interaction gives these memories “their indelible emotional resonance”. Carver (2007) found that “the brain has the ability to store not only memories but emotions as well-as they occurred at the time the memory was made” (p. 1). My participants had positive memories of reading. They were always fairly skilled readers and this contributed to these positive feelings when reading. When they recall memories of reading, the positive emotions are triggered as well. This encourages them to do further reading. In contrast, people who have stored negative memories along with reading memories would be reluctant to repeat these experiences. In a study by Lowe (2001) the reading histories of failed readers were investigated. Lowe states “There was a remarkable similarity in the participants’ memories of their early school days. All recall specific incidents in year one or two that they associated with their literacy failure. These memories were often so vivid that the color of the teacher’s dress, the print on the page arranged in narrow columns and where and with whom they were sitting are recalled in great detail” (p.4) Lowe concludes that “they were pre-occupied with experiences that reinforced their failure. The same feeling of humiliation surfaced whenever they attempted to engage with print”. Belzer (2002) in a study of failed readers found one participant reported “she has no memories of school before the age of about 11”(p. 110). This research indicates that schools and teachers must be more conscious of creating positive reading memories as well as developing reading skills. The lack of this focus in classrooms could have considerable

impact on the creation of lifelong learners. Sumara (1998) suggests, “while we have become adept at teaching young people how to decode, we have generally neglected teaching them how to read” (p. 209). Other studies conclude, “we perceive that institutionalized structures and curricula in schools that are not responsive to students may foster both negative attitudes and school failure” (Ivey, 2001, p. 353). Ivey also “suspects that what happens in school affects how children feel about reading” (p. 367). The National Endowment for the Arts report (2007) stresses that “the failure of schools to instill a love of reading” is a contributing factor to the falling rates of reading in the United States. “The emphasis in many schools on bolstering reading skills and preparing students for tests is insufficient for nurturing an appreciation of reading” (National Endowment for the Arts).

Interestingly, all three participants indicate that one memory they have from school is that of a teacher reading aloud to them. Research by Ivey (2001) found that “respondents favoured teacher read alouds as an important part of class time, they saw teacher read alouds as scaffolds to understanding because the teacher helped to make the text more comprehensible or more interesting to them” (p. 367). Several studies (Belzer, 2002; Ivey, 2001) supported the idea of read alouds. Although the participants all expressed negative feelings about “round-robin” reading, Belzer (2002) found that “reading aloud, round robin style, was actually helpful to Mattie, as long as it was not her turn” (p. 110). As a teacher, I was comforted by this research as I read aloud to my students and seldom used “round-robin” reading. However, connecting to my own reading story, I need to

consider if these practices grew out of my own preferences for reading and did not consider the needs of a variety of readers in my classes. I often tell teacher candidates that there is a danger that in times of stress we will teach the way we were taught or the way we learn. I am more aware now that my identity as a reader influenced my teaching practice. How do teachers with identities of non-readers approach reading in their classroom?

The creation and storing of these early memories has a great impact on how people view themselves as readers in adulthood. Readers own their identity. In this study the importance that participants placed on ownership went beyond the idea of an abstract personal connection to a concrete idea. The prevalence of this idea in the data suggests that physical ownership of books is part of a reader's identity.

### *Ownership*

The term "ownership" is used throughout much of the literature to explain the idea of people taking responsibility for their learning and therefore defining their identity. Atwell (1998) maintains that student ownership is the defining feature of her reading and writing workshop approach to literacy learning. This is the most common use of the term in education. An ERIC database search using the term "ownership" provides 3387 results. Narrowing the search with the term reading reduces the number of results to 206. Using the terms ownership and books, gives 197 results. Browsing these results, it is clear that the literature on ownership has a different focus than the ownership that my participants speak of. Ownership is used in education to describe "student independence, autonomy, and

choice” (Dudley-Marling, 1994, p v). When students take responsibility for their own learning, they are said to have “ownership” in the learning process. The ownership that my participants refer to is much more concrete than this abstract idea of student role in learning.

To articulate the meaning of ownership that was important in my study, it is necessary to redefine it. Alvermann (2007) defines four different relationships between words and concepts. One of the most difficult when teaching students new vocabulary is the idea of “known word/ new concept” in which a student must “suspend a known meaning for a word in order to learn a new concept” (p. 231). Although I am using the term in an educational context, the known meaning in this context needs to be replaced with the definition from The Canadian Oxford Dictionary:

Own: 1a. Belonging to oneself or itself; not another’s b. Individual, peculiar, particular. 2. used to emphasize identity rather than possession. pron 1. Private property 2. Kindred verb 1. Have as property, possess 2a. Confess; admit as valid, true 3. Acknowledge paternity, authorship or possession of.

What stands out from these narratives is the importance of “possessing” books, having books as “private property”. Somehow this definition seems much more pedestrian in the educational context. Can something as concrete as buying a book be as important to creating readers as the ideas of identity and literacy definition? When I taught in an inner city school I would give an initial survey of students’ interests and attitudes. One of the questions I would always include was, “how many books do you own?” My own children would be unable to

answer this question, as the reading material is too numerous to count. And sometimes that would be the answer from my students, “too many too count” or “about a million”. Often the answer would be none. And without the backing of scientific data, I knew, as many other teachers would tell you that there was a correlation between struggling readers and the answer zero. But neither of those answers affected me as deeply as the students who answered “three”, or “six”. The fact that these students could count from memory the number of books in their house spoke to the importance of these titles within their life.

“Reading is about the collecting and the owning.” This is how Linda’s story ends. It begins with her telling the “best thing that ever happened” to her. “I got fourteen books for Christmas”. Throughout the stories of my participants, the idea that took the greatest prominence in these discussions about reading was not the idea of “reading”. There was some discussion of the practices that they had or used to read, but very little about the actual time they spent reading. What was important was the “having read” a book. These books became part of what they owned, either physically or through the idea that this book was now theirs because they had read it. Linda says, “I read *Trixie Belden*. I had them all. I also read *Nancy Drew*. I have some of them upstairs in my little library. Those were my books and I kept them”.

Irene’s story begins some eighty years ago with her own childhood. Books were clearly a luxury. She says that “we didn’t have any books to read in our house, and sometimes we couldn’t afford to get the weekly paper, which we all liked in our family.” But book ownership was still valued, “everybody knew



you could give a book and it would be welcome". Readers in Irene's life were identified by the books that they owned. Her brother "was a real reader. He had whole sets of Zane Grey". And the little girl whose parents owned the store also owned "all the L. M. Montgomery books, all the ones about Anne, about Emily, about Pat of Silverbush. She was very generous about letting the rest of us read these books, because her mom and dad could afford to buy them".

When Irene could afford to buy books, she passed this idea of ownership onto her children, "books were something we could afford by then. We would buy books for them. The same as we did for our grandchildren". Her early love of *The Anne of Green Gables* series continued through life, "I bought my sister the Anne books. She started with a set of maybe four. We kept on giving to my sister after she'd grown up and had a family of her own, so that she would have a complete set. Linda's story repeats this theme. She tells of sitting down for tea in a bookstore, "and right in front of me was one of these Anne books that my mom needed. And I thought 'I'm sure my mom doesn't have this one. We just keep collecting.'"

Irene's owning of books became so prolific that moving her from her house to a suite became a bit of a problem. Linda said that she "didn't ever want to pack up another carton of books. We found skating magazines from the 1960s. And an Ice Capades program from 1949. My nephew and I figure we could do and EBay business sometime".

But each of these books is important to own for Irene. She says, "I have *Flint and Feathers*, several copies, poems by Pauline Johnson. I also have her life

story. That's part of my stuff that I don't want to throw out. I have several copies of *Song of Sourdough*". These books represent moments from her life, and each one has the story within the book and the story that the book recalls, much like a photograph. The idea of owning books being a way to diarize life is repeated in Linda's story. Linda refused to throw out her University textbooks because they "tell your journey, about who you were and what you did".

Times change, and so does book ownership. Irene's books are in boxes and crates in her house. Linda's are found in a lovely library in the beautiful Bed and Breakfast home that she owns.

Robert represents a new era in book owning. He says, "I keep a list of my reading. It's in my phone. I have a 'books that I have read' list. I keep adding to it. Every time I read a book I try to put it on my list. I can say, 'I've read this. I always have my phone with me'". And with this statement book ownership enters the digital age. The books that Robert has read become part of an ever-growing list that he keeps with him all the time.

This theme of ownership also appeared in a pilot study I conducted (Boyd, 2006). In that study, one participant defined himself in this way. All interviews began with the question, "If I asked you to rank yourself on a scale from one to ten with one being a non-reader and ten being an avid reader, where would you put yourself?" The answer to this question offered the first indication as to a participant's reading identity. Dan ranked himself as a ten. When asked why, he stated, "I tend to read at least one book a week, maybe more. I finish a book

within a day or two of starting it. And I have a collection of around twelve hundred to two thousand books” (1, 1, 16).

Research on this type of ownership is limited. An article by Manning (2005) comments on the reasons why children need a collection of books in their home:

1. They feel ownership of the books, as well as a connection with them that inspires pride.
2. The presence of books in the home creates a print-rich environment where books are accessible. Parents will be more likely to read to their children if books are in their home.
3. Books inspire or nurture the bonds between family members because reading can be a shared experience.

In the book *Who Owns Learning*, (Dudley-Marling, 1994) there is only one mention of the importance of physically owning a book. Rhodes (1995) discusses the idea of self-advocacy in the classroom. She claims that teachers often take responsibility for being the advocates for children’s literacy and recounts the story of a fifth grade teacher who “decided to involve her students in creating libraries in their homes-homes that contained few books, magazines or newspapers.” (p. 38) By the end of the year this teacher had supported students in creating “a personal library at home and exchanged these books with other students” (p. 38). Teachers instinctively seem to know that it is important to put books in the hands of students.

Although, clearly not research, in my quest to find more data on the idea of ownership I came across a blog that dealt with the concept:

“Buying and reading books are different activities but might seem similar. Buying and owning books are however *entirely* different. To buy a book, leaf through it,

think and *then* buy it is one of the most pleasurable things to do. And perhaps not buying one, the lingering doubts that remain, the nagging images of the book covers in one's mind, what delights..." (<http://disquietthoughts.blogspot.com>, July 4, 2007)

The writer of this blog was trying to articulate the theme that resonated with my data. My participants took pleasure in owning books, not just reading them. They responded to the feel of them, the look of them. There was an element of the hunt as they sought to add to their collections of books

As characters in their own stories, my participants define and describe themselves as readers. They self identify and socially identify as people who partake in the type of reading that I defined for my study. They are critical readers who use text to inform and entertain. Within these stories are elements that help to develop this identity. They are able to document their reading journey by both the memories that they recall with clarity and detail and by the books that serve as road markers.

## Conclusion

There is a common literature response strategy used in classrooms called a story vine. Following the reading of a story, students collect artifacts that represent the important events in the story. These artifacts are attached to a “vine” and used as prompts to retell the story. Although there is little research on the concept of ownership of books, this is what the books in my participant’s lives seem to parallel. The books that readers own are the concrete representation of their reading journey. Each book connects them to the moment that they engaged with that text. They are able to recall the emotion that was generated at that time. Sumara says, “as readers identify with and interpret the experience of characters, they learn to reidentify and reinterpret themselves” (1998, p. 205). Reading therefore creates readers. I started this process looking for a definitive point in a person’s life that made them a reader. What I found was a continuum of experiences that leads them to identifying themselves as a reader. The recording of this continuum is their reading story.

My initial questions as I began this study were: Is reading important? Why is it important? And are there ways that we can encourage a lifetime reading habit? I initially believed that reading was and is important. At times during this process I have been forced to examine why I have that assumption and whether or not it really is based on fact. The research supported that reading has economic, cognitive, and psychological benefits for those who read. As to whether there are ways that we can encourage a lifetime reading habit I would need to revisit the wording of that question. The word habit suggests an action that is done with

very little thought. The research indicates that in order for people to become readers they must consciously make choices to engage in experiences with text. If I were to ask the question now, I would ask whether there were ways that we can encourage the development of reading identity. My interpretation of the narratives and the research indicates that not only can people encourage the development of a reading identity in both themselves and others but they can also discourage this development. I also asked where the habit of reading was formed? Was it in schools, homes, or were readers born? Again, the complexity of reading makes a simple connection difficult if not impossible to make. What is clear is that it is not an issue of place. The setting of a story is an important backdrop, but it is the plot that moves the story towards its conclusion.

However, as a teacher the setting of school is important to me and this was represented in many of my research questions that revolved around my role as a teacher. Could I as a teacher have been more conscious about creating lifelong readers? Could I have made this learning more transparent? Did my students know why reading was important?

Sumara (1998) says that identity emerges from remembered and lived experiences (p. 203). As a teacher, I controlled many of the literacy experiences that my students had. I did need to be more transparent about the purpose of reading and why it was important. I underestimated my role in the lifelong process. Although we often speak about creating “lifelong learners”, many of the experiences that I provided for students were about a short-term product that may have contributed positively or negatively to their reading identity.

Many of my students came from homes with limited literacy experiences. Therefore, “school reading and writing have a particularly strong influence in defining literacy for these learners and that these definitions stay with them in adulthood despite practices that may contradict them” (Belzer, 2002, p. 107). Students needed me to help them articulate and define literacy as a lifelong process, and reading as something that can be done for pleasure to inform and entertain. Teaching students to read is not enough. They must recognize themselves as readers not just people who read.

Finally, other questions that emerged through this process had to do with the process of narrative inquiry. Do the reading stories of others help us to understand how people end up at different points in their reading? Does my reading story shed light on why this research is so important to me?

When I was a little girl and was read a story I was afraid to close the book because I didn't know what would happen to the characters. I assumed that they went on with their lives beyond the watchful eyes of the reader. When I was older and able to read for myself, I wanted to know what “happily ever after” really looked like so I would make up the next part of the story myself. I knew that the characters didn't exist without their story and that someone needed to tell it. It is somewhat discouraging to realize that the conclusion that I have sought for the last two years was something that I clearly knew when I was seven. Readers are readers when they have a reading story. Or as Dorothy Allison says in *Two or Three Things I Know For Sure*, “the story becomes the thing needed” (p. 3).

The stories that were told by my participants informed me about the journeys that these readers undertook throughout their lives, but the stories also informed the participants. Stories, memories, and identity are intricately linked. My participants were able to retell their reading stories by using the emotional memories that they had collected throughout their lives. Like all good stories, these events moved them along the plot line. But an event on its own does not make a story. It is the connection between those events that is important. For readers, reading books and stories are themselves events in their own story. Each time they read a story they reinterpreted their own identity in light of the new information that they have from the text. Positive experiences moved them towards an ending where they were readers. Alternatively, people with negative experiences with books and stories are can be taken in a direction that concludes with them being non-readers. Just like stories with plot twists and turns, the end of the story is not a foregone conclusion based on the beginning. Early non-readers may go on to become readers with later positive experiences. Robert, for example, did not begin to read for pleasure until University. Before that the reading events in his life were either negative or non-emotional. There were other stories being written in his life, but not a reading story. The fact that my participants not only had a reading story, but also could recall it with such clarity suggests that the stories are journey stories that have led them to the point that they are at now. Each recalled experience is a road marker on that journey. The research on emotional memory (Dolcos, LaBar, Cabeza, 2004) suggests that powerful memories can be formed through positive and negative experiences.



Although all of my participants did end up as adult readers possibly because of their generally positive memories, if they had become non-readers, their memories would still have documented their journey. Similarly, in my own reading story that is filled with emotional memories, I clearly define myself as a reader and have a clear definition of myself as a reader. This identity has brought me to this research. To return to my folk dancing analogy, reading is not just the act of decoding and comprehending, just as dancing is not just the act of performing steps. To be a dancer you must emotionally connect with the music and with the movement. This connection makes you a dancer not just someone who dances. This research was important to me because I want others to feel the power of that emotional connection.

In July I stood in Assiniboine Park in the dark and witnessed something amazing. I stood and watched my thesis come to life. Hundreds, maybe thousands of people gathered to celebrate the launch of a book. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* had brought together generations of people from around the world. I was reminded of one of my participants saying that she remembers her teacher saying he had traveled from his home town to Minnedosa to see the poet Pauline Johnson go by on the back of a train. She said that authors were the rock stars of the day. I think the same could be said for J. K. Rowling. She is a rock star of her day. People will remember where they were, how old they were, what they were doing when they read Harry Potter. Those books will evoke memories in the same way that a song from high school or a familiar scent from childhood will result in a rush of feelings. There is considerable discussion about the impact

that Harry Potter has had on the reading habits of young people (Dixey, D'Angelo 2002). But there can be no disputing that the books contribute to a creation of emotional memory. When I began this journey, I was focused on the power of the teacher, the power of the reader. Through my reading of other's research and my own reading I am beginning to understand that it may not be the reading that is important, but the having read. What I have been reminded of is the power of text. And when reader and text transact, this has the power to help create identity and memory. What happened that night in Assiniboine Park had little to do with the act of reading, but every person there added a memory that could be recalled in his or her reading story. The owning of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* will be the artifact that helps them to recall the sights and sounds of that night. The overriding theme that emerges through the narratives is the idea that people read because they are readers. Reading is important. It is important to the individual and it is important to society. Readers think, they question, they constantly reinvent themselves. People are born readers in the sense that people are born to seek meaning, and reading is one of the most powerful and prevalent ways to do this. The journey from being born a reader to becoming an adult reader is fraught with obstacles. This research has helped me to be more aware of the complexities, and aware that educators need to thoughtfully help students along this journey.

Sumara (1998) says that telling a story about oneself "is always a kind of traveling. One is never in the same place at the end of the story as one was at the beginning" (p. 204). My own reading story taught me about myself and also

prepared me to interpret the stories of my participants. My own story has not only run parallel to this research but has been deeply connected to it. It has also been important for me to document my story as a researcher to see those connections, to learn about myself, but also because the telling of the story makes it true.

### **My Research Story**

“I started this research to prove others wrong and maybe more importantly to prove myself right. I wanted to destroy something. This journey from destruction to creation has been humbling, tiring, frustrating.” This is how I began this thesis. I am interested in my choice of the word “journey”. Have I actually traveled somewhere else? Moss and Stott (1986) discuss the importance of the literary journey by saying that “for a variety of reasons characters leave either to find new homes or return to their previous homes somehow matured” (p. 487). As a character in my own story, I needed to consider if I had gone on a circular journey in which “characters engage in actions which enable them to reestablish themselves in the homes from which they departed” (Moss and Stott, p. 487) or on a linear journey in which “characters enter new worlds to find secure homes” and “achieve happiness and a sense of fulfillment in their new dwellings” (Moss and Stott, p. 487.)

When I began this journey, I was an educator, but I had begun to lose touch with why I was. As an administrator in a busy inner city school, I “did” a lot of things. What I didn’t have time for was thought. One morning I rushed into the school office. I was late because I had stopped to pick up treats for the parent council meeting that evening. As I walked from the parking lot to the office, three people stopped to ask me questions, seek clarification, or request something from me. When I walked into the office I saw a family sitting in the waiting area, clearly anxious. I knew why they were there. Two days before I had suspended their son and they were here for a reentry meeting. Since that

time, forty-eight hours earlier, I had made so many decisions that I could not recall why I had suspended that child. In that moment I was struck by how far I had come from what I believed an educator to be. I had made a decision that affected a family's life, and I could not remember it. When I think about this incident, I understand the research on emotional memory. I can recall this event with complete clarity. I can see what everyone was wearing, what the weather was like, and who else was in the office. This moment diarized my life as the moment that I realized I wasn't thinking anymore. This is the moment that I first left my home and began this journey.

The first step on my journey brought me to a home that I had left many years before. I returned to the Faculty cynical, and doubtful that I would find anything useful there. In my first few classes I was frustrated with my assignments, frustrated with my colleagues, frustrated with my professors. Everything moved too slowly, no one "did" anything. There was too much talk and too much thought.

A few months ago I was talking to my sister about the title of my thesis. I was tossing around the words that would work best and how it should be phrased. I glanced over and saw her eyes glazing over. I knew this look. As the principal of a high school, my sister is "doing" education. She doesn't have time to think about which word fits best. In the time that I have taken to think about the wording, she will have made numerous decisions about programming, staffing, discipline, and financing. I understood this look. This is what frustrated me so much when I began this journey. Now it frustrates me for a different reason.

Why is there such a divide between those who have more time to think and those who have more time to do? Why does there seem to be so little connection, in fact outright hostility, between the two groups? I see and hear this repeatedly with my teacher candidates. They are told in the schools that what happens in the Faculty doesn't work in real life. Their connection to theory and research is destroyed before they even begin their career. The second year candidates that I teach are far more reluctant to listen and think, they have already moved to the doing and for some reason feel that they give up the other piece. I wonder if this happens in other professions? In medicine are practicing doctors not more closely connected to researching doctors? These are new questions to me. Questions that I am asking as a researcher.

So where am I now on my journey? I don't think that I have reached a home yet, either my old home or a new one. I must still be on this journey. What am I looking for in my new home? What if I don't recognize it when I see it? What if I don't like it and I can't go back to my old home? What if I can't teach a class anymore? Then who will I be? These are questions that I ask myself as an educator.

When my family is looking for a new house, the real estate agent makes us define who we are. We are a family with four children, we have a dog, and we entertain. This description of ourselves helps match us to a house. Maybe I haven't found a new "home" because I don't know who I am yet. Am I "Teacher"? "Researcher"? "Student"? What I have learned about identity is that it is not a "hard kernel that is embedded deeply inside of us" (Sumara, 1998,

p. 205), but constantly changing and redefining depending on where I am and who I am associating with. This parallel journey of learning about myself as I learn about readers helps me to make connections. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) say that the “act of researching teaches you about yourself as a researcher” (p. 176). I would add to that the act of documenting your story as a researcher helps to teach you about yourself as a researcher. The word research or to search again makes me realize that I need to look at my profession with different eyes. I need to contribute to it by thinking, not just by doing.

I end this part of my journey humbled, but with hope and a feeling of success. I made some good decisions on this journey and I have learned to trust myself, whoever I am.

### Implications

When I was a classroom teacher, I felt that I was making a difference in students' lives. That was why I went into education. In my new role, which is still being defined, I still need to have an impact on students. As a researcher, that means that my work should impact in some way on my profession. There should be a "so what" at the end of this process. This research has informed me that we have a bigger role to play in students' lifelong learning. Educators and parents need to make thoughtful decisions that help children become readers. As those children grow up, they need to be prepared to take an active role in their own identity formation.

*Students need to be provided with opportunities to develop, think, and talk about themselves as readers.*

If, as Allison (2004) says, "The story is the thing needed", then the implication from this research is that people need the opportunity to learn, know, and tell their story about themselves as a reader and as a learner. In recent years, there has been a considerable movement to include the ideas of metacognition or "thinking about thinking" into classrooms. Teachers are much more aware of the range of learners in classrooms and many teachers engage students in discussions about their own learning style or multiple intelligences. These ideas of including the learner in discussions about their learning need to be reframed to include students in the creation of their own story. As teachers we often record parts of students' stories through anecdotal records or on report cards. These are not our stories to tell in isolation from the character in the story. The new Manitoba



Social Studies Curriculum has a focus on the idea of identity. As early as grade one, students are encouraged to “Give examples of groups with which they identify. Examples: cultural, linguistic, community...” (Manitoba Department of Education, Training and Youth, p. 38). Having students recognize that they are a part of a family, team, or club helps them to develop their identity. This idea could easily be used to have students think about their identity as a reader or a learner. In order for students to have rich reading stories to tell, they must have positive emotional memories and artifacts to use as prompts to retell their stories.

*Teachers need to be thoughtful about providing experiences that create positive memories about reading and books.*

As always, our neighbours to the south influence us. Movements that focus on accountability, back to the basics, and standardized tests results sway our instruction for learning to read, as in decoding and functional reading, instead of learning to read for pleasure. Students need opportunities in schools to see that reading for pleasure can entertain and inform. What happens in school must assist in creating positive emotional memories involving books, text, and reading.

Schools need to give students the opportunity to “own” their literacy practices. For all readers, particularly for adolescents, choice is crucial. Robert comments that he appreciated when he was given the opportunity to choose what he read in school. Yet, common practice is to give less choice as students become more skilled, “middle school students are expected to become independent readers, yet they get limited opportunities to explore their own interests in reading, to read at their own pace, or to make their own decisions about whether

or not to read a book” (Ivey, 2001, 368) Reflecting Robert’s own experiences, Ivey noted of her respondents that “the books that they mentioned did not match what they said they preferred to read and what they read out of school and that they ranked their classroom as one of the least likely places to find the materials they want to read. Of particular significance is the amount of nonfiction students reported reading out of school compared with the near nonexistence of nonfiction mentioned for school reading” (p. 368). This choice is important because “we all need to experience stories that connect with who we are or might become. These are the stories that recognize and affirm something important, even vital, about our lives, that speak to the many ways we have of being in the world, that represent and thereby honour our many possible life experiences” (Dozier, Johnston, Rogers, 2006, p. 146).

School reading and school literacy practices must value the literacy practices that students value. Norton (2003) investigated the popularity of Archie comic books with adolescents. Teachers reported that although they had enjoyed comics as youngsters “they now considered them unsuitable reading material particularly in the school context” (p. 142). Teachers commented that “they are not very educational, a lot of children might be distracted by the pictures, or I would prefer an actual book” (p. 142). These comments led Norton (2003) to ask “to what extent we as literacy educators take seriously the enjoyment value of reading for preteen children” (p. 142) This idea of enjoyment, which in schools often comes secondary to skills, may be an important factor in developing lifelong readers. Belzer (2002) maintains, “without engagement, learners will eschew

opportunities to read. Thus, enthusiasm and engagement are extremely important in developing proficiency” (p. 104). When schools fail to support students’ love of reading, what develops is a “literate underlife”. Finders (1997) said that students “played out a range of social roles in this “literate underlife”, they “read, wrote, and talked about issues that were not sanctioned for them in typical classrooms” (Ivey, 2001, p. 354).

Students will separate school reading from “real” reading. If schools do not make connections “between various literacy practices inside and outside of school, and if they devalue learners’ cultural and personal experiences, preferences, strengths, and vulnerabilities, they risk creating disengaged readers for life” (Belzer, 2002 p. 105). Robert recognized that his reading needs were not met at school but his family structure supported other types of reading. If that support is missing, struggling readers may “be impeded by a belief that (a) school style reading and reading materials are the only legitimate way to improve reading and (b) school learned behaviours are the only legitimate way to engage with texts” (Belzer, 2002, p. 112).

The issue of literacy congruency affects not only struggling readers, “even avid, proficient young adolescent readers who excel in school reading express dissatisfaction with assigned reading and writing that does not match their interests or purposes” (Ivey, 1999). Further, separating home and school is the reality that “texts that are educational are almost by definition texts that are abstract and unconnected to their everyday lives” (Norton, p. 145).

*Parents need to invest in owning and keeping books that are road signs in a child's life.*

More research is required in the area of book ownership. This study suggests that books that readers own become artifacts that help them to recall, retell, and reidentify with events on their reading journey. The participants all found a way to keep, catalogue, and revisit books that they had read. These books were important to their identity. Parents need to value reading by committing to the development of a child's personal library. Similarly to collecting photographs, books can be used to document a child's life. Schools can assist in this endeavor by promoting the use of inexpensive, accessible book clubs and holding book fairs in their schools. Children can be encouraged to save to purchase their own books, both new and secondhand. Children also need to be taught to make quality choices about books and learn to look after them as they would any valuable collection. Adult readers all seem to have a way to own and keep books. Again, more research in this area could clarify the links between ownership and reading identity.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have a constantly evolving definition of literacy. Young people are confronted by multiple literacies and required to read and write in a variety of ways. The eighty-four year span of stories represented in this study illustrates the evolving nature of literacy. Irene and Linda had much more traditional views of reading. They connected with the fiction that was read in schools. They lined their shelves with the books that they had read. In contrast, Robert had to redefine in adulthood his purpose for reading. His virtual book list

reflects new ways of belonging to a community of readers. Yet the stories of the participants reflect the common theme that readers need a reading identity and teachers, parents and readers themselves can all take a role in developing that identity. This reading identity takes the form of a reading story, a narrative journey.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Sample of Consent Letter**

Research Project Title: Adult Reading Habits: The importance of having them, the factors that contribute to them.

Researcher: Karen Boyd

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education. For my thesis, I am conducting a research project in the area of Language and Literacy. The purpose of this research project is to investigate the connection, if any, between early experiences, both school and home experiences with reading and adult reading habits. In order to investigate the family connection in developing adult reading habits, all three of the participants will be members of the same family. Your involvement in this project will involve three interviews lasting between 45 minutes and one hour. These interviews will take place in a location of the participants choosing. Two of these interviews will be done with you alone, and the third interview will involve the other two participants in the study. The first interview will involve discussing and recording your personal memories of reading. During this interview, you will be asked to recall memories that you may have of early experiences with reading and also to comment on your current reading habits. If at any time this recall of memories causes discomfort, you will have the opportunity to end the interview. This interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. The second interview will provide you with the opportunity to read and respond to the narrative created from your first interview. At this time, revisions can be made to be sure that your experiences have been accurately represented. The third interview will provide you and the two other participants the opportunity to respond to a collective narrative that represents the family story. Prior to the second and third interview, you will be provided with a written narrative for your review.

The primary researcher will transcribe the transcripts. The transcripts of the recorded interviews will only be used by the primary researcher, and will be shared with the researcher's advisor and thesis committee. On both the recording and written transcripts, you will be identified by age, gender, and occupation and pseudonym. At no time will your name appear on written or recorded documents. Your confidentiality will be protected at all times. The tapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet for the duration of the study and for six months after the completion of the study at which time all data will be destroyed. Written

transcripts will be shredded and taped transcripts will be erased. At the completion of the study, you will be provided with a brief written summary of the results if you request. This letter contains a section to request the researcher to contact you with these results.

Your participation will provide you with the opportunity to share your experiences, which could be a benefit to your participation. If you have uncomfortable memories regarding your reading experiences, participation could present the risk of discomfort or angst. If this occurs, you have the opportunity to end the interview at any time.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you may inform the primary researcher in person, by phone, or by e-mail at anytime during the study. This contact information is available at the end of this document. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Karen Boyd

The Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the researcher, or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122 or e-mail [Margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

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Participant's Signature

Date

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Researcher's Signature

Date

I would like to be informed of the results at the conclusion of the study.

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Participant's Signature

e-mail address

Ethics Protocol Submission

**Appendix B  
Ethics Approval Certificate**

**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

01 May 2007

To: Karen Boyd (Advisor R. Schulz)  
Principal Investigator

**FROM: Stan Straw, Chair**  
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

**Re: Protocol #E2007:035**  
**“Adult Reading Habits: The Importance of Having Them, the Factors that Create Them”**

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

**Please note:**

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Kathryn Bartmanovich, Research Grants & Contract Services (fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

**The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: [http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors\\_ethics\\_human\\_REB\\_forms\\_guidelines.html](http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html)) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**