The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Connection of Reading towards Academic Success

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the impact that reading has had on the lives of two female students who have attained exemplary results in their final year of high school. Both students were academically successful in completing their Victorian Certificate of Education. One of the participants was awarded the Dux of the school while the other participant was the second highest achieving student in the VCE cohort at their school. The students attended a girls' Catholic College which is situated in the inner North West of Melbourne.

In this comparative case study, semi-structured interviews have been employed to delve into the reading practices of these two high achieving students. The analysis of the interviews provided data rich information which highlighted several essential themes explored in this thesis.

The focus of this study is to explore the following main areas: how reading links to academic success, how students perceive reading in helping them achieve academic success and what other factors related to reading can be associated with students' performance.

Reading is seen to be the core of both students' lives and how it interconnects and weaves a journey of academic success is explored in this study.
Declaration

This is to certify that this thesis comprises only my original work towards the Masters, due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used. The thesis is 24,000 words in length exclusive of bibliographies and appendices.

Signed..............................................................................................................
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There are a number of people to whom I am eternally grateful:

Firstly, I am indebted to Emma and Laura for allowing me to interview them and to use the transcript of our interview for the research I needed to complete this thesis.

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Enjoyment Connected to Student Performance</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental and Pre-school Influence</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Knowledge</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Foundations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Reading</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Strategies</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Reading Strategies</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity of Good Reading Practice in High School</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement and Motivation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Readers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Literature Review</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose for The Study</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Research Questions and Sub - Questions</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions

Chapter Four
Methodology
- Comparative Case Study
- Data Collection
- Initial Contact
- The Site - Invitation to My Family Home
- Digitally Recorded
- The Transcript
- Deconstruction and Coding The Transcript
- The Participant's Profile - Emma
- The Participant's Profile - Laura
- Context
- Assumption
- Potential Limitations
- Significance of The Study

Chapter Five
The Results and Analysis - The Essential Themes

Chapter Six
Section One - School Hour Begins At Home
- Nurturing the Home Environment - Emma's Story
- Nurturing the Home Environment - Laura's Story
- Nurturing the Home Environment - Emma's and Laura's Story
- The Role of The Sibling - Emma's Story
- The Home Background and Finding The Key - Emma's Story
- The Home Background and Finding The Key - Laura's Story
- Equipped For School - Emma's and Laura's Story
Chapter Seven

Section Two - Instant Success At Primary School page 40
Differentiation Begins - Emma's Story page 40
Differentiation Begins - Laura's Story page 40
Differentiation Begins - Emma's and Laura's Story page 41
Chatting About The Book - Completing Stimulating Tasks -
Emma's Story page 41
Chatting About The Book - Completing Stimulating Tasks -
Laura's Story page 42
Chatting About The Book - Completing Stimulating Tasks -
Emma's and Laura's Story page 43
Free and Extensive Reading - Reading for Enjoyment -
Emma's Story page 44
Free and Extensive Reading: Reading for Enjoyment -
Laura's Story page 45
Free and Extensive Reading - Reading for Enjoyment -
Emma's and Laura's Story page 45
Engaged Readers - Reading Achievement - Emma's Story page 46
Engaged Readers - Reading Achievement - Laura's Story page 46
Engaged Readers - Reading Achievement -
Emma's and Laura's Story page 47

Chapter Eight

Section Three - In Pursuit of Reading For Pleasure page 48
Reading For Pleasure and Performance - Emma's Story page 48
Reading For Pleasure and Performance - Laura's Story page 48
Reading For Pleasure and Performance -
Emma's and Laura's Story page 49
Diversifying Mind - Emma's Story page 49
Diversifying Mind - Laura's Story page 50
Diversifying Mind - Emma's and Laura's Story page 51
Goal Oriented - Emma's Story page 52
Chapter Nine

Section Four - Maintaining The Grade - The Expectation

Academic Success a Motivator - Emma's Story
Academic Success a Motivator - Laura's Story
Academic Success a Motivator - Emma's and Laura's Story
Strategic Reading - Emma's Story
Strategic Reading - Laura's Story
Strategic Reading - Emma's and Laura's Story
Richness Gleaned from Reading - Emma's Story
Richness Gleaned from Reading - Laura's Story
Richness Gleaned from Reading - Emma's and Laura's Story

Chapter Ten

Section Five - Relational Foundations

The Literate Companion - The Sister - Emma's Story
The Literate Companion - The Father - Laura's Story
The Literate Companion - Emma's and Laura's Story
Adding Another Layer to The Foundation - Emma's Story
Adding Another Layer to The Foundation - Laura's Story
Adding Another Layer to The Foundation - Emma's and Laura's Story

Chapter Eleven

Section Six - Raising Consciousness

Reading Efficacy - Emma's Story
Reading Efficacy - Laura's Story
Reading Efficacy - Emma's and Laura's Story
The Reading Shift - Dissection - Emma's Story
The Reading Shift - Dissection - Laura's Story
The Reading Shift - Dissection - *Emma's and Laura's Story*  page 72
Effective Strategies - Proficient Readers - *Emma's Story*  page 73
Effective Strategies - Proficient Readers - *Laura's Story*  page 73

Effective Strategies - Proficient Readers -  
*Emma's and Laura's Story*  page 74

Chapter Twelve

Section Seven - The Expert Reaps The Rewards  page 75
Good Comprehenders - Continuity - Cultural Capital -  
*Emma's Story*  page 75
Good Comprehenders - Continuity - Cultural Capital -  
*Laura's Story*  page 75
Good Comprehenders - Continuity - Cultural Capital -  
*Emma's and Laura's Story*  page 76
The Past Influences The Future - *Emma's Story*  page 76
The Past Influences The Future - *Laura's Story*  page 77
The Past Influences The Future - *Emma's and Laura's Story*  page 77

Chapter Thirteen

Conclusion  page 78
Recommendation  page 79

Bibliography  page 81

Appendices

Semi - Structured Questions used in The Interviews  page 90
Transcript - Interview Extract - *Laura*  page 91
Transcript - Interview Extract - *Emma*  page 99
*Emma's and Laura's Reading Journey - Diagram*  page 107
Chapter One

Introduction

When I first read Jeffrey D Wilhelm's book You Gotta Be The Book: Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents I was enthralled - it was like I had found another human being, another teacher, who understood and valued reading in such a 'real' and life transforming way. In the many years I have been involved in teaching, I have aimed to give my students a love of reading - to create a friendship with reading, or as Wilhelm (2008) so aptly wrote:

"My best friendships involve books; some friendships are because of books. There are authors and characters that I feel I know so well and I regard them as friends, great-hearted people whom I get to know better each time I read. Seeing that they have written a new book or story is like receiving a dinner invitation: a chance to get to visit and know each other more" (p. 5).

That love of reading has stayed with me in my teaching, and over the years I have observed and talked to many students who have had that same passion. I am the teacher who would say to her students "Have you read this book?" and students would always want to share, in turn, their reading with me. The impetus of this study came from two events in my life.

The first event which ignited my desire to explore reading and how it is connected to a student's academic success was when a replacement teacher had taken my English class during my absence. She had assumed that it would be impossible for students to read silently for an entire lesson, so she took them to a computer lab where they could complete their homework. On my return to school, I encountered the wrath of my students who had missed their reading period. The students were annoyed that something they saw as enjoyable and engaging had been denied to them. Their Quiet Reading Period was seen as a special activity that they valued highly. This vocal irritation on the part of my students
made me realise how important reading was to them, and how much they enjoyed it but more importantly it made me realise that not all my colleagues saw reading as a valued activity; an activity which could also help in a student's learning.

The second event which stimulated my research was a conversation I had with my librarian colleagues. In hindsight, the key questions and ideas for this thesis had been evolving subliminally in my mind over the thirty years of my teaching. I had been making quiet observational notes of the students who were academically achieving exceptional results. It was through a conversation with library staff members that my quiet, unsaid annotations about reading were shared. My observation had been that the students who were achieving academic success were avid readers. It may sound too simplistic a statement, and thus the need to explore became the impetus of this study. So I began to ask "Does reading relate to academic success?" This was the question I initially posed and it still remains the pivotal question of my study. The original concept of looking at the end product down, examining the reading of the academically successful student, is where this study begins.

In the search for material related to the proposed study, the following terms were used: reading, reading literacy, reading metacognition, reading success, reading and academic success, reading leads to academic success and academic success. A large number of websites can be visited when the search ‘Reading Research’ ‘Reading’ and ‘Reading Success’ is entered in the many various search engines. This number continues to grow each day, and possibly in the language of digital era, each nano-second. Yet much of what can be found in the literature related to this topic, deals primarily with how to implement strategies to help students read successfully, such as those of repeated modelling and practice (Gamble, as cited in Rose, 2005, p. 140); how to bridge the reading gap; how to help students achieve in reading tests, and how to increase students’ reading comprehension, especially focusing on the early to middle years of schooling. Limited research however, has been completed which explores the "reading journey," as I will call it, of a successful reader who is also an academically successful learner.

The enjoyment of reading and how it has contributed to the learning of two students is to be examined in this paper. A significant research study which validates many of the
questions this paper seeks to explore is the recent report entitled *Challenges for Australian Education; Results from PISA 2009*. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) implements the PISA results as a measure to provide information on the progress of Australian schooling. The report showed that enjoyment of reading had a strong relationship with students' performance in the PISA assessments. However, one of the major areas for concern, highlighted by the Pisa 2009 Report, stated, "Australia's reading literacy performance has declined since 2000 and a third of Australian students did not read for enjoyment" (p. 296). The enjoyment of reading, according to PISA 2009, has been shown to be important, as are the strategies students use to read well and to synthesise information. It is significant to note that researchers have stated "we need research that captures the comprehension strategies [that] successful [school] students’ use…" (Conley, Freidhoff, Gritter, Vriend Van Duinen, 2008, p. 97). Freebody (2007) also observed this omission and declared that "the gaze of much research has remained, too singly and for too long, on the appropriately phonating child, rather than on the actively literate and knowledgeable learner" (p. 65). Thus, this study intends to look at the literate and knowledgeable reader and learner and observe the strategies employed by such a student.

Thus questions need to be posed as to what type and what range of texts has the academically successful learner read in their school life? Who or what factors have helped the student achieve academic success? And can an assumption be made that students who read extensively will perform better in their studies and obtain exemplary scholastic results? A recent study by Evans, Kelley, Sikora and Treiman (2010) which collected data from 27 nations and from approximately 70,000 cases, found that book oriented homes provided students with the tools to succeed at school. These book-oriented homes provided children with "vocabulary, information, comprehension skills, imagination and familiarity with good writing" (Evans et al., p. 19). Therefore this study will aim to examine whether books were valued, and what impact the reading of texts had on the students' lives.

One of the pivotal concerns related to this research is the power of reading and what effect it has on the learning of a student. This paper intends to explore whether there is an impact on the students' knowledge and understanding when students have read and have been challenged to read more extensively. How reading links to academic success and how reading can be seen as the key which facilitates thought to be unlocked and fine-tuned in
our brains is fundamental to this research, for "our inner thoughts are rooted in language, they are inherently social. [It is] language [which] enables us to name the world and our experiences within it, to differentiate ourselves from the world, and to find our place in it" (Oldfather, West, White & Wilmarth, 1999, p. 10). Whilst on another level, one of the most political aspects of this study might be in "finding ways to engage students in reading [which is] one of the most effective ways to leverage social change" (OECD Report, 2002, p. 3). Reading therefore, provides us with the ability to acquire language, to use language in our writing and our discourse, and it is empowering.

My research aims to analyse students’ understanding of the value of reading and their reading practices, and to offer some reflectivity on the subject matter. The study aims to explore the connections that students make between reading and their own success. If I could use the analogy of viewing a film or creating a film to help elucidate the introduction to my thesis, it would proceed as follows: the film begins with the end, in this case the conclusion of VCE for two high school students. It is a medium shot of a young woman dressed in casual clothes. She is metaphorically packing her high school books and her school uniform away in a box. She begins to talk; simple words and phrases, recounting one or two of her learning and reading experiences. A voiceover; it is my voice. I am bringing myself into the field of study.

As a teacher of almost thirty years, I have seen the end product, that is, the successful student, the reader and the learner. But what is it that motivates and inspires these students? And how do they explain the effect that reading has had on their lives? The camera takes a snapshot of the student as a child, images of parents dissolve across the screen. Did the child have parents or a home environment which was conducive to reading? Another shot, another scene: the school environment, a montage of images and sounds of school corridors, school rooms, teachers’ faces, books, libraries and awards. This montage, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain, invites "the viewers to construct interpretations that build on one another as a scene unfolds" (p. 5). This study is analogous to the work of a "quilt maker" and the researcher is "the quilter who stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 5).
Another section which is part of this construction is the question of whether the students were part of an enculturated school environment which supported, encouraged and rewarded the reader. Movement to the present, where the film originally began. An interior monologue continues. A close-up shot of the student reflecting on her own experiences of reading, the joy of being able to read her first book, the realisation of the power of the word and the "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, as cited in Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003, p. 196) of reading providing an ecstasy, an inner clarity and a feeling of complete pleasure. The credits appear, about 17 minutes into the film, the title of film emerges across the scene: *The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Connection of Reading towards Academic Success.*
Chapter Two

Literature Review

There is much research available which explores reading, reading literacy, reading efficacy and reading comprehension. However, less research is available examining how reading correlates to academic success. Huey, in the early 1900s, marshalled an argument for the importance of teaching reading in schools. More than a hundred years later, the significance of reading remains crucial. Data collected from 65 countries by The Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA Report 2009, concluded that it is important for students to be literate and to be "prepared to use knowledge and skills...[in order] to meet real-life challenges (PISA, 2009, p. i). This Literature Review aims to examine some of the literature and key studies which have addressed the value of reading and how it is connected to student performance.

Reading Enjoyment Connected to Student Performance

One of the large major international studies is PISA 2009. It assessed a random sample of students aged 15 years old. Almost half a million students from 65 countries took part in the reading literacy assessment. "In Australia, 353 schools and a total of 14,251 students participated in the PISA 2009 study" (PISA, 2009, p. i). The study results indicated that Australia was out performed by six countries: Shanghai - China, Korea, Finland, Hong Kong - China, Singapore and Canada (PISA, 2009, p. iii). In 2009, the assessment questions focused on the students' reading habits and attitudes - "how much they enjoyed reading, how often they read and what materials they preferred - as well as their approaches to studying in general and to reading literacy - related tasks" (PISA, 2009, p. 159). The results suggested that the more enjoyment students gained from reading, the greater the range of materials they read. However, the most significant factor to be stressed from the findings was that enjoyment of reading had the strongest associations with student performance in all the assessment indices.

A study which supports the PISA 2009 findings is The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP) 2004 report. NEAP has monitored student achievement in
America since its inception 1969, and has examined reading trends in American schools since 1971. NEAP 2004 assessed over 11,000 students at the ages of 9, 13 and 17 in the reading component, and their data indicated that students who "read for fun almost every day had higher average scores in 2004 than those students who said that they never or hardly ever read for fun" (NEAP, 2004, p. 54). Although the study is American, it is relevant to how reading is connected to students' academic success and it echoes the same conclusions found in PISA 2009. Such findings present strong evidence for the importance of reading for pleasure and its interconnectedness to students' academic success.

A recent Australian report commissioned by the State Library of Victoria's Centre For Youth Literature (CYL) entitled Keeping Young Australians Reading 2009, aimed to "provide a picture of the Australian reading landscape for professionals in the field, providing inspiration, guidance and encouragement to children and young people" (p. 2). The CYL 2009 Report, an attitudinal research, included the findings of interviews with young people and parents in focus groups. It also examined some of the current surveys and data collected by other organisations such as PISA 2009, Mission Australia, NAPLAN 2008, and The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001. The report concludes that the importance of reading for pleasure is not only related to ensuring academic success for students, but its benefits are socially and economically viable. The CYL 2009 Report also indicates that, "when [many students] move from primary to secondary school, reading for pleasure is no longer a key focus and it is at this point that many young people disengage" (CYL Report, 2009, p. 33).

**Parental and Pre-school Influence**

Researchers have identified that the role of the parent, in order to create this reading environment, is significant in a child's early years. Nichols (2000) argued that the role of the parent, as a key in literacy development, is a given. Other researchers, Pulvartaft (1985), Wiener (1988), Spreadbury (1992,), McMackin (1993) support the concept that the parent has occupied a prominent place in developing their child's literacy (as cited in Nichols, 2003, p. 315). Nichols stated, "reading to children has been attributed with a wide range of educational effects, including fostering intellectual development, contributing to the development of children's reading and writing skills and encouraging positive attitudes
to books" (Nichols, 2000, p. 315). Her research, however, found gender patterns evolving, especially with fathers bonding with sons. This finding mirrors the closeness that is explored in my study with the girls and their mothers reading bedtime stories and bonding during this period.

This positive parental influence is reinforced further in another more recent Australian paper entitled *A Research Paper To Inform The Development of An Early Learning Framework For Australia, 2008*. The document presented a viewpoint that the early years, especially the first three years of a child's cognitive development are important. Equally important is another Australian longitudinal and experimental study by Raban and Coates (2004) which documented the possible effects of engagement in a pre-school literacy project. Raban and Coates' (2004) collection of data, on approximately 900 students, over a period of two years, concluded that early literacy intervention works. The substantial and noteworthy conclusion of Raban and Coates' (2004) study was that to ensure later academic success, students required “access to a wide range of appropriate…literacy resources and that adults interact with children effectively” (as cited in Freebody, 2007, p. 46). Sharif, Reiber and Ozuah (2002) also examined the reading results of 200 participants, aged over three and spanning a three year period. They demonstrated that increased reading to a young child was reflected in the child's higher receptive language scores. The interconnectedness of these factors must be stressed in that early parental involvement, encouraging children to read, leads to good practices and increased reading activity and performance.

**Reading and Knowledge**

Further supporting the concept that students' positive home experiences correlate to school success is the work of Snow, Dickinson and Tabors (2001). The Home-School Study of language and Literacy Development, was a longitudinal study that mapped out the links between eighty-three children's literacy experiences and their literacy skills. What is exemplary about this study is that it not only mapped the students' pre-school years but followed them through primary school and high school. The data collected over 13 years showed the powerful impact that family interaction and reading had on the various literacy levels and the schooling achievement of the children who took part in the study. Snow
(2001) argued that a child's reading was based on prior knowledge and being able to explore and build upon that previous knowledge. The study concluded that as the child learns language and strives to become a competent reader it needs "the full resources of a seamless epistemology...creating knowledge, recreating knowledge, extracting knowledge, and uncovering knowledge...[while the] procedures for self-correction are the one absolute condition for learning a language" (Snow, 2001, p. 5). The nature of Snow, Dickinson and Tabors' (2001) research is further explored in my study focusing on the richness that is gleaned from previous reading and decontextualising language in order to understand and enable learning.

**Relational Foundations**

The importance of the literate adult beyond the child's early years has been the nucleus of several studies. La Marca (2003), Carter (1987) Leonhardt (1996) believed relationship building between adult and student is crucial. The concept of the 'enabling adult' is the prime focus in the work of La Marca (2003) and Chambers (1991). For Chambers the term, 'enabling adult' encompasses teachers, librarians, parents, writers and publishers - people who help children to become literate readers. La Marca's study, however, focuses on the secondary school environment and the role of the teacher-librarian in providing opportunities for students to become good readers. Her summation of an enabling adult is one who is, "supportive, perceptive, a fellow reader, knowledgeable about their collection, knowledgeable about their students...a good listener, a good modeller of response and conversation, a good facilitator" (La Marca, 2003, p. 22). Wilhelm (2008) too, advocates the role of the teacher in engaging students to read. Much of his work deals with reluctant readers and his desire to engage these students to become readers. Wilhelm (2008), through, his work with reluctant readers, re-iterates the same message as Chambers (1991) and La Marca (2003) that the "human factor...is the absolute omnipresence" (Wilhelm, 2008, p. 12) in enabling a child to be an engaged reader.

**Free Reading**

There are other equally important elements which enable students to read and become proficient readers. Krashen's (2004) work does not focus on the enabling adult but rather on books and free reading. Krashen (2004), Brooks, Waterman and Allington (2003), Ivey
and Broaddus (2001), state the connection that students have to books is one of the most influential factors in engaging students to read. Krashen (2004), a proponent of Free Voluntary Reading states, "that more reading results in better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development" (Krashen, 2004, p. 17). The connection with novels and the socio-political implications of being able to read was the focus of Graff's work. Graff studied the reading practices of seven girls, aged 10 and 11 years old, who were labelled as struggling readers. She discovered that the girls viewed reading as a "literary imprisonment... it had the potential to be a positive and rewarding experience but... it [wasn't] meeting that potential" (Graff, 2010, p. 181). The study highlights the negativity the girls experienced, "during the creation of our library, the girls approached books with trepidation, rather than eagerly embracing the books as viable and pleasurable texts to experience" (Graff, 2010, p. 182). Her research elucidates the necessity of re-focusing the teaching lens that reading is empowering and the books teachers and schools choose for students, "can broaden students' conceptions of reading, enrich our own instructional practice, engage in critical thought and better ensure our students' academic and social success" (Graff, 2010, p. 186). Graff's research concludes that reading, and how students' perceive themselves as readers, is linked to academic success.

**Reading Strategies**

From reader to a strategic reader is also the focus of researchers Cross and Paris (1988). Cross and Paris (1988) examined the emergent relationship between children’s metacognition and reading understanding through an experimental curriculum using Informed Strategies for Learning. Their extensive research noted the importance of strategic reading and the effect it had on children’s ability to decode, comprehend and learn from the texts they were being given. Metacognition they stated “is the knowledge and control children have over their own thinking and learning activities, including reading. The term metacognition includes two broad categories of mental activities: self appraised knowledge about cognition and self management of one’s thinking” (Cross & Paris, 1988, p. 131). The importance of being able to think and employ these metacognitive strategies is the core of Gardner’s (2008) theories. In his book *Five Minds for the future* he states that "the survival and thriving of our species will depend on our
nurturing of potentials that are distinctly human" (p. 167) one of these potentials is reading.

These strategies have been proven successful in the above mentioned studies and in other studies which have examined variations on the effectiveness of these reading practices and instruction. Langer’s (2001) study was a five-year longitudinal which sought the input of 44 teachers and 88 classes. Her research examined "the features of instruction that make a difference to student learning" (as cited in Freebody, 2007, p. 50). Langer found that when literacy assessment was regularly and explicitly integrated in the curriculum there was a “connectedness and continuity in learning” (Langer, 2001, as cited in Freebody, 2007, p. 50). Langer concluded that many of the students beat the odds of the expected performance level. This need to explicitly teach reading strategies is a key finding in the PISA Report 2009. One of the performance areas of concern for Australia is the data which indicated that "over one third (34%) [of Australia's students] did not meet the proficiency standard set by [Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs] MCEECDYA" (PISA, 2009, p. 296).

Teaching Reading Strategies

Supporting this concern in teaching explicit reading strategies is the work of Paris (2005) who argues that students are able to learn over a relatively short period of time "constrained skill sets"(as cited in Freebody, 2007, p. 56), such as alphabetic knowledge and phoneme awareness. While the "unconstrained skill sets," (as cited in Freebody, 2007, p. 56) of comprehension, vocabulary and repertoires of genres develop over a longer period of time, and for some students they are never "fully acquired" (as cited in Freebody, 2007, p. 56). Paris and Paris (2003) in their study confirm that reading needs to be comprehended but the decoding of text and comprehension need to be interdependent or as Freebody has expressed it a "multiple capability" (as cited in Freebody, 2007, p. 56). The teaching of specific and explicit reading strategies is identified as a significant feature in enabling students' academic success.
Continuity of Good Reading Practice in High School

As Paris argued "unconstrained skill sets" develop over a longer period of time and reading practices need to continue in high school. Mc Ewan (2007) too presents the view that “reading cannot end in the third grade. To meet the requirements of colleges and employers in the 21st century students must receive explicit literacy instruction throughout their adolescent years…continuing into twelfth grade” (Mc Ewan, 2007, p. 13). Snow and Biancarosa (2004) argued that although is necessary to get third graders to read at grade level it is equally important that "reading needs ongoing attention from researchers, educators, teachers and parents" (as cited in Wise, 2009, p. 373). "Literacy is, in reality, the cornerstone of student achievement" (Wise, 2009, p. 373). The significance to note that for many students, in the high school setting, the texts set by teachers may impede students' enjoyment of reading and the effects may be adverse. In order to support students becoming good readers Manuel and Robinson (2003) make a crucial point in their research when they conclude that teachers of English at secondary level need to plan and put into practice reading programmes "that cater for the diverse needs, interests, tastes and capacities of individuals within their class acknowledging at all times the powerful role of student choice and enjoyment in teenagers' reading achievement," (Manuel & Robinson, 2003, p. 76). Reading for enjoyment and utilising explicit reading strategies are components which are deemed invaluable in the high school setting.

Engagement and Motivation

A major key to reading success and student learning is connected to motivation, as explored by Guthrie, Wigfield and VonSecker (2000). Guthrie et al (2000), found in their study that students who were able to master their goals, were driven to do better, "their task-mastery orientation fostered intrinsic motivation" (Guthrie et al., 2000, p. 338). While Gambrell and Marinak's (2008) study of over 800 students examined specifically which rewards would foster a culture of reading motivation. Their study was underpinned by Deci's (1971) research, which suggested that rewards undermined intrinsic motivation. The final finding of Gambrell and Marinak's (2008) research was that using books and or a token to reward reading did not enhance nor undermine reading motivation. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), also concluded from their research, that motivation is multifactected.
Guthrie (2008) in his book *Engaging Adolescents in Reading* stated that there are four levels of motivation. They are: external, introjection, identification and intrinsic. Guthrie states that "students who are intrinsically motivated enjoy reading...individuals with intrinsic motivations have a positive sense of well-being...their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are being met. Therefore, students who are more intrinsically motivated tend to enjoy school" (Guthrie, 2008, p. 107). Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni (1996) refer to numerous studies which have examined reading and the need to create interest in reading. Their own study makes direct correlation to Guthrie's (1996) research (as cited in Gambrell et al., 1996). They conclude "that highly motivated readers generate their own literacy learning opportunities, and in doing so, they begin to determine their own destiny as learners" (Gambrell et al., 1996, p. 518). The ability to determine one's own destiny as a learner is a layer which is explored in this study.

**Expert Readers**

The expert reader, Pressley and Afflerbach (2010) noted, is always changing their reading processes or practices depending on the text that they are reading. However, Pressley and Afflerbach (2010) also confirm the need for a starting point, to establish where knowledge is first gleaned. They state "meaning emerges because of activity enabled by prior knowledge" (Pressley & Afflerbach, 2010, p. 81). The concept of prior knowledge and building up on that knowledge is also explored by Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) who concluded in their research, "that those who read a lot will enhance their verbal intelligence; that is reading will make them smarter" (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998, p. 8). Their study looked primarily at the reciprocal effects of reading volume and how it increased students' knowledge. On the other hand Wigfield and Guthrie's (1997) work summaries the steps undertaken by the expert reader. They state that there are three constructs to motivate the reader. Firstly the belief in one's efficacy to achieve; secondly the purpose for the reading is clear, and thirdly the social aspects of this motivation, reading for pleasure and reading more widely and reading more frequently. The effect of Cunningham and Stanovich's (1998) study is interconnected to Wigfield and Guthrie's (1997) work, for if a student does not achieve reading success, they are less inclined to be
motivated, to read for pleasure and the knowledge attained from reading is obstructed. Graff’s (2010) study elucidates this clearly.

Concluding Literature Review

While there is little research which focuses on the ‘end product,’ the academically successful student and how reading connects to their success there is much research on the value reading has had in students’ lives. In this study the main question asked is how does reading link to the participants’ academic success. But in asking this question other constructs are formed and these create the basis of exploration for this thesis. Taking a different perspective on a similar scenario to this thesis, is the work of Graff (2010). Her work is significant for it deals with girls who are labelled as struggling readers, and her demographic is in total contrast to the demographic of my study. Graff (2010) states, "if we addressed the nuances of books and reading, we can help broaden our students’ conceptions of reading, enrich our own instructional practice, engage in critical thought and better ensure our students’ academic and social success" (Graff, 2010, p. 186). This statement epitomises the intrinsic and extrinsic value of reading for all students.
Chapter Three

Purpose for The Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact that reading has on students’ academic success. The study also seeks to explore the reading practices of two academically successful students and what factors shape their success. The central phenomenon investigated in this study, based on social-constructivist theory, develops insight into how reading links to students' academic performance at school. This qualitative research is based on semi-structured interviews and data collected from two students who achieved exemplary results in their final year of high school. The focus of the study is to map the reading journey of these two students and identify the key factors which assist their success.

Research Questions

The types of questions posed in this qualitative research need to be broad for, “understanding starts with a question not any question but a real question…a real question expresses a desire to understand…desiring to understand opens [us] to experiencing what is new as new, and the already known under new aspects”(Bettencourt, as cited in Wells, 2000, p. 64).

Main Research Questions and Sub-Questions

The following are the main research questions and the sub-questions:

1. How does reading link to academic success?
   (a) What practices or motivations occurred at school and out of school that encouraged reading?
   (b) What impact did the reading have on the reader and their learning?
2. How do students perceive reading as helping them achieve academic success?
   (a) Was the reading purposeful and pleasurable?
   (b) How would the effect of reading be explained by the student?

3. What factors related to reading can be associated with students' performance?
   (a) What text types were read and who encouraged the reading of the texts?
   (b) How extensive was the reading that occurred?
   (c) What type of reading did the student undertake?

Definitions

The following terms are used in this study:

Academic Success: For this study Academic Success will be the final measured ENTER score as given to the student by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) on completing their Victorian Certificate in Education (VCE).

ENTER: The ENTER is the percentile ranking of each Year 12 student who has successfully completed their VCE as provided by VCAA.

Study score: A student’s Study Score is calculated using the student’s moderated School Assessed Coursework (SAC) scores, School Assessed Task work (SAT) scores and examination scores for each study (subject). The Study Score has a maximum of 50. VCAA provide the final Study Score which indicates how a student performed in relation to all others who took that study in the state of Victoria.

Intrinsic motivation: The emotions of interest, enjoyment and excitement play an integral part in intrinsic motivation while "competence and autonomy represent the rewards for intrinsically motivated behaviour" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 34).
Extrinsic motivation: The motivations outside the learner which have to do with external awards for completing a task. Examples of these awards may include higher grades, praise from a teacher or material awards (Burden, 2000, p. 3).
Chapter Four

Methodology

Comparative Case Study

The study focuses on the stories of two teenage girls, who, at the time of the interviews, had completed their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) studies and currently attend tertiary institutions. The two girls have been given pseudonyms and will be referred to as Emma and Laura.

I chose to complete a case study for its rich "thick description" (Geertz, as cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 275). It is, "a study-in-depth" (Stark & Torrance, as cited in Somekh & Lewin, 2008, p. 33) which exemplifies the qualitative researcher's, my attempt, to "emphasise episodes of nuance, the sequentiality of happenings in context [and] the wholeness of the individual" (Stake, 1995, p. xii). In the collection of information and data, I was determined that it be done effectively but also in an environment which was comfortable for the students in order to allow them to be honest about their reading practices (Fine, as cited in Eder & Fingerson, 2001). This case study aims to be "particular, descriptive, inductive and ultimately heuristic - it seeks to illuminate the readers' understanding of an issue" (Parlett & Hamilton, as cited in Somekh & Lewin, 2008, p. 33). The understanding of the issue, of how reading is linked to a student's academic success, is to be explored in this study.

The case study has allowed me to gather material which has, "rich accounts of the details of a culture" (Guba & Lincoln, as cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 275) the "culture" of two teenage girls and their reading journey. The girls were chosen for their excellent academic results in VCE. I had taught Laura in high school and had observed her as a reader in my classes. Laura and I had had many conversations about books. She was, however, chosen to participate in the study due to attaining the second highest VCE Enter result in the cohort. Emma, on the other hand, was invited to participate in the study because she had attained the highest Enter in the Year level for her VCE. I had never taught Emma and did not know anything about her or her reading practices. The girls were similar yet unique. In
this study one wishes, "to seek to understand them...to enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus with a willingness to put aside [any] assumptions while we learn" (Stake, 1995, p. 40).

**Data Collection**

The data collection was through one semi-structured interview I held with each student. I devised a series of questions which I have included in the Appendix found on page 90 of this paper. The semi-structured questions were selected as they would allow me some flexibility in covering the most important issues of the study, while also allowing the interviewee less structure and more freedom. The beginning of the interviews "were less concerned with getting the 'right' answer [to the questions I was asking] but more about 'understanding' the interviewees (Reinharz, as cited in Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 184).

**Initial Contact**

Firstly, the students were contacted via telephone and I asked them whether they would like to be part of a study I was completing. I did inform the girls that I was interested in exploring how reading could be related to academic success. Giving them this information allowed them to consider whether they did or did not want to participate in the study. Both Emma and Laura agreed to participate in the interview. The consent letter and form was mailed to them and within a month we had established a time and place convenient to complete the interviews.

**The Site - Invitation to My Family Home**

I had chosen to invite the girls to my family home. Inviting them to my home was carefully planned. I had been informed by my principal I could complete the interviews at school but I preferred to establish a "natural context" (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 183). The girls no longer attended the high school, so a more comfortable setting was chosen. I hoped that my home would be seen as a warm place away from any lingering associations of school "or the controlling behaviours that might [make] them associate with teachers [and the school environment]" (Tammivaara & Enright, as cited in Eder & Fingerson,
...I wanted the girls to talk freely, openly and to engage with me in the conversation. As Fine (1994) stated "to work the hyphen" (as cited in Edder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 198) was my intention.

**Digitally Recorded**

The interviews were taped with permission, using a digital recorder, it was a small unobtrusive object. The recording allowed me to "interact" (Rapley, as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008, p. 66) and have a conversation with the girls, rather than writing down what the girls said. It allowed for "detail and accuracy not obtainable from memory or notes" (Gillham, Rapley, Taylor and Bogadan, as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008, p. 67). I offered the girls some biscuits and tea to "settle them into the interview" (Morse & Field, as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008, p. 66). Initially there was some nervousness but I had hoped my questions, which were broad and general at first, would establish a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. The interview took 80 minutes with Emma, while Laura's interview went over 100 minutes. There was also much laughter and talking. A few times I felt that I had to move the conversation back onto a relevant track but at the same time I delighted in allowing the girls to talk freely about other topics. I had a predetermined set of questions but I wanted to allow for some latitude in the breath of relevance.

The interviewees were driven home by me. I had also arranged this with them at the time of confirming a date and time for the interviews to take place. This was to avoid untimely termination of or interruptions to our discussion. Both of the girls did not drive so I had offered to take them home.

**The Transcript**

The transcripts were given to Emma and Laura to read and they were asked to note any sections that they thought were inaccurate or were not true to our conversation, or to indicate any section they wished to have removed. The transcripts were returned and Laura indicated that there was a section she wished to have removed, which I complied with. An extract of the transcripts has been included in the Appendix found on pages 91 to 106.
Deconstruction and Coding The Transcript

I read the transcripts to identify patterns emerging in the interviews. I highlighted sections which seemed to be similar in both interviewees' lives. I circled words that expressed key ideas or concepts which were evident in both interviews. I wrote "memos, small pieces of analysis" (Minichiello, as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008, p. 273) on stick it notes and placed them on the transcripts. As I coded the data according to essential themes appearing through the entire data, I was also starting to observe clear differences in the reading practices of the two girls. These similarities and differences became the sections or the seven descriptive headings I used in my paper in the analysis of the results.

The Participant's Profile - Emma

Emma attended her local Catholic primary school. She is an ex-student of the Catholic Girls' College where I am employed. Emma had never been taught by me but was asked to participate in this research because of her overall exemplary results in VCE. Emma was awarded the dux of the school for her academic achievement.

Emma lives with her family in the North Western suburbs of Melbourne and comes from a comfortable middle-upper socio-economic background. Her mother was once a secretary but no longer works. Her father entered university but returned to the family business. His business involves horse racing. As Emma stated, her father is a professional gambler. Emma has an older sister who is at university completing an Honours degree in Occupational Therapy.

Emma was born with a chronic illness. The illness is a progressive disease. Her primary schooling was not affected by her illness but during her secondary schooling she had to stay in hospital sporadically a number of times during the school year.

Emma's VCE results were Health 50, Biology 50 - both of these studies were completed in Year 11 - while Religion and Society 48, Chemistry 44, English 43 and Math Methods 39 were completed in Year 12. Emma was encouraged by teachers, and her medical carer,
to complete some of her subjects as part of the accelerated program at her school. She is the recipient of an Access Scholarship Award and is studying Biomedicine at the University of Melbourne.

During her schooling, Emma was also heavily involved in extra-curricular activities. She played netball for a few clubs. She danced and performed in Musical Theatre. In Year 12 she would perform 24 shows a year, packed into two weeks.

**The Participant's Profile - Laura**

Laura attended the local state school in her area. Laura too is an ex-student of the Catholic Girls' College and had been taught by me at certain stages in her schooling. Laura was asked to participate in this study because of her academic results. Laura was the second highest achiever in the VCE cohort at the school.

Laura lives with her mother and sister in the North Western suburbs of Melbourne and comes from a comfortable middle-upper socio-economic background. Her mother is a primary school teacher. Her father was a journalist but now works for an importing company. He is a prolific reader, has an extensive library of books and suggests books for Laura to read. Laura's younger sister is at high school about to complete her VCE.

Laura's VCE results were Legal Studies 50, which she completed in Year 11 as part of the accelerated program, English 45, Literature 44, Revolutions (History) 41, Further Maths 39 and Religion and Society 39. Laura was awarded a certificate of recognition for her outstanding performance from her school for her Legal Studies, English and Literature study scores. She is at Monash University studying a combined degree in Commerce and Law.

While at high school Laura was part of the Student Leadership Team. She was chosen as the Academic Captain by her peers and staff. Laura was involved with extra-curricular activities at school, debating, public speaking and so on.
Context

The school Emma and Laura attended is a Catholic girls’ College, situated in the North-Western suburbs of Melbourne with a population of about 750 students. The school, according to diocesan agreement, provides an inexpensive education for young girls in the local vicinity and near-by suburbs. The school's aims, according to the mission statement, to develop excellence and promote students' development spiritually, intellectually and socially. This research has come from the perspective of one who is an insider, not only to the school which Emma and Laura attended, but an insider who has been immersed in reading for most of her life. I was drawn to the research from the perspective of a person who has been teaching students and quietly observing students' reading practices and observing their academic performance at school for close to thirty years.

Assumption

My background as an English teacher should not be viewed as an impediment to this study but as an added dimension. There is an underlying assumption that the research contains my own prejudices and biases and that the semi-structured interviews may be manipulated. Every effort has been made to remain objective in finding and analysing the information from the interviews. Holstein and Gubrium (as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008) effectively clarified this underlying assumption when they stated that “respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge - treasuries of information awaiting excavation - as much as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008, p. 68). Thus my role as interviewer is uncovering the wealth of information treasure that Emma and Laura provided.

Potential Limitations

Some of the potential limitations of this study are that it is based on the case study of two high school girls and their experiences. This is not intended to be representative of large numbers of students but the study is ‘information-rich’ because of the in-depth interviews which provided the researcher with knowledge and understanding. The actual number of participants is less important than the richness of the data which has been collated.
(Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008). I have chosen to complete a comparative case study "to maximise what we can learn from the case study" (Stake, 1995, p. 4).

**Significance of The Study**

This qualitative study provides a chronological narrative of the two students' reading journey. The study explores this passage of how the girls viewed reading and what motivated them to read. In identifying this reading journey, and the factors which link to the girls' academic success, the "qualitative research [becomes] a powerful tool for learning more about our lives and the sociohistorical context in which we live" (Merriam, as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008, p. 1). The significance of this study is looking at the end product down for as Freebody (2007) states, "the gaze of much research has remained, too singly and for too long, on the appropriately phonating individual child, rather than on the actively literate and knowledgeable learner" (p. 65).
Chapter Five

The Results and Analysis - The Essential Themes

Each section will visit key elements of the interviews, examining patterns or unexpected findings and connect the outcomes to relevant literature. The main discussion of this study therefore will follow a narrative approach starting with the exploration of the preschool years of the two participants and concluding with the girls reflecting on their final year of high school.

In order to closely analyse the findings from the two interviews more thoroughly, I have divided the material in what appeared to be a fluid and sequential arrangement which developed naturally from the essential themes found in both the interviews. The seven sections were then divided further into a number of significant sub-sections, which developed in the reading and the analysis of the transcripts. These refined sub-headings helped me to analyse the rich data that the participants provided in their interviews.

The first scene or section - School Hour Begins At Home - explores the type of reading practices both the students were exposed to, and involved in, before they began their formal education. It looks at the home environment and what were the factors that equipped them as readers by the time they entered primary school.

The section entitled Instant Success At Primary School - focuses on the reading that occurred in primary school. It explores reading in terms of Emma's and Laura's engagement, their various reading activities and the amount of reading that was taking place. This section examines the literate practices that were beginning to shape the girls' metacognitive behaviour.

The focus of In Pursuit of Reading for Pleasure - examines Emma's and Laura's time at secondary school. This period examines the reading practices from the junior high school years to the middle years. The analysis looks at reading for pleasure and the germination of reading that takes place.
Laura and Emma speak of their own expectations and the reading strategies they employed as they progressed through high school - this is the key theme in - **Maintaining the Grade - The Expectation.**

**Relational Foundations** - investigates the foundational factors and the role of the literate companion, the person or key people who had an impact on the reading taking place in Emma's and Laura's lives.

The section entitled - **Raising Consciousness** - provides a close-up of how these students used their reading skills as a "toolkit" (Swindler, as cited in Evans et. al., 2010, p. 173) in order to prepare themselves for the rigours of senior schooling.

Finally, **The Expert Reaps The Rewards** - examines the role of reading in the lives of these successful students. The section focuses on the end product the successful reader and successful learner.

Each of the sections will examine the data as presented in the recorded interviews. Emma's and Laura's interviews are their personal stories. Their specific word choice and language enabled me to explore what each considered important about reading, how they viewed and valued reading, and how they used their reading at school.
Chapter Six

Section One - School Hour Begins At Home

Nurturing The Home Environment - Emma's Story

Emma's mother would read to her and her sister every night. "Mum would read to us - to me and Kim like before bed...Mum didn't work ...she was looking after us...Dad would read to us on a few occasions - but mainly Mum, like every night would sit down and she would read us a chapter...she had the biggest role to play." Emma's mother played the most significant role in Emma's early years. Emma's words "she had the biggest role to play" emphasise her understanding of how important and pivotal her mother's responsibility was. The use of the superlative "biggest" suggests an understanding of how Emma saw reading as crucial and her Mother's input was irreplaceable. The Mother provided a ritual, a repeated behaviour, for Emma and her sister, it was something they did "every night." The practice of reading a "chapter" each night is embedded in Emma's memory. Emma can recall the books that were read when she says, "we used to read um The Magic Faraway Tree...I remember a novel called No Flying In The House..." Importantly though, she describes the reading activity as "we read." The use of a collective pronoun enabled her to include herself as the active reader not just as the passive listener.

Nurturing The Home Environment- Laura's Story

Laura recalls that books were part of her life from a very early age. Laura states that her Mother always gave her books, "I had books in the bath...plastic sort of water proof [ones]...and books in the car...[Mum] wanted me to read a lot... [Mum] would always read to us even before we could talk - she would sit us down and read to us." Laura's repetition of the word Mum signifies the importance and key influence her Mother had on her reading. Laura notes that it was her Mother who "wanted" Laura to read "a lot." It was Laura's mother's beliefs and values that were being embedded in her daughter. Laura was immersed in books and reading, from the earliest years of her childhood. The impact that reading had on Laura's formative years is evident when she says, "Mum would read to us even before we could talk." The words "even before we could talk" suggest that reading
was seen by Laura as a superior, metacognitive activity which would normally occur after the "talking" stage.

Like Emma's mother, Laura's mother also provided a ritual, a repetitive and physical activity, "she would sit us down and read to us...[Mum] said she that she would read books with chapters." Laura though, at this point in her life is the receptor of the reading behaviour for she indicates that her mother "read to her" and her sister. Laura says that, "Mum set up the basics...she taught me how to read...I think as a teacher she knew and encouraged [reading]." Laura's perception of her mother setting "up the basics" and referring to her mother's profession, suggests that Laura realised her mother's role was a nurturing one but also a role which "knew" the intrinsic and extrinsic value of reading if Laura were to succeed at school. Laura's Mother was not only setting up "the basics" she was in other words "setting" Laura up in preparation to be a reader and a learner. Laura recalls her mother telling her that she "[knew] adults who haven't read a novel in their life...she said she wanted me to read novels...books with chapters." Laura's mother was strategic in what she read to Laura. This reading activity confirms the research completed by Klauda (2009) who reported that according to reviews of studies "parental involvement in their children's reading activities and their beliefs about reading both correlate with and have causal impact on the reading motivation and achievement of the child" (p. 325).

**Nurturing The Home Environment - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Emma and Laura had parents, primarily Mothers, who read to them at an early age and the experiences both Emma and Laura had were positive, nurturing, loving and encouraging. However, Laura's mother's reading activity was explicitly stated as "wanting" Laura to read and "knowing" the importance of it for Laura as a learner. Laura's experiences suggest a very clear and very determined focus exemplified by her mother in "setting up the basics." Hayden and Wahl (1996) explored mothers being involved in their children's reading and they found that "literacy learners [did] not stand alone but [were] supported and nurtured by the more literate community around them within social dimensions that sustain literacy development' (Hayden & Wahl, 1996, p. 211). For many people the enjoyment and the pleasure of reading obtained in these early years influences how they relate to reading later on in life. Baker, Scher and Mackler (as cited in Snow, 2007)
reported the results of a longitudinal study, The Early Childhood Project, which explored children's home experiences in relation to reading and the influences it had on motivation. The Project focused on the emergence of literacy in children from a variety of socio-cultural, inner city groups and included a broad range of measures of home experiences, parental beliefs, and children's competencies. Their study concluded that the positive reading experiences preschool children had at home were fundamental foundations in cultivating positive motivations for reading.

The Role of The Sibling - Emma's Story

Emma's childhood experiences, however, indicate an added element in her reading development. Emma states, "Mum would read to us, to me and Kim, before bed" and "I can always remember, I have this really vivid memory, of always asking my sister Kim how to spell." Emma was curious about reading and about the decoding of language. It is significant to note Emma stating that she has a "really vivid memory" of "always asking" her sister "how to spell." The word "vivid" implies how clear and how important Emma saw reading. The value of reading was being intrinsically embedded in her memory and in her mind. Emma noted that her sister had "more books" so they shared their books and Emma was keen to read the "stuff that Kim was reading." Research suggests that older siblings may play a vital role in providing role models and supporting their brothers or sisters. For some children, this quasi-parent as it were, can provide them with an understanding of what it means to be literate. The older brother or sister "are especially well placed to understand and mediate the two worlds in which the younger children live" (Kelly, Gregory, Williams, 2002, p. 79). These same older siblings may also have an impact on their younger sibling's social and emotional skills. Thus, learning "from older siblings may have implications for school learning" (Kelly et al., 2002, p. 68). This is evident in Emma's story, as it is her older sister who becomes a larger focus in her reading life, an aspect explored later.

The Home Background and Finding The Key - Emma's Story

Emma and her sister shared their books. She says that between the two of them they had "more books" to read. The word "more" implies quantity but it also suggests "more" in
terms of the quality this gave Emma and her sister. The sharing of the books brought them closer, as Emma says it was a "bonding thing," an activity which connected them and had a lasting effect on their relationship. Emma’s story about having books to read is seen by her as invaluable, she says, "having the resources and the opportunities...to excel...but not push [children]...is important." To her, books are "the resources," they are a commodity, or a key. It is an extrinsic value being given to books which enabled students like herself to "excel." The word "excel," infers the academic success Emma associated with reading. It is important to note that this concept is perceived by her, as a literate and knowledgeable learner, who is reflecting on her reading development. However, the language she uses in "not pushing" kids suggests that in her home reading was encouraged and she never felt pressured by her parents. Emma says, "they would like always say, don't stress, do the best you can, we will be proud, we will be very happy - yep very carefree - but very supportive role model parents - don't tell them I said that"(Laughter). The laughter in Emma's story supports her view, that for her, reading needs to be something which is valued, something which is precious and also enjoyable. It is not something negative or something that is aggressively "pushed" onto a child. Emma clearly understood the intrinsic and extrinsic value of reading for a learner.

The Home Background and Finding The Key - Laura's Story

Laura's retelling of books importance in her life, is shown when she states how her Mother, "always gave me books," and "Mum always bought me all of those books...when I was even younger...she bought me those golden one..The Golden Books." Laura notes that her father had many books, "over a thousand" and his influence on her reading comes at a later stage in her life. Books were accessible for Laura. Her Mother's insistence on reading is emphasised by the repetition of the word "always," to describe that fact that the books were an intrinsically valuable item, readily available to Laura at an early age. Laura says her Mother "wanted" suggesting a desire for Laura to be able to read. Laura noted that her parents placed an important value on reading as she says, "mum was more about getting me into the habit of reading and teaching me how to read properly and [she was] more [involved with me as a kid] while dad provided the books and recommended them." Laura reflects on being "taught" to read "properly" by her mother. The words "taught" and "properly" portray the language of schooling and it highlights the extrinsic value given to
reading. It implies a causal relationship to reading and schooling, that is, if one is taught to read properly, success as a learner is most likely. La Marca (2003) stated, "the problematic nature of cause and effect in the interaction between reading and student achievement is noteworthy, yet the relationship is apparent and one to be fostered" (p. 8). Reading is a value laden activity. While her Father's influence, as her mentor and literate companion, is explored in another section of this study.

**Equipped for School - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Emma and Laura were equipped to start school. Books were accessible to Emma and Laura and their parents provided them with a key in their reading development. Evans et al., (2010) argued that books are important to a child's learning, "but it's also about parents being around kids and enjoying and valuing books"(Evans et al., 2010, p. 190). Both girls had spoken of how the act of reading and having books to read were provided for them in their formative early years. There is a difference to note in their stories. Emma's parents were "very carefree." She stresses and repeats the adjective "very" emphasising her view as being accurate and precise. While Laura's parents, and here it is her mother that I refer to, approached reading as a teacher in the classroom. Laura said, her Mother "taught" her to read "properly." The word "properly" suggests an action of precision. In Gee's (2006) view acquisition of literacies, in this context, reading happens in the home both before and during the school years. Emma's home background to reading appears enjoyable. Laura's home background appears enjoyable also, for she does not indicate any negativity or dislike about the reading practices. Laura's language, however, suggests a pride in being "taught," being trained to read accurately. Students with good reading skills and habits argued Stanovich (1986) were more likely to continue to prosper thus, displaying the "Matthew Effect" (Stanovich, 1986, p. 37).
Chapter Seven

Section Two - Instant Success At Primary School

Differentiation Begins - Emma's Story

Emma story, in recounting her primary school days indicated that she was placed in a different, more challenging group, to other students. Emma says, "I always liked school...I was...I remember in Year One in The Independent Learning Group of four kids...we would go off and the teacher would let us look up big words in the dictionary and stuff and we felt that we were pretty good." She says they were "segregated" into a reading group and "there was always one group that was the advanced group and I always remember being in that one." Emma's entry into primary school saw her placed into a small exclusive group as she remembers it: "four kids." She surmised that it was special, something not everyone could do. Emma says, "we would go off," having been given the teacher's permission, elucidating her perception of the "four" students as an intimate group and as being special. Another validation that they were more capable was they could look up "big words in the dictionary." The name, "The Independent Learning Group," and her specific memory of it re-enforced her perception of being more competent at a young age and it made her feel "pretty good." Emma also remembers that before she arrived at school she had always asked her sister "how to spell [the word] 'the'... all the time - and I was in three year old Kinder." Language for Emma was like a game, a repetition, and the fact that she was asking to spell "all the time" indicated that it was something enjoyable. The end of that statement, "and I was in three year old Kinder," is emphatic in its tone, making it clear that Emma was extremely young, insisting to learn how to spell words.

Differentiation Begins - Laura's Story

Laura recalls that in her early primary years she was also placed in a "higher level" group which was organised according to how well she could read. She did note that the groups were named according to levels and she was in the "green level." Laura knew she was in a more advanced group because she said, "I thought at the time the other kids' books were easy (laughter)...I knew [because of] what we were reading...the books are thicker...they
are reading books that don't look as hard to read... I had read them before...I would say[our] words were bigger...it made me feel smart (laughter) yeah it actually did!"

Laura's reflection on how she knew she was in a more competent reading group differs to Emma's understanding of being given special privileges to "look up big words." Laura was observing the actual words the other children were reading. She thought that her words were "bigger" and more sophisticated. Laura observed the books the other students were reading and she noticed that these were books she had read before. Laura's books, she noted, were "thicker." This association of a thicker bound book in her mind suggested the book was harder, there were more difficult words and it required a clever student to read it. Laura was comparing herself to the other students in terms of reading ability and she said it made her feel "smart."

**Differentiation Begins - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Emma and Laura were being extrinsically rewarded for their reading ability, firstly by being placed in more advanced groups and secondly by being given difficult words to either "look up" or by being given books with "big words" to read. Emma and Laura were placed into smaller reading groups which allowed them to work with students who were quite possibly operating on a similar level. Emma stated that her group of "four" were allowed to use a dictionary and look up big words while in Laura's group the books were harder to read than the other groups' books. They were engaged in the reading activities and an intrinsic value of reading had been established, both girls spoke of the reading groups making them feel "pretty good" and "smart." "When children intrinsically value an activity they often become deeply engaged in it" (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010, p. 4). This ability to engage in the activity of reading made them feel good. Snow's (2007) evidence though suggests "an early successful start with literacy is not enough to ensure later literacy"( p. 6). Exploring the other factors which assisted these students to be successful readers and successful learners is the intention of this thesis.

**Chatting About The Book - Completing Stimulating Tasks - Emma's Story**

Emma recalls times when, "we would like go in this other room and we read a book...we would do activities on it...there were about six of us - it was always fun - in a special little
room and we would chat about a book." For Emma this period of her reading development was "fun." It was enjoyable and pleasurable. It added to the intrinsic value of reading. It was seen as something "special," an extrinsic reward was provided by going into the "special little room." Emma suggests a sense of being comfortable and secure in the "little room" and the word "chat" reveals her perception that this is something more sophisticated readers do and she was identifying herself as belonging to such a group. Emma succinctly stated that "I [did] not see the point of not learning...[there was] always something to do. It was stimulating and I guess probably because I could do it well..." The words "I did not see the point of not learning" and "I could do it well," elucidate her view as being an able learner and reader. Emma spoke of her teachers encouraging her to do better and providing tasks like making models, dioramas and scenes related to books they had read. Emma's language suggests that she was aware of "achievement space," (Gee, 2000, p. 419), being able to connect herself to achievement and success. Emma talks of, "making models, dioramas" and other things related to her reading. She enjoyed doing this; she found it "stimulating" and she "could do it well." Emma's language and how she perceived reading as an achievement, underpins Gee's (2000) concept that students with this ability to "recognise and accrue skills, attributes, attitudes and achievements, [see it] as capital that will make them worthy of success" (Gee, 2000, p. 419).

**Chatting About The Book - Completing Stimulating Tasks - Laura's Story**

Laura emphasised her love of discussing the books she had read, "we had these programs where they would give us...they would give each group a book to read and we would have to read it an then we would have to discuss it...I really liked it...there were books constantly, they were giving us [books]...to read. You would have like mothers come in and do volunteer reading...I would read the books and we would come to class and we would just talk about it." Her desire to read and the affect it had on her is clear when Laura says, "I really liked it." Like Emma's "chatting" activity, the "discussing" of books for Laura was seen as something a mature person does. She says they would "just talk about it" suggesting its informality, its naturalness and its enjoyment. The "talk about books, more than anything else, enlargers and deepens us as readers"(Chambers,1991, p. 84) this
shared enjoyment for Laura is prescient, when we consider her discussions later in the study, in regards to book analysis.

Laura does recall a time when reading for her was not pleasurable but rather a "pointless activity." She refers to a specific time in Year four, when a teacher read to the entire class for long periods of time and the students had to, as Laura perceived it, unreceptively "sit" and listen. She says "I didn't dislike the book, I just hated it. I didn't have the patience to sit there for ages and listen to someone talk for ages." Laura says, "It was just like why? Why are we doing this? It just felt so pointless...I just thought it was stupid it was like - how old are we? Five? (Emphatically) Oh! I can't forget him reading all those books. I just got so bored. Um I don't think I listened half the time either..." This "hate" and not liking the passive activity of being read to illustrates how Laura was affected by this constraint in her reading development. Her statement, "how old are we?" suggests that Laura identified herself as a competent reader who no longer needed to be read to. The way Laura thinks and what she feels, is shown in the "I" comments she makes. "I' is consequential for how [students] are here and now fashioning themselves in and through language" (Gee, 2000, p. 415 ). Laura affirms that she was being stifled and was annoyed when she emphatically says, "Oh! I can't forget him reading all those books."

Chatting About The Book - Completing Stimulating Tasks - Emma's and Laura's Story

Laura's episode with the teacher who read all the Harry Potter books left an indelible mark, however, it did not turn her away from reading. Emma and Laura did value reading. They spoke of "liking" school and "liking" the reading activities. This intrinsic motivation stems from the fact that both girls were stimulated by their primary school environments and by their teachers at school, especially when provided with opportunities to talk about what they were reading in smaller, more intimate groups. Wigfield and Guthrie (2000) argued that practices which would increase reading motivation and reading comprehension were things such as, "providing content goals for reading, supporting student autonomy, providing interesting texts, facilitating social interactions related to the reading, maintaining warm relations between teachers and students and using hand-on activities to spark interest" (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2000, p. 232). All of these elements were being
addressed in the primary schooling for Emma and Laura and it provided the girls with another layer which was embedded in their reading journey.

Free and Extensive Reading - Reading for Enjoyment - Emma's Story

Emma's reading as she progressed through primary school was assisted by independent learning programs. She says, "we did the Inquiry Program and my school got heavily into that...so that when I was in Year 5 and 6 - actually I had good teachers all the way - in Year 5 I had a really good teacher who really sort of pushed me. I remember that. Yeah, he was very good - I don't remember much about reading in the Year Level though I can remember like doing dioramas and making models from scenes in the book that's about it." When asked if she was reading at home during this period and if she had a favourite book or novel she stated, "I read a lot - I don't think I had a favourite book though." Emma's Year 5 teacher provided hands-on activities related to the books they read she cannot recall reading at school too clearly at this point. However, she does comment that this particular teacher "pushed" her, encouraged her to explore other creative ways to display and retell narrative structures. Emma does say that she was reading extensively at home and she was not committed to reading a favourite book but rather she read "a lot."

In Year 6 Emma's reading increased, she says, "I remember that we'd...get class set of books and go through them...I read a lot though...novels that were sort of easy - I guess not always for my age - not sort of - well I liked the novels that everyone else would be reading - even the stuff that [my sister] would be reading for Year 7 and Year 8..." Not only did Emma read extensively and freely but she was being attracted to novels that "everyone else was reading." The language here suggests that she was fascinated by novels that were more difficult and the wording of "everyone else," implies her older sister's reading selections. Emma was emulating her sister's reading practices so she read novels which were far more sophisticated almost two years above her reading age. Emma stated about her sister "she is bigger than I...and so she always had quite a few books." This idea of the older sister being "bigger" and having "quite a few books" reveals a world of reading maturity and importance that Emma wished to enter. Books were available, accessible and necessary for Emma (Chambers, 1991) and they appeared to have a "social status" (Griswold & Hunt, as cited in Graff, 2010, p. 185) connected with them.
Free and Extensive Reading: Reading for Enjoyment - Laura's Story

Laura's foray into reading was not hampered by the Year 4 teacher who read *Harry Potter* to the whole class. She read extensively and states that "there were books constantly." Her reading was frequent. Laura recalls, with great detail, the story lines and characters in the books she read. In Grade 5 or Grade 6 Laura comments on a novel that changed her reading as she says, "I would think to myself I really want to read this one - I couldn't put *Across The Nightingale Floor* down - just couldn't stop reading it - very good book at the time I loved it...it was the mystery and the suspense and I guess that I had never read any books like that...it was set in Japan...and there was a war, a lot more complicated and I think it [my reading] probably changed with that book..." Laura describes the desire to read when she says "I really want to," "I loved it," and "I just couldn't stop reading it." She knew that reading this book was pivotal in her reading development and like Emma she too had challenged herself to read "more complicated" texts. Reading for leisure is vital to the development of student reading abilities (Nimon, as cited in La Marca, 2003) but it is also vital in building up knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).

Free and Extensive Reading - Reading for Enjoyment - Emma's and Laura's Story

The more they read, the more of a challenge they set themselves. This is evident by the fact that Emma was reading her older sister's books and Laura was reading books that she said "challenged" her and she "really loved it." In the later years of primary school the girls read extensively. Emma says there were "tons" of books while for Laura there were books "constantly" in her life. Laura on the other hand was discovering different genres and was being selective in the types of novels she chose to read. Emma, at the same time was discovering and enjoying the reading choices of her older sister. Both Emma and Laura benefitted from free and extensive reading (McQuillan & Krashen, 2007). These practices supplemented their reading development (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998) providing - another rich layer in their reading journey.
Engaged Readers - Reading Achievement - Emma's Story

Emma remembers that Library classes were held at primary school as part of the school curriculum. She says, "I remember we had Library classes...and the Library teacher would always like give me [books] (Emma speaks in the Librarian's voice) 'we just got this in, ' 'you have this one,' 'you will really like this one,' - it was that kind of thing - so that was always good. The repetition of the word, "you" suggest that 'she' was chosen by the Library teacher as being a capable reader and as an engaged reader she needed to be nurtured and encouraged (Chambers, 1991). Emma states that she did not recall particular genres, she was not attracted to particular genres like Laura was, rather for Emma it was "I liked all the part of school...the whole thing was a good experience...I liked learning so I think the whole thing was - positive." Emma's reading was linked to her learning achievement, she "liked" learning and she was connected with school, "it was all good," she states. The more Emma read the better she read (Krashen, 2004) and the confidence in herself as a reader grew too.

Engaged Readers - Reading Achievement - Laura's Story

Laura recalls that, "[reading] made me feel smart...yeah it actually did," her statement elucidates the theory that Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) argued. Laura's sense of self-worth and her view of being seen as an 'adult reader' was validated in the incident when she discovered, "in Year 5 or 6...I do remember my teacher at the time...[saying] 'Oh you are reading that! - we are fighting over it in the staff room!'...I didn't think it was something they would read...but at the same time I thought ahhh this is a bit of a challenge and I really loved it!" Laura felt a sense of achievement when she was noticed by her teacher at the time. Laura reiterates the teacher's surprise, "you are reading that!" and the teacher's emphatic tone is inferred with the words, 'that novel!' This incident was important for Laura because she had entered, and engaged with a reading world she had associated with teachers and adults who, were "fighting," over a book she was reading. Laura's reading in primary school, as she says, was a natural part of her life, "I read every day it was a novel I had to read for school or it was a novel that I was just reading out of interest..." Her identity was aligned to her reading and whether she knew it or not, Laura's reading achievement was her capital (Gee, 2000).
Engaged Readers - Reading Achievement - Emma's and Laura's Story

Emma and Laura expressed the views and behaviours of engaged readers (Guthrie et al., 2000). Emma engaged in Library classes and in the books suggested to her, while Laura eagerly partook in reading "every day." Both girls were 'emotionally' engaged with reading. Emma expressed her enthusiasm when she said, "I liked learning." Reading for Emma though was seen as a positive experience closely connected to her learning at school. Laura's emotional connection is expressed with the words "I loved" it which suggests that her connection to reading was treasured and that it was desired. There are specific attributes which can characterise Emma and Laura as engaged readers. There was behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement and emotional engagement. The girls expressed enjoyment and enthusiasm about learning (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).
Chapter Eight

Section Three - In Pursuit of Reading For Pleasure

Reading For Pleasure and Performance - Emma's Story

Emma recounts her early High School days with the Literacy Program that was offered. Emma says that in Year 7 she remembered, "the Literacy Program and I had gotten an Award - I had got the highest one...I remember doing the book reports in the Library and [most of my] friends would have made theirs up and I would have actually read the book.” In Year 8 it is noticeable that Emma states, "I remember doing the Literacy Program... it wasn't something I particularly looked forward to or enjoyed...it wasn't exciting or rewarding...I got the Award for spelling the most words correctly...I did read in Year 7 and 8...I did read on the side...we would be reading in class and I would be reading on the side..." Emma's experiences suggest that the awards she received and the reading being completed in class was not something she particularly saw as pleasurable. She was proud that she "actually read" her books unlike some of her contemporaries but most importantly Emma was reading "on the side." Her language infers that this reading "on the side" was something she chose to partake in. It was an extra curricula activity that Emma indulged in 'almost covertly.' Reading "on the side," reading extra books, was a 'place' where she gleaned enjoyment, away from the "book reports" and the "spelling tests” which she was doing well in and receiving awards for.

Reading For Pleasure and Performance - Laura's Story

Laura's reading in the early years of High school focuses on the novels and the genres she was exploring. Entering High School Laura remembers, "there was a library thing and we had those sessions and you would say what books you had read and then we would talk about it...they would give awards to the people who read the most...some Year 7's said they had read 150 books...I would just read like when I felt like it and when I wanted to - it wasn't like I have got to read 90 books to impress my friends...I went against what was the norm or the most popular thing...I was mainly enjoying [the reading]...I was enjoying Crime books because I thought they are there for entertainment...John Grisham...Stephen
King: that was just for entertainment...they didn't have any substance." Laura's reading suggests a maturity in her approach. She read not to "impress" her friends or be part of "the norm." Rather she read because she was "enjoying the books," and they provided "entertainment for her."

Reading For Pleasure and Performance - Emma's and Laura's Story

In Year 7 and 8 Emma and Laura took part in the Literacy Program offered by their High School, reading is encouraged and class time is given to the students to read. The intimacy and the relationship they formed with reading was valued and enjoyed by the girls. They did not, however, value the "book reports" or the "spelling tests," or the number of books read. Emma found enjoyment in reading texts "on the side," while Laura "was enjoying the reading" and doing it "for entertainment." Enjoyment with reading has a "strong relationship with performance" (PISA, 2009, p. 296). However, the personal relationship with reading needs to be created first. Both Emma and Laura not only displayed independent reading habits out of school (Cullinan, 2000) but they had a personal relationship with reading. Reading for them was dynamic it allowed them to position themselves as a "reader who constructs meaning and understanding" (Rosenblatt, as cited in Graff, 2010, p. 178).

Diversifying Mind - Emma's Story

By the time the girls reach the middle years of secondary school there is a marked shift in how they perceived reading. Emma's recollection of reading focuses on the novels she studied in class. I use the word "studied" because of Emma's explanation of what was happening in the Year 9 classroom, "It was never one of my favourite things about school - English was never my absolute favourite subject - I didn't dislike it but pulling apart novels gives some people a real interest and they are very big into it - to me I was never hugely into it...Year 9...I remember doing To Kill A Mockingbird and enjoying that book...I enjoyed the story...watching the movie helped." Emma's reading does change, she does not read "on the side," and Library sessions for Year 9 students are no longer available. Emma's reading consisted of "pulling apart" her English texts. The analysis of the text examining the linguistic features, imagery and "metaphors" did not appeal to Emma.
Manuel and Robinson (2002) state, that teachers need to be aware of using the reading novel as "a 'lit crit' dissection for it underplays the literary aesthetic value of good literature and young adults' ability to appreciate its value" (Manuel & Robinson, 2002, p. 77).

Emma's enjoyment of the "story" was her focus. The word "story" suggests the enjoyment or "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) a child may obtain through reading a narrative. Emma's pleasure was in the reading not in the analysis of the text.

**Diversifying Mind - Laura's Story**

Laura's reading during Years 8 and 9 continues in the vein of the engaged reader. However, it is at this point she does become more analytical in her view of books and what they offer her. She says, "I don't remember as much about what I read but I think that was when I read more diverse books - I can't remember everything but I read To Kill A Mockingbird..." Laura indicates that she was reading more "diverse" and different books. Sadly, she cannot recall them, however, her memory of To Kill A Mockingbird indicates her maturity and her ability to relate the events of the novel to her life. For Laura her reading was akin to Wilhelm's (2008) reverberations one feels when reading a good book. Laura says, "the novel makes you think too - especially I remember - even though it's like a small aspect of the book you know - the women, the white women who would go to church and call themselves (my input here helps her remember the name of the group The Ladies Missionary Circle) yeah...and I think one of them is named Alexandra...this sticks out...it was like a side theme to the book - you know people who think that they are moral because they go to church and that kind of thing...people who think that they are decent...I kind of relate it to my own life sort of how these things can still or might apply..." Reading stated Chambers (1991), "is a means of thought...Literature gives us images to think with" (p. 7) and for Laura this was pivotal in how she connected herself to the text and it enabled her to think empathetically.

Laura's recollection of the novel is extremely personal and at the same time she is able to access and retrieve information from the book. She is able to interpret information, "the white women who would go to church," and then connect the women to a missionary group. Finally Laura is able to reflect and evaluate the event for she says, "they think they [the women] are moral...decent," inferring that these women were not so and further
elucidating the concept that these events "can still apply" today. Laura displayed all the aspects which PISA (2009) assessed as significant in a student's ability to read, but she was also able to connect herself to the text which Chambers (1991) believed was "profoundly important" (p. 83).

A profound impact on Laura's thinking was created by A Fortunate Life. Laura says, "actually [the book which had] an impact on me was A Fortunate Life, by A. B. Facey - it was like suddenly that book just really sticks to me because it was...in fact it is not entertaining at all. You could just say it is just a completely boring book - if you just read it after, you know, all those crime books...it's got nothing to do with entertainment it's just got such a simple...simple Australian life, made up of hardships...you were made to think how hard it must have been for him and how everything he has been through that he will see himself as fortunate you know...it was really kind of...you can't not think about it..."

Laura's interpretation and analysis of the title "a fortunate life" expresses her understanding of irony as the main character's life is anything but fortunate. She repeats the word "simple" as if to affirm that the story and its message is easily interpreted. A Fortunate Life had an impact on developing her reading metacognition. Reading had direct impact on her cognitive skills, the consequences were exponential in their nature (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Laura says, "you were made to think," and "you can't not think."

**Diversifying Mind - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Reading allowed Laura to analyse life and to analyse people and think about situations, as she says, "when you read a book you kind of see your own life...you are like drawing wisdom from it." Reading provided Laura with intrinsic rewards. She was able to discover life lessons and she could identify with the stories and the characters. Her experiences echo Misson's assertion that "when we are reading, if we are reading well, we project ourselves into the text. In fact, we can only make sense of the text through the imagination. To understand, we need to imagine a relationship to the kind of text it is" (Misson, 2001). For Laura this was truly a turning point in her reading - she remembers specific novels outside of the school selected text books which enabled her to reflect on life. "Looking at things from different angles" is what reading provided for Laura.
For Emma, the reading of novels did not create such a cathartic experience as it did for Laura. Emma found reading pleasurable and she enjoyed reading novels outside of the prescribed school's texts (Krashen, 2004). Laura recalls that reading was something she did every day, as did Emma. However, Laura says, "I wanted to read because I wanted to improve myself, I wanted to know...I wanted to learn something...to learn something else." Her repetition of the word "I wanted" portrays Laura as a person who wishes to be actively involved in her reading and in her learning. Emma's learning is important to her too and this is explored in the next section of this study. However, it is Laura's response in being actively involved, that reaffirms her dislike of having to passively listen to Harry Potter being read to her in Grade 4. Her ability to reflect and to evaluate is a measure in understanding and in gaining knowledge (PISA 2009). A clear identity (Gee, 2001) of Laura, as an active, analytical learner is forming, through the language she uses to describe her reading.

**Goal Oriented - Emma's Story**

Reading for Emma provided her with pleasure and enjoyment. Emma says, "I enjoyed finishing a book...then getting a new one...and then reading my sister's...it was definitely out of pleasure." Emma's pleasure also came from the fact that reading was seen as something which was natural in her home. "I enjoyed it...my sister would read and my parents would read...when I read I feel comfortable." This language of "comfort" is reminiscent of the reading practices she recalled in early primary school. Emma recalls that as a child it was an activity she did every day. Other children "would have just gone home and watched TV...[but] reading was something I chose to do...I was never pushed into doing it but I chose it...it obviously gave me pleasure." The repetition of the word "chose" indicates that for her reading was associated with her free will and her desire to learn. Her language provides us with an identity (Gee, 2001) as Emma, a person who read for pleasure and one who was intrinsically motivated. She says, "I always wanted to do well at school...it has always been a personal thing that I have wanted - wanted to do the best I can and show myself I can so yeah!" Emma was extremely disciplined. This is shown clearly when she repeats "I can" and "I wanted." Her illness placed restraints on Emma, however, she had a clear path in mind, "to do the best I can."
Emma's reading purpose and reading significance in her life did change. She says, "I was always into reading - first it was pleasurable and then I was reading anything I could for academic purposes...yeah...I remember like when I was in Year 11, I was in Year 12 Biology and I would read the whole text book and I would get another text book out and then I would read that entire text book and we'd have like thousands of PowerPoint slides...I read them all and then I would read all the study guides and all The Checkpoints...I read all the work sheets...everything." The repetition of the word "read" highlights the repetitive action she embarked on to succeed academically: Emma read "everything." Emma's school reading was goal oriented as Csikszentmihalyi (1997) so aptly put it "much of what we do is not purely for pleasure, but to accomplish a goal...which leads to new challenges and hence to personal and cultural growth" (p. 11). Emma realised that as her school commitments became more demanding and her out of school obligations took up more of her time, and her health needed to be kept in check, her reading for pleasure slowly "started to drop off." She says," I read through all of primary school...and at the start of high school and then I guess as school got busier and I started going on with extracurricular - I started to drop off at the end." Although her language "drop off" suggests a fall in her reading for pleasure, Emma did not stop reading. It meant, however, that she learnt to be more purposeful and selective in her reading which ultimately had a positive effect on her learning (Cullinan, 2000). What Emma read, how she accessed it, how she retrieved and interpreted her reading was a strategic approach that Emma employed and will be examined later.

**Complex Family - Emma's Story**

Emma's home life was comfortable and supportive. Emma says "I read from early on because I enjoyed it and because it was part of a routine and my sister would read and my parents would have read to us - it was kind of a logical thing to do - it was just what people did...mum and dad still enjoy [reading] - my dad is a professional gambler...all of his life he has betted on horses and made a living out of it...my mum doesn't work...she's always um cleaning and she's always cooking...[they read to me because] it was more like a bonding thing...we enjoyed that sort of stuff..." Emma saw herself as a reader: "I read pretty much, as much as I [could] do, to do well..." Emma's home was one where reading
was seen as an enjoyable experience. For Emma and her family it was "part of a routine," "a logical thing to do" and part of a "bonding" experience. Emma's family activities, related to reading, were part of her normal growing up experience. The word "bonding" implies that reading was something which brought them closer together as a family unit. Emma's description of reading being "routine," conveys a sense that it was comforting because it was a normal day to day activity one that was considered special and positive. Within this family unit Emma saw herself as a reader. She read to achieve, had goals and she aimed "to do well" at school. These positive home experiences were part of complex families observed by Gute, Gute, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2008). "Complex families, reported the greatest number of positive home experiences [while the teenagers reported] living up to their own and others’ expectations and doing projects important to themselves and the fulfilment of their goals" (Gute et al., 2008, p. 345).

**Complex Family - Laura's Story**

Laura recalls her parents' separation, when she was eleven years old, as a time of seeing "things in a clearer light." She says, "I kind of started wondering why things were the way they were...in some ways it made me a better person...[mum and dad] never told me to do homework...they never like stood over my shoulder because they knew that I would do my best - do my own thing and I would study...they would be excited when I got a really good mark...so I always felt like that sort of makes [made] me feel good..." Laura's family also supported her. The indication Laura provides of her parents that they, "would be excited when I got a really good mark" and never being "told what to do," suggests that they supported Laura and had a highly developed sense of what she was capable of doing. Laura says she worked, "to do my best," she aimed to fulfil her own goals and her own expectations within the structure of a complex family (Gute et al., 2008).

**Complex Family - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Emma and Laura had supportive literary environments during their schooling. Positive attitudes about reading were enforced at home and both of the girls spoke of parents who were engaged in their learning but never "pushed" them. In the OECD, *PISA 2009 Results: Learning to Learn Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices (Volume III]*)
the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that "students who [made] reading an everyday part of their lives [were] able to build their reading proficiency through practice, while in turn it [improved] their confidence and [encouraged] them to become more engaged in reading" (p. 97). Emma and Laura enjoyed their reading pursuits and they did become more confident. While in the home environment, the positive and supportive experiences provided by the girls' complex families (Gute et al., 2008), added another layer which enabled Emma and Laura to find a balance in achieving their desired goals while developing as readers and learners.
Achieving academic success was a motivator for Emma as she moved further into high school. Emma took part in an accelerated programme. She was advised to complete a VCE subject in Year 10, firstly due to her academic ability and secondly to allow her time to study four subjects, rather than the usual five or six, in Year 12. While Emma was in Year 9, a representative from the Children's Hospital worked closely with her school teachers. Emma, they believed, was capable of doing one extra VCE subject, "starting it in Year 10 and that way [I] could do one less in Year 12." Emma recalls that, "it would take the burden off me in Year 12... I made sure that I did an extra subject...so that I could have more freedom...Year 12.Emma also says in relation to the subjects she chose, "I was always going to do Maths Methods because I had always done well in Maths...I had people telling me that if I did [Chemistry] and Methods - I could pretty much get into most courses...provided I had the right Enter." Emma says, "I never had it in my head that I was going to do medicine or anything like...it was only in Year 12 that someone said 'Oh are you going to be a doctor?' and I was just like hmmmm never thought of that."

Emma's academic ability was evident to her teachers and her peers when she comments that staff said she was "capable" of studying a VCE subject earlier and her peers noted "are you going to be a doctor?" The demarcation for Emma in seeing her academic success being a motivator is exemplified when she says, "I made sure I did an extra subject...I could pretty much get into most courses...provided I had the right Enter." Revealing that Emma realised in order to obtain a place at The University of Melbourne, to study Biomedicine, she needed to achieve exceptional results. The reading strategies Emma used are to be examined in the next sub-heading of this thesis.
Laura's motivation to achieve academic success is more clearly pronounced. Laura is definitive in attaining a "good" Enter. She says, "I just wanted that good Enter score - that was really what I wanted because I wanted to get into the right course because that was my main motivation...I feel like I am not in control if I don't get good grades...I was just compelled to do well because...I needed that sense of achievement doing well...I think it is in me...within my nature." She recounts an event from her primary school years when in Grade 6 the students were required to write in a graduation book. Laura says, "[it] had like your profile and what you want to do when you grow up and I wanted to be a lawyer or psychologist..." Her subject choices related to her personality as she says, "I am definitely more of a Humanities person. I prefer English and Literature...Revolutions and Legal Studies...so that is where the Law comes in because I really like the analytical side..." Laura's desire to achieve, however, is shown to be most compelling when she repeats, "I wanted that good Enter...I wanted...I wanted to get in the right course." Her perception of "doing well," "achieving" and getting the "right course" resonates with the same language she used to describe how she was "taught" to read by her mother "properly." Laura admits that this desire to do well and to do it correctly was an innate quality she saw "within" her own personality, her identity and her inherited disposition (Bourdieu, as cited in Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

Emma and Laura knew that the prospect of entering a career path of their choice and an university course was highly competitive. During the middle years of high school the two girls made very clear choices about the subjects they would study. They had very specific goals: Emma wished to study Biomedicine at Melbourne University, while Laura aimed to study a combined Law and Commerce degree at Monash University. Their subject selections were based on their enjoyment, interest in the subject areas and their self-efficacy or strengths which would enable them to attain exemplary results. These were intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for the girls (Paris, 2009). Emma chose the Maths and Science disciplines while Laura chose the Humanities area. Both girls were motivated, strategic and cognitive in their choices (Hynd, 1999). Emma and Laura were part of their
school's Acceleration Program which enabled them to study two VCE subjects as Year 10 students. Both girls obtained exceptional study scores in Year 11 for their Year 12 subjects. Emma received a perfect study score of 50 for Biology and Laura, received a perfect study score of 50 in Legal Studies.

**Strategic Reading - Emma's Story**

Emma's reading became strategic in her final years of high school. She says, "In Year 11 and Year 12, I would read everything - I would read my entire text book, I would read every bit of note I was given, I would read it all and then I would always summarise it and make - a complete huge volume - like these huge volumes of notes but they were like in my own words - a compilation of every single source I ever received...I would highlight [the notes] but because I would refine them so much and I added in things from different sources where they fit in - I knew it so well - I pretty much knew it all in my head 'cause I had seen it that many times..." Emma's reading was specifically targeting the necessary information she needed. She retrieved the information and put it in her "own words." Emma was purposeful and resolute, in reading her class notes, discarding what was unnecessary and then summarising her notes in order to understand them. Her strategic approach was not only of an "effective and efficient learner" (PISA, 2009, p. 141) but of a reader who was implementing several reading comprehension strategies simultaneously (Kucan & Beck, 1997).

**Strategic Reading - Laura's Story**

By the time Laura entered her final year of high school she too was reading strategically. Laura says, "I didn't read as much... outside all the reading [for study] ...I kept reading text books because I will definitely get what I need to find out..." Laura's primary concern in the Years 11 and 12 was to "find out" what she needed. Her reading had a very specific purpose to "find" the information relevant to her subjects to help her do well. Laura's heavy reading load in English, Literature, History, Religion and Society and Legal Studies meant that reading "books outside" the prescribed texts or reading for pleasure became less of a focus. She recounts how she bought more text books to read on the advice of her History teacher: "There were these other two books the teacher told us about, so I bought
them as well, and found that after reading the other text books, there was so much information...that it seemed a lot easier." Laura's previous knowledge helped her understand the newly collected information. She was able to make connections more readily. Added to her reading of the extra texts, Laura also said," I'd still read [newspapers] because I didn't allow myself time to read a novel so I thought a newspaper." Allowing herself "time to read a novel" meant that Laura did not have time to read for pleasure. She placed much pressure and value on her time, and reading was for extracting "what I need to find out." Laura's senior years of high school were primarily concerned with her achieving the "good Enter" she spoke about, so what Laura was reading was strategically placed in her daily school life. Laura also stated that in order to understand a text it was necessary, "to just expose yourself to different kinds of material then you can just get used to it." Her comments suggest her growing knowledge, that of knowledge being built on previous knowledge which was gathered from reading various text types. It also suggests a repetition of action: the more she read and "exposed" herself to the material the more likely she would become familiar with it, a form of The Matthew Effect.

Strategic Reading - Emma's and Laura's Story

Both Emma and Laura were strategic readers during the final years of their secondary schooling. They were purposeful in what text types they read. During this period Laura spoke of not reading as much for enjoyment but reading supplementary material. Emma also read extra material; she read whatever she felt would enhance her studies. The girls were conscious and intentional about their reading behaviour. They were aware that expending such reading behaviour would lead to positive performance results (Pressley et., 1987).

Richness Gleaned from Reading - Emma's Story

Emma recalls what she did in VCE when encountering new words, she says, "before I looked it up I would have read the sentence to see if I could have, you know, find out its meaning on my own." Emma's attempt to recall whether she was familiar with the word within the context is a strategy used by students who are expert readers (Pressley et al., 1987). Emma clearly states, "I think reading is important...many things we can read and so
many reasons to read - like I just think if I never read how would I possibly know all the stuff I know?" Emma connects her reading, her prior and continuous reading, to her wealth of knowledge. Her reflection on the magnitude of her knowledge and the connection to her reading is exemplified when she says "how would I possible know all the stuff I know," if it wasn't for the reading she had been doing. Her reading enabled her to build on previous knowledge (Snow, Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

**Richness Gleaned from Reading - Laura's Story**

For Laura reading was not just about obtaining knowledge and building up on her knowledge. Reading for Laura was, "like some sort of wisdom and you know it's really interesting to hear other people's perspectives and see how you relate to it...I love hearing about different kinds of interpretations and perspectives...I like looking at things from different angles all the time." The reading she completed provided her with a springboard from which she compared, contrasted, analysed and evaluated matters that related to her life and to other texts she studied. Laura was the Humanities student, one who loved to analyse texts. As she says, "the act of reading doesn't make me feel anything but what I am reading in itself - that can make me feel certain things." Laura's reading was about experiencing and about obtaining "an intelligence," or a "wisdom." She states that reading, "can provoke a lot of thought I like books that provoke a lot of thought...it is ultimately the way you can be taught...you get some empathy from reading...if you've got an open mind you can kind of broaden your perspective on everything." Laura's perception on the richness she obtained from reading is holistic and philosophical.

**Richness Gleaned from Reading - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Reading provided Emma and Laura with a richness of knowledge. For Emma reading enabled her to connect her knowledge to other subject areas and it provided her with the information she needed to succeed. Laura's reading provided her with meaning making experiences which she connected to her subjects and to her personal life. Wilhelm explains that this type of reading as, ":[extending] to the making of meaning with other sign systems...if students' work with one sign system...they could use this...as a springboard to operating in other systems" (Wilhelm, 2008, p. 197). This is what reading helped the girls
to do, by the time they had reached high school they had become competent readers, they were able to use this sign system as a means to learn more. As they moved into their senior years they were skilfully utilising their reading in order to become experts in their studies. "Proficient learners have vast stores of subject matter knowledge and are expected to contribute new knowledge...their reading strategies...are highly efficient" (Hynd, 1999, p. 83). Both Emma and Laura were proficient learners and proficient readers.
Chapter Ten

Section Five - Relational Foundations

The Literate Companion - The Sister - Emma's Story

Emma's literate companion was her older sister who provided her with an added value to her reading. Emma's sister would recommend books to her, "If [my sister] got a new book that was really good...or if she [borrowed] from the library she would be like oh you should read that." Anything that her sister would read Emma happily read. Her sister's recommendation spurred Emma to read the "really good" novel. Emma commented that in Year six she was reading novels that were, "not easy...not always easy for my age...stuff that my sister would be reading in Year 7 and Year 8...my sister is a bigger reader than I am." Emma read the more complex novels, that her sister read at the time. The literate companion in Emma's case also provided a source of socialisation, through the discussion and sharing of texts. Being involved in this reading of sharing and "recommending" books allowed Emma to connect and to emulate the behaviour of her older and more knowledgeable sister, who was a "bigger" reader, in Emma's eyes. Emma admired her older sister: "There was never a competition between my sister and me. She was always bright...she just got offered Honours [at university]. " It is evident that Emma had a close relationship with her older sister and looked up to her sister's ability and academic success: "She was always bright." The most powerful element in this relational foundation was that Emma had formed a "cultural and even a spiritual link" (Love & Hamston, as cited in Klauda, 2009, p. 345) with her literate companion. Emma and her sister both read and were both academically successful.

The Literate Companion -The Father - Laura's Story

Laura also had a dominant person in her life who was instrumental in her reading success. Laura's reading was influenced by her father, a journalist, whom she would visit and there she would attempt to count the many "thousands" of books he had. Laura said that her Dad was a prolific reader who recommended books to her all the time. "He probably buys two books a week...it is really funny...we will be having a conversation...or watching a
documentary...he will walk away and then he will bring three books...he's always got a book about something you know...he would say this is a really good book." What is important in this literate companionship is the ability to discuss the novels or the books being read. For Laura her existence as a reader and as an adult was being validated by the time she spent reading or discussing texts with her knowledgeable father, "who has always got a book about something." Laura elucidates this: "He always recommended books - like if I had to read books for school - I would just go to Dad and you know find something that I liked...you know he always had books to choose from ...he always had something worth reading." Laura's view of her father as the literature companion in her life is seen as someone precious and important to her. Laura repetition of the words "always" and the words "I would just go to Dad" indicate the esteem in which she held her father for he provided Laura with what she needed at the time.

The other important factor to consider is the range of the texts Laura was recommended to read by her father. Laura clearly valued her father's suggestions: "He bought me this good book The City Of The Lost Z...and suggested I read Girl With The Pearl Earring...I still have so many good books to read...[Dad] would say 'I was like nineteen when I read 'this' book and it freaked me out'...it made him question stuff...he's got [so] many good books I still haven't managed to find the time to read them." Laura's father not only recommended books to her but he would purchase them for her to encourage her motivation and her love of reading and to provide a place of the minds for the two of them. Klauda's (2009) research indicated that parents may support older children's reading motivation by sharing their own books with their children, discussing books or articles of mutual interest. This "will develop and sustain a child's commitment to reading" (Klauda 2009, p. 359). Thus Laura's sustained commitment to reading and her motivation was ignited by an intrinsic reward of being connected to her father on philosophical and spiritual level.

**The Literate Companion - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Emma and Laura had solid reading foundations in the home. Their mothers read to them every night and their teenage years were supported by the relational foundations of their
Adding Another Layer to The Foundation - Emma's Story

Emma recalls with precision many of the texts she read at school and the teachers who taught her. It is significant to note that for Emma, reading was something she enjoyed but not always the prescribed school texts that were part of her studies. Emma says, "I actually had good teachers all the way. In Year 5, I had a really good teacher, who sort of pushed me...[in Year 7] I remember the Literacy Programme and I had gotten a reward...I remember doing the book reports...I had a really good teacher Mrs D... I really liked her. I remember reading Featherbys and not being that into it and [then reading] Chinese Cinderella and liking that one...in Year 8, I had Mrs E...and I do remember doing the Literacy Program um - it wasn't something I particularly looked forward to...I suppose I could just read for myself. I didn't really need to read out the plot to the class...it was just another thing to do and it wasn't exciting or really rewarding or anything...I remember getting the Award for Spelling the most words correctly...while in Year 9 a lot of the [girls] were a bit frightened of Ms P... but I liked her because she was a very good teacher." Emma can remember the names of her English teachers and what texts they studied. However, her experiences of the Literacy Programme in the Library, "doing book reports" was not engaging and it was not challenging for her.
Emma was very independent in her reading: "I could just read for myself, I didn't really need to read the plot to the class." She also stated, "we would be reading in class and I would always be reading on the side [out of school]." For Emma much of what she was reading and doing at school was as she recalls, "a personal challenge...I think that's something that has always motivated me...no one wants to get an award and then the next week you know like do not well...English was never my absolute favourite subject - I don't dislike it...I do remember doing To Kill A Mockingbird and enjoying that book...in Year 10 there was Much Ado About Nothing... Paper Nautilus I didn't really enjoy that too much and What's Eating Gilbert Grape..." Emma's comments reflect the findings of Manuel and Robinson's (2003) study which indicated a number of similarities. Firstly, Emma preferred to choose her own novels. She was, "always reading on the side," the texts she preferred. Secondly, the fiction chosen by the school as part of the English curriculum was generally accepted as a text of study by Emma but not as a text she had enjoyed. Thirdly, there is a definite requirement as seen from Emma's comments, for teachers to plan and implement reading programmes that cater to the diverse needs of students like Emma. Emma was not being stimulated by the book report sessions in the Literacy Programme: "I didn't really need to read out the plot to the class...it was just another thing to do and it wasn't exciting or really rewarding or anything."

**Adding Another Layer to The Foundation - Laura's Story**

Laura's relationships with her teachers and the teacher librarians who extended recommendations of novels for her to read, was important and significantly more obvious. Laura recalls, "I was in Grade 5 or 6 - I do remember my teacher at the time Mrs M she said 'Oh you are reading that [book] we are fighting over it in the staff room..." This particular incident had an impact on Laura for she said how she had no idea that the adults would be wanting to read Across The Nightingale Floor. Laura continues that, "in Year 7 and Year 8 I really got into the murder mysteries...I would read a whole lot of crime stuff...I don't know [the library staff] could have said 'Oh! you should try something else' or it could have been Mr H [English teacher who] said like 'Maybe you should read something else'...I don't know I wasn't kind of obsessed with crime books." Laura's English teacher's or the library staff's suggestion, that she read other genres, indicated their perception of Laura as a reader who needed to be exposed to other genres. The comment
did affect her for she tries to defend her reading by saying, "I wasn't kind of obsessed with crime books." Notably her reading of different genres changed when she makes a point of saying that by Year 9, "I read more diverse books."

Laura's memory of the Literacy Programme is clear she says, "we had Library sessions with Mrs C and all the library staff in Year 7...we had to read a minimum of 12 books - and then write them down - you had to keep a record of them all...they would give awards to people who had read the most...some Year 7 s said that they had read a hundred and fifty books but I never read like a hundred and fifty books...I would just read when I felt like it and when I wanted to. It wasn't like I have got to read 90 books to impress my friends...I refused to read Twilight...I can't bring myself to read it. Everyone keeps talking about it...or everyone did...I read John Grisham - I did read a bit of Stephen King. That was just for entertainment."

A turning point for Laura was the discovery of different genres and the diversity of books available to her. Laura's stance on what she read is based on her developing strong perception of how she saw herself as a reader. Her literary canon did not consist of reading "one hundred and fifty books in Year seven" in order to be given a reading award or to "impress her friends." Rather, she wanted to read books that would "make her think" such as, Facey's A Fortunate Life. Laura says, "it was like suddenly this book...a simple kind of [book]...about an Australian's life...made up of hardships and everything...[and] you were made to think how hard it must have been for him...everything he [had] been through...and that [he the main character could ] see himself as fortunate." Laura's recollection of this novel had a profound impact on her as a reader for she understood the irony explored in the actual title of the novel. Laura indicates that in actual fact the main character's life was tough it was, "made up of hardships," and it was anything but fortunate. What had moved Laura, was how the character could still see "himself as fortunate," amidst the bitterness and "hardship" of life. This was also a turning point for Laura. She was driven to achieve and to do well, to attain grades which would confirm a university place of her choice, but at this moment, reading opened up a different world to her. It was another layer which was personal and meaningful for her.
Adding Another Layer to The Foundation - Emma's and Laura's Story

Emma's experiences confirm her independent reading for pleasure and how she disliked certain reading activities at school. Emma says in relation to the study and the analysis of novels, "it was never one of my favourite things about school...pulling books apart gives some people a real interest and they are very big into it - to me I was never hugely into that." She did not enjoy the tedium, as she saw it, of book reports. Emma was the maths and science student who loved reading but reading her own books "on the side," outside the mandatory texts of the school curriculum. Laura, however, loved to analyse the texts she read. She was the Literature and English student. To her, the study of books meant the analysis of symbolism, metaphors and literary techniques which was the focus of her VCE years to be explored in this thesis. For Laura, reading provided her with a, "unique and powerful way of knowing... that a book can sink so deep that it alters our lives, and we know that its reverberations will never cease to be felt until the day of our death" (Josipovici , as cited in Wilhelm, 2008, p. xv).
Chapter Eleven

Section Six - Raising Consciousness

Reading Efficacy - Emma's Story

Emma always wanted to learn and to be stimulated. She says, "I liked all parts of school...I just [did] not see the point in not learning." Emma also had to contend with the added concern of her physical illness which meant there were times she needed to listen to her body's demands (and her doctors' advice) and slow down. For her, there was never a question of "falling behind." Emma says "the prospect of trying to do better motivated me," and "I wanted to show myself...to do the best." Emma's strong personality is evident in that she did not allow her illness to hinder her from achieving what she aimed to do: "I wanted to show myself."

Emma's aim was not about passing VCE, it was about doing "her best." Emma comments that as a student of VCE, her reading developed into encompassing the reading efficacy required for study: "I was always into reading - first it was pleasurable and then I was reading anything I could for academic purposes...I just absolutely [would] compile everything - put them in my own set of note racks...I would just read the text - I would just read everything...I am quite analytical in my approach so I just carefully study it and like underline key words...probably read it a second time..." Emma knew that in order to succeed academically she had to be a more efficient reader. She had to be analytical in what she read and how she read. She talks of her understanding language in a particular content, "when I read I feel comfortable - I feel familiar [and if I don't feel familiar] it's okay I can process it and it's fine...I ask myself questions...[I would] read a little bit if it didn't make sense...I need to understand...I [would] research...read reviews and read." Emma's need to process her understanding meant that she needed to understand how language construed meaning. The material she read had to be placed into context (Schleppegrell et al., 2004). Thus she was more critically aware of the language, or as Emma phrased it to "feel familiar" and "comfortable."


Reading Efficacy - Laura's Story

Laura speaks of reading books because she "didn't need to impress her friends." She speaks of striving for "perfection" and "being in control." Her need was to "feel good [and] to get good grades." Laura's focus was, "I wanted to get into the right course...that was my main motivation." Her language, "the right course," suggests that Laura's drive was very much on an external reward. At the same time Laura talks of feeling "good," which suggests that in order to feel good she needed to master her studies and the content that was being covered - this she did through her reading. Reading in Laura's eyes was about being able to," know structures - the structures of paragraphs...you know where the important bits are - like okay they are going to go through an example now and I am just going to scan...I think just in sentence structure and you know just understanding - you know particular words - your vocabulary...it's easier to pick up on the meaning of a word judging on the context of that word in any other sentence...I can't learn if I don't read...it depends on the content...[sometimes] I had to read a paragraph like three times because the first time I would just be reading the words...and the second time I would understand...also if I am interested in what I am reading I will definitely re-read it."

Laura's reading clearly focuses on her reading to understand, not just reading and glossing over the words. She indicates that she analysed the "sentence structure," the linguistic features of language, and she judged the use of words in the "context" of the overall piece. Her actions are similar to Emma's. They are the actions of a critical thinker working towards a higher level of knowledge (Schleppegrell, Achugar & Oteiza, 2004) and reading efficacy.

Reading Efficacy - Emma's and Laura's Story

Integral to this aspiration "to do well" was the extrinsic motivator in their final year of high school to attain top grades, while at the same time it is apparent in the interviews that their desire to know their subject material was also a driving force. Emma and Laura were motivated students; they were intrinsically aware that their reading efficacy was a key to achieving academic success. Eccles and colleagues (as cited in Snow, 2007) summarised this motivation as the following construct, "students' self-concept of ability and
expectations for success 'Can I succeed on this task?' and students' goals for or valuing achievement 'Do I want to succeed on this task?'” (Snow, 2007, p. 70). Emma and Laura wanted to succeed and they used their reading as "disciplined minds," (Gardner, 2008, p. 32) to help them achieve this success.

**The Reading Shift - Dissection - Emma's Story**

This reading shift is most evident in the final years of schooling. Emma explains that in Year 12, "I would read everything...entire text books...every bit of note...compilations of every source I would read...The Study Designs...Checkpoints..." Reading in VCE became a flurry of collating and reading volumes of books, texts, power points, study guides, websites and notes. Emma says, "When I was in Year 11 [doing Year 12 Biology] I would read the entire text and I would get another text book out and then I would read that entire text book and we would have like thousands of Power Point slides - the Biology Department had purchased them from some sort of company - and so we'd get all the manuals and just huge volumes of these slides and I read all of them and then I would read all the study guides and all the Checkpoints for both semesters...and I would read all the worksheets and everything [the teacher] wrote on the board." Emma's language elucidates the quantity of what she read when she says, "entire texts," "another text," "thousands of Power Point slides," "huge volumes" and the repetition of the word "all" emphasises her need to read every possible text. Emma's intrinsically embedded good reading skills promoted her one step further. She not only read but she, "highlighted" what had been covered in class and she, "[picked] out the points that [she] thought were important" and "[typed] them into [her] own notes." Completing her Maths problems she learnt to read the question properly and in her words, "to pick apart" the sections of the problem. Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) maintained that "good readers are always changing their processing in response to the text they are reading" (p. 2) this action was being exemplified by Emma's reading shift.

Emma focused on the reading she needed to do for her subjects: "I guess it was kind of intrinsic...I would have a look at the questions and say I don't need to do them. If I thought that they would help me I would do them...so a lot of the time I would like say 'Sorry [to the teacher] I haven't done it!'...I only did what I think I needed to do - just those things."
She was selective in her reading and admits to not doing homework if she felt it was not helpful in her extrapolating the information she needed for her exam. Emma says, "knowing what the Study Design [entailed] helped...a lot of people don't read those sort of things but I knew what we were being assessed on so I could kind of hone in on it...this has got to be important or this comes under that heading so therefore that must be a main point." Her ability to read as she said, in relation to The VCE Study Designs, many people didn't read "those sort of things," placed her is a far better position as a learner than her peers.

Emma strategically used her reading comprehension skills to scan a page for the headings and sub-headings and then retrieve the information she needed. The word "hone in" suggests her ability to magnify the information she needed in a sharp and determined manner. Emma states that, "highlighting would be just sort of an accessory for me - just so I would feel like I was doing something but I think that when I read things that I have written I just retain it really well...my summaries are very detailed...and then as I go along I will make them simpler...I will read my notes and I will remember writing them and I will remember what the next sentences says... I'd add in things from different sources where they fit in...and retain it really well." Emma's reading had shifted, she not only displayed the qualities of a good reader but also those of a skilled reader (Pressley & Afflerbach, 2010). Emma used different processes when reading: she highlighted passages, made notes, summarised and intentionally integrated her knowledge, and then further slimlined her notes, as she says making "them simpler."

**The Reading Shift - Dissection - Laura's Story**

Due to the VCE subjects Laura studied, much of her time was spent on reading and note-taking. Like Emma she also focused on her note taking skills but Laura's love of analysing language meant that she would dissect the task, as she says, "I [would] summarise the textbook because I can rely on that more and I feel like I get more out of it...I would make really thorough notes...I know some girls would note-take but it would be really like paragraphs and it would be - basically straight from the book and it would have a lot of unnecessary sentences and everything - but I think the aim was to be able to read and comprehend properly and know what is important...I think you think more laterally - you
can sort of see the bigger picture." Laura's ability to visualise and be creative in her analysis and knowing what she needed to attain from the text is suggested when she says that she saw it "more laterally." Laura states, "I would highlight the main points, the sentences that had the most substance and the sentence which would summarise the paragraph basically....in Year 10... there was a turning point when I highlighted novels...I saw Ms T had highlighter her novel - different colours for different things..." Laura's note-taking also involved another process, as she says, "I [would] go back when I am reading it again and then I read the book again and just take particular notice of the highlighted bit...and I would definitely put it in my own words..."

This ability to know what were the "sentences with substance," and the "sentence that would summarise the paragraph" required an exceptional knowledge of language and how language is utilised in a particular field (Schleppegrell et al., 2004). Laura was a student of History and "the amount of reading in [History] classes surpasses that in most Maths and Science classes...the reading passages are long and filled with abstract concepts and unfamiliar schema that cannot be easily demonstrated" (Short, as cited in Schleppegrell et al., 2004, p. 71). Laura's comments elucidate how she managed to deal with many of these so called abstract concepts and unfamiliar word patterns. She read and "re-read" and "read to be able to comprehend properly," all the time visualising in her mind and using the strategies of an expert reader (Kucan & Beck, 1997) in order to attain what she needed from the texts.

The Reading Shift - Dissection - Emma's and Laura's Story

Through Emma and Laura's extensive and active reading, which occurred from their very early years, they were able to implicitly move from reading for pleasure to reading for a purpose. They were able to read for strategically important reasons in their VCE - namely to retrieve what was relevant in their reading, to evaluate its importance and to recall it when it was required. Emma and Laura not only read assiduously but they processed their information competently (Hacker, as cited in OECD, PISA 2009, Vol. III, p. 77) which embedded another layer in achieving academic success.
Effective Strategies - Proficient Readers - Emma's Story

Emma's need to understand texts is closely related to her reading and the strategies she employed. If Emma came across an unknown or unfamiliar term she would as she said, "before I looked it up I would have read the sentence to see if I could have - you know - find out the meaning on my own...working to see whether it makes sense in the context it is being used." This strategy of building up on words as one encounters them in their context, is the sign of a student who is capable of developing a vast vocabulary (Kucan & Beck, 1997).

Emma says on numerous occasions that if she failed to understand a text she set herself the task to, "read it again," or "to have a good read." In preparation for her Year 12 English text In The Lake of The Woods, Emma indicated that she asked questions about the text, "hold on what's going on here?" Emma says, "I read reviews and read - just things that people had written about it to get a range of views - I remember throughout Year 12 actually with English - I like would get credible sources and just look at what other people had to say and if they had something good to say - I would be like note that I might be able to use it...I was always reading more than the minimum... I wanted to do the best I can...I didn't want to have expectations because I didn't want to get let down so it was like I will do what I can." Emma's questioning of whether the text made sense to her is one of the criteria students use to aid their reading comprehension (Scull, 2010). Emma was selective in the sources she read:"I would get credible sources," highlighting the fact as a skilled reader she was able to effectively identify and implement trustworthy and reliable evidence. Emma's desire to understand and to achieve was a personal thing, she says clearly, "I didn't want to get let down." For Emma everything she did was connected to her simple mantra, "I wanted to do the best 'I' can."

Effective Strategies - Proficient Readers - Laura's Story

Laura's understanding of text was to employ a strategy which involved reading and building up that knowledge from previous texts or seeing the word in the specific context. She says, "it is easier to pick up on the meaning of the word judging on the context...if you expose yourself to different kind of material then you can get used to it." Not only was
Laura understanding the words in their context (Schleppegrell et al., 2004) but she noted the importance of more reading "of different kind of material." She states, "well, I guess it does improve your speed of reading...I can pick out the important bits...[I can] scan...sentence structure...and just [understand] particular words...It is easier to pick up the meaning of a word judging on the context...you just [need to know] how to [figure] things out." This ability to pick up the meaning, to "figure things out," from the "particular words" as Laura says, illustrates her curiosity about language, characteristics argued Beck and Kucan (2002) of those students capable to develop extensive vocabularies. Laura's ability to pick out the "important bits" suggests that in the act of scanning the pages she didn't need to read to the end of the sentence but rather as Krashen claimed (2004) "good readers just need to see enough to confirm that it is there" (p. 130).

Laura's reading during her final years at high school indicated she yearned to read for pleasure but time constraints disallowed her being able to immerse herself in a "good book" as she put it. Laura commented that she regularly read the newspapers in order to increase and to complement her knowledge in preparation for her Legal Studies exam," I [did] a fair bit of reading [of] newspaper articles...I thought the examiners might appreciate it if you showed some knowledge from more recent times to support you...knowledge is empowering." Laura's desire to understand and achieve was connected with her view that knowledge was "empowering."

**Effective Strategies - Proficient Readers - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Laura and Emma both used effective strategies to enable them to succeed in their senior high school years. The PISA 2009 *Report* states that students who performed well in the testing, such as; being able to underline important parts and summarising important parts in one's own words were more effective for understanding and remembering information (PISA, 2009 p. 150). Both girls were able to recall previously read material, they were able to summarise information, to infer and evaluate from the texts they read and they were able to identify what was important and what was not. They were proficient readers for they read fiction, text books, reviews and newspapers to complement their knowledge and understanding (OECD, PISA 2009 Report Vol III).
Chapter Twelve

Section Seven - The Expert Reaps The Rewards

Good Comprehenders - Continuity - Cultural Capital - Emma's Story

Emma is aware that her strategic and disciplined approach needs to be maintained and continued. As a tertiary student, Emma explicitly talks of using the same expert techniques she has employed in the past, "I am this compulsive note taker...[in reading an article for university] I think what will be the main point [of the passage]...there is no point in reading something and not doing anything about it...at the moment I am reading because - I am reading mainly academic sort of work that I need to read in order to excel in my course...to pursue my chosen path...so I read pretty much as much as I can to do well...I try to always condense larger volumes of text to smaller volumes and sort of compile from different sources to get sort of the best of each opinion or range of opinions or whatever...it's very time consuming...I have been really pedantic about it...it helps because in VCE I [got] to the end of the year and had everything that I could possibly want in the one place...it comes down to discipline a lot." Her language suggests that Emma is aware that reading "academic sort of work," requires a disciplined and strategic approach, one that she is familiar with. Emma's tone is reflective when she says, "I need to read in order to excel in my course...and pursue my chosen path." This focus on academic language and needing to not only "read" it but to understand, is the language of a critical thinker (Schleppegrell et al, 2004). Emma's words "I am reading...to pursue my chosen path," indicates that reading for her is connected to her success. Emma has claimed for herself, a competence or a skill, namely reading, which is highly valued and is seen as cultural capital (Bourdieu, as cited in Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

Good Comprehenders - Continuity - Cultural Capital - Laura's Story

Laura's study of the combined Law and Commerce Degree suited her "analytical" nature. Laura says," I found it really hard... if you haven't done it before...everything we learnt in VCE...we [did] in the first six weeks... I love the finance part. I think I am going to major in finance because I think it's really useful or economics...there is a lot of reading for
university - it takes up most of my time because there is a lot of it especially with Law but I really like that reading anyway so have no problems with that...I really love the analytical side of it..." Laura's introduction into Law was "hard" but her concept of "hard," suggests not the difficult nature of the language of the degree, rather the volume of reading completed, as she indicated the reading takes up most of her time. Laura's thinking about future prospects is similar to Emma's focus on her "chosen path." Laura says she believes Finance or Economics to be "really useful," suggesting she sees it as a career path offering her employment and a viable future. Connected to her study is the vast amount of reading she needs to complete, but as she says, "I really like the reading anyway so I have no problems with that." Reading here is seen as Laura's cultural capital (Bourdieu, as cited in Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Laura's positioning of becoming a skilled reader, however, was innately connected to a cultural habit and disposition which was established by her family. This was evident when Laura stated that it was her mum who "taught" her how to read "properly."

**Good Comprehenders - Continuity - Cultural Capital - Emma's and Laura's Story**

Emma and Laura are readers who were able to reap the rewards from their reading. Emma's family never "pushed her," but they were instrumental in enabling her to become a reader. Laura's family though, particularly her mother an educator herself, "taught" Laura how to read "properly." Both families instilled an enjoyment and pleasure of reading in the girls which opened the door to Emma's and Laura's academic success (*PISA*, 2009).

**The Past Influences The Future - Emma's Story**

Emma's understanding of the value of reading is best exemplified in, "I'd like [my children] like my parents did...to have a good start...I don't want them to get to school and be like uhhh what this book is scary - you want them to [know] reading is always going to be something that is important...should always be important...so I [would just try] to give them the resources and opportunities that they will need to excel but not push them at all...yeah create a nice environment where they can read if they want to and hopefully they will enjoy it..." Emma's words, "I want [my kids] to know reading is always going to be something that is important...[something] they will enjoy," encapsulates the value of
reading. For Emma, reading is connected to a child's ability to succeed. She does not want her children to see it as something to fear but as something to embrace.

**The Past Influences The Future - Laura's Story**

Laura's ideals and aspirations for success are connected to her reading and her academic success. Laura says, "I wanted to read because I wanted to improve myself...I wanted a chance to learn something...knowledge is empowering...I learn more from my text book than I do listening to my lecturer...I didn't have a priority at primary school...but well [now I think] you can do well...and it can lead to other things - it is about opening up opportunities, that is what I wanted, the opportunities... it's freedom...opportunities mean freedom and choice..." Laura values reading and for her there is direct correlation between her being able to read and her succeeding academically. Reading for Laura is fundamental, it leads to academic success which leads her to "freedom" and "opportunities" in life.

**The Past Influences The Future - Emma's and Laura's Story**

The relationship these girls had with their reading, their understanding of reading, not only strengthened but enhanced their academic performance. Emma and Laura were successful readers and learners and therefore were able to reap the rewards of their success."The successful learner [and reader] comes to experience schooling as their pathway to the future" (Rose, 2005, p. 133).
Chapter Thirteen

Conclusion

The impetus of this study was to explore how reading connects to academic success. The data gathered revealed some common interconnecting factors which exemplify similarities in the participants' reading development. However, the research also showed a multilayered complexity which, as La Marca (2003) stated is, "the problematic nature of cause and effect in the interaction between reading and student's achievement" (p. 8).

There are several layers such as: the nurturing family, the reading enculturated school and the literate companion which facilitated Emma's and Laura's reading development.

Both girls were highly motivated. From a young age reading was seen by them as something to be valued. It was enacted regularly and encouraged by their parents, and in the very first instances by their mothers. The participants' mothers provided this intrinsic motivation for reading; they encouraged an interest, a playful enjoyment and an excitement about reading. The belief that reading was valuable and that it provided social connection was inherently bound with the first years of Emma's and Laura's life. This belief in reading as an invaluable key, shaped Emma's and Laura's understanding of achievement. They were intrinsically motivated, they "felt good". Reading gave the two girls a freedom to select books of their own choice, to be challenged by what they read, and ultimately, to achieve a mastery in what they read and in the tasks they had to complete as students. The external success was the extrinsic motivation for Emma and Laura. As they mastered their reading, they became more critically aware of how language and reading connected to the external and measurable successes of teacher praise, material awards and higher grades. This efficacy enabled them to "be in control" of the external rewards. Emma and Laura were engaged readers; they were intrinsically motivated to read for a variety of personal goals; they read strategically and with a common purpose. They were extrinsically motivated to gather information, to glean new understanding from texts, in order to learn and to achieve academic success.
The reading journey of these two academically successful students resembles that of an image of two helix curves moving in overlapping, moving out and moving in again (as shown in the diagram on page 107 of the Appendix). One of the helix's curves represents the reading path of the Maths and Science student Emma, while the other belongs to the English and Literature student, Laura. At the core of the helix curves, the single vertical axis line, where all curves congregate, is the reading for pleasure that remained constant in both their lives and the exemplary results they attained.

The girls' reading paths converge in that they were imbued with a love of reading from a young age, and their knowledge and comprehension was aided by their reading. They were strategic and purposeful in their reading in the later years of high school, motivated to succeed. However, the curves diverge and delineate during the middle years of high school. Emma enjoyed reading but did not enjoy the analysis of novels. She excelled in the world of Maths and Science, while Laura, found the reading and analysis of novels deeply rewarding and excelled in the field of English and Literature.

Another point of convergence is the fact that Emma and Laura employed similar reading strategies, though neither of them could recall being taught these techniques explicitly. These strategies characterised them as skilled readers. Thus as skilled readers, who had been embedded with strategic reading techniques, comprehension strategies, a germinating vocabulary and relationships with key people and with a love of books, they attained academic success. The path to academic success is connected to reading for these two participants, but the journey is not a straightforward one, as Snow (2007) stated, "the path to academic success is much narrower than the path to failure..." (p. 136). Reading left an indelible mark on Emma and Laura. They recognised that reading was connected to their academic achievement but in order to continue on this path, reading with all its variables, alternating forms and purposes needs to continue.

**Recommendation**

The lack of studies examining the reading journey of academically successful students, is clearly evident, "the gaze of much research has remained, too singly and for too long, on the appropriately phonating child, rather than on the actively literate and knowledgeable
learner" (Freebody, 2007, p. 65). Through analysing this data rich material it is recommended that a larger scale study similar to this one be completed. The main focus of the study would aim to explore how reading has impacted on a cohort of students who have achieved the highest performance levels in their final year of high school. It would explore a cross section of Australian students, taking into consideration the tension created between free choice and the literate companion's suggestions, gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity of students and students of Non-English speaking background, giving the study a further richness and more layers to consider.

The challenge for high schools, policy makers, administrators, leaders, curriculum leaders and teachers if we are to ensure all students are given a chance in performing well at school, is to turn our attention to reading, for it is not only the "currency for the future" (O'Connell, 1999, as cited in La Marca, 2003, p. 221) but it is also "a political construct" (Graff, 2010, p. 185). We need to firstly, ensure all students are provided with the time and resources for the enjoyment of reading in the years leading up to and including the middle years of high school. Secondly, we need to ensure that explicit reading strategies - understanding, retrieving, summarising and evaluating texts are taught to enable students to become proficient readers and learners. There is "at least one malleable habit that will itself develop abilities [to help a student achieve academic success] that is - reading" (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998, p. 8).
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Appendices

Interview Questions for the top VCE students (Completion of VCE in 2009)

Would you like to tell me a little about yourself? Your age? Where you went to school?
What were your favourite subjects at school and why?
What are your favourite memories of primary school?
Were you encouraged to read at primary school? If so, by whom?
Can you recall some of the books/texts you read in primary school?
Was reading important to you why?
What about secondary school – did you read when you got to secondary school?
What sort of texts did you read at school?
Why did you read?
How frequently did you read?
Was there anyone who influenced your reading at school?
When can you recall getting the best grade in school? Were you encouraged to do your best at school? By whom?
Tell me something about your family? Are they readers?
How would you describe a reader?
Is being successful at school important to you? Why?
How does reading make you feel?
Is reading important? Why?
Interview Extract - Laura (Student One) - 9th August 2010

Abbreviations:

T: Teacher
S1: Student One, Laura

******* indicates a section of the transcript has been removed

... Indicates an overlap in conversation or part of the conversation has been removed
-

Indicates a pause in the conversation

italicised words Indicate the words or thoughts of another person other than the interviewee

italicised words used to indicate the title of a text that the student is referring to

(happy voice) words in brackets are used to indicate the interviewee's mood

(12:46) indicates the interview's time on the digital recorder for example 12 minutes and 46 seconds
T: Tell me a little bit about yourself?
S1: I am at Monash University doing Commerce and Law. My subjects at high school were English, Literature, Revolutions, Maths Methods, Further, Legal Studies and Religion. I am definitely more of a Humanities person. I prefer English and Literature - you know Revolutions and Legal Studies. So yeah! I guess that's where the Law comes in because I like really like the analytical side of it and - I am eighteen, I live with my mum and my sister.

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S1: Mum always bought us books and she would always read to us even before we could talk. She would sit us down and read to us. She said that she would read to us books with chapters. It’s funny the importance of reading books with chapters to my mum.

T: What did she say?

S1: She said that she knows adults who haven't read a novel in their life and she said that she wanted me to read novels books with chapters.

T: Okay?

S1: Because that way - she said that it’s just good reading developing ...

********

S1: Yeah! My mum bought me all of those books when I was even younger. She bought me those golden ones.

T: The Golden Books series?

S1: Yes! The Golden Books. She bought me those and what else? I never really liked Harry Potter because I had this teacher in Grade 4 and he thought it was a great idea to read all of the books to us. Books one to four in the series, at that time. I absolutely hated it because I hated to sit there listening to someone read. After all that, I never really wanted to hear about Harry Potter.

T: Did you dislike him doing that or did you dislike the book?

S1: I didn't dislike the book I just hated - I just didn’t have the patience to sit there for ages and listen to someone talk for ages.

T: But you could do it yourself?

S1: Yeah! it was just like why? Why are we doing this? It just felt so pointless.

********

S1: In primary school - we had these programs where they would give us - like they would put us in groups. They would give each group a book to read and we would have to read it
and then we would have to discuss it. I do remember this book I really liked - can’t remember much about it - but it was in grade six. It was called Across The Nightingale Floor - I really liked it because it was a mixture of fantasy and all these other genres.

I actually do remember when we were sort of starting to learn to read you would have like mothers who would come in and volunteered to read.

T: So at school there was reading happening and at home there was obviously reading happening too?

S1: Yeah! I can’t remember like actually sitting reading and stuff but I remember I would read the books and we would come to class and we would just talk about it. I guess in the early primary school - my mum taught us everything earlier. She wanted us to talk early and all this kind of other stuff. She wanted me to learn my timetables as soon as possible also like I was the best in that at primary school. I knew all by timetables by Grade 2 and we had timetables competitions you know and things yeah and she just taught us everything early.

T: Your mum is a teacher?

S1: Yeah she is a primary school teacher!

T: And how did you know you were in a higher level?

S1: Because I thought at the time the other kids' books were easy (Laughter).

T: How did you know that?

S1: Oh! I could like look at what we were reading - I just thought the books are thicker (19:18).

T: Did you look at the language?

S1: Oh yeah - I did well - I'd say the words are bigger!

T: Did they have a name for the best group? Did they give them names?

S1: Yeah - they didn’t give them names but they sort of pointed out that the groups were in levels - the green level.

T: How did that make you feel? Knowing that you were probably in a better group?

S1: It did - it made me feel - I am smart (Laughter) yeah it did actually!

T: Was there a reading program when you started in Year 7?
S1: Yeah! You had to read a minimum of twelve books. I think it was that - and then you had to write them down - you had to keep a record of all of them.

*******

T: That didn’t motivate you?
S1: No! I never- I mean I don’t even know if those girls read one hundred and fifty books...
T: So what was motivating you to read then?
S1: I would just read when I felt like it and when I wanted to. It wasn't like I have got to read ninety books to impress my friends - it just sound stupid because - sounds like you know - I mean I know some girls who would say I read this many and say some ridiculous number.

*******

S1: Well I was really just I was mainly enjoying the reading when I was younger - when we were doing English and Literature I think it just changed – I do think it changed the way I do think about books. But in some ways when I was reading the Crime books - I thought they are there for entertainment, a lot of them, you know like John Grisham. I did read a bit of Stephen King that was just for entertainment. I really didn’t see sort of messages it was just like - there wasn't any like they didn’t have any substance (30:18)
T: Okay?
S1: They were just entertaining that is what I liked about them.
T: So when did that change?
S1: Ahh! I read - I know what did actually have an impact on me was A Fortunate Life, by A. B. Facey. It was like suddenly that book just really sticks to me because it was such - in fact it is not entertaining at all you could just say it is just a completely boring book - if you just read it after reading you know all those crime books...

*******

T: Did you keep reading in Year 11 and Year 12?
S1: I did but as I got to Year 11 and Year 12 I didn't read as much because I was more concentrating on my studies and I wanted to do - you know - I thought okay why? I might have read two or three books outside of all the reading by Year 11 because I just thought why read a book now when I could improve my grades and stuff like that you know...
T: Okay, so in Year 11 your studies were really important to you?
S1: Yeah in Year 11 and 12 - sometimes I would just say well I'll keep reading the text book because I will definitely get what I need to find out – you know I have - I felt guilty reading - then I would just be like I have to get back to my text book.

*******
T: So you if you have seen that word somewhere else?
S1: Yeah, because it's easier to pick up on the meaning of a word judging on the context of that word in another sentence. So I think you just used to you know, figuring things out and just you know like I remember. Dad's got these two books these massive books on Hitler's life. I was in Year 10 at the time and one sentence would be like a paragraph, that big! You know what I mean! So I read about ten pages or more, you had to really concentrate if you try to read things like that. So if you just expose yourself to different kind of material then you can just get used to it (37:28).

*******
S1: Dad was a journalist and a producer - yeah he was going to go back into the media but that is a long story um so (Laughter). Dad probably buys like two books a week or something . It is really funny, I will be having a conversation with him, he knows a lot. So you know, we might be watching a documentary and then he'll say like - he will pause the show and he'll continue. The show might be talking about JFK and dad will say in fact and then he will walk away. Then he will bring back like three books (Laughter). All these times when we will be having a conversation , dad will be like stop and he will go and get a book. He's always got a book about something .

*******
T: And he encouraged you?
S1: Yeah well not only that he would say this is a really good book and he bought me a book The City of The Lost Z - and The Girl with the Pearl Earring - he bought it for me and I haven't had a chance to read it yet -
T: How long ago was this?
S1: Oh this is just like earlier on in the year like yet. Dad's always recommended books really easy. If I have had to read books for school - I would just go to dad and you know find something that I liked. You know he didn't have like girls' teen fiction - you know yeah but he always had books to choose from. Normally I would go out and buy something but he's always got something that is worth reading.

*******
S1: I think mum was more about getting me into the habit of reading and teaching me how to read properly - and dad's been providing books and recommending them -

S1: There were these other two books that our teacher recommended for Revolutions. Our teacher told us about them. So I bought them and I found that - after reading the other text books there was just so much information that is seemed really simple. You know it was a lot easier.

T: My question here is why did you read? Why?
S1: Um, I guess I read different things for different reasons like text books for school. You know other books outside of school just because I thought it was or it could have been interesting, or my dad recommended it, or you know I was bored (Laughter) or something like that. Then I would read the newspapers because I wanted to know what was going on. I did a fair bit of extra reading like articles newspaper articles - I thought the examiners for Legal Studies would appreciate it if you showed some knowledge from more recent times to support yourself.

T: So there was something else motivating you?
S1: Yeah! I mean I think as well as that - I think I also wanted to read because I wanted to improve myself. I wanted to know - well I didn't want to know everything (Laughter) but I wanted to know - if there was a chance to learn something , to learn something else...

T: What else?
S1: To learn about life. Something kind of, someone else's life and what they have been through...

S1: I just want to be - I just want I feel like - you know knowledge is empowering! So there, by reading, that's where you know. I learn more from reading the textbook...

T: Alright so what I am sort of hearing that through reading you learn. You realised at some point that reading for you helped you to learn?
S1: Mmm! That is what it is for me. I can’t learn if I don’t read it. Like, I think that is just how I learn because - I will rather summarise the text book because I can rely on that more. It is my own interpretation (53:41).
T: And in high school? Who were you doing it for in high school?
S1: Ah! For myself because I just wanted that good Enter score because it was - that was what I really wanted because I wanted to get into the right course. That was my main motivation.
T: So what was your Enter score at the end?
S1: 98.9.

T: What about mum and dad in all of this?
S1: They never told me to do homework or anything they never like stood over my shoulder because they knew that I would do my best. I would do own thing and I would study. They never sort of said you know do you have any homework? (56:33)

T: Did you do that in high school?
S1: Yeah I did that in high school. I would always read the text book and then I would always highlight.
T: What were you highlighting - key words?
S1: Yeah! Key words, the main points, the sentences that had the most substance and the sentence which would summarise the paragraph basically.
T: Who taught you to do that?
S1: I don’t know. I think I just sort of picked it up from somewhere.

S1: I would say that I read every day!
T: Mmhh!
S1: Um now these days it tends to be text books,
T: At high school? 
S1: At high school um...
T: Primary school?
S1: Um I think I would have read every day because it was either a novel that I had to read for school or it was a novel that I was just reading because of interest or it was a text book. Most definitely every day in high school, I would read - I sort of like put pressure on myself to work. To always work in especially in Year 12 and in Year 11. I just always read, every spare moment I would have. If mum asked me to go to the shops and if she just
had to go to get the groceries on the way, I would like bring my text book or novel or the book for English or for Literature or something like that, or I would bring my notes to read. I just felt, you know, even if I had not read them that much, I just felt like I needed them to be there.

********

S1: Well my mum sort of yeah she was the one who set up the basics you know she’d probably bought more of the books when I was younger (80:04) and I think she taught me - she taught us how to read. She kind of, I think as a teacher, she kind of knew and just encouraged what it was. Then but my dad was the one who would like - you know - had so many books over a thousand and you know - I think now he is sort of these days he is more active sort of encouraging me.

T: How would you describe a reader? What do you think a person is as a reader?

S1: They are well informed and they are disciplined.

********

T: How does reading make you feel?

S1: Um doesn’t make me feel, the act of reading doesn’t make me feel anything. But what I am reading in itself, that can make me feel certain things it just depends on the content. You know unless you have particular life experiences how are you meant to know? How are you meant to know about other things? I think you can sort of like get some empathy from reading because I think if you’ve got an open mind you can kind of broaden your perspective on everything...You can become a better person as ridiculous as it sounds and you can learn a lot from reading and just improve yourself...

********

T: Thank you Laura!

S1: Thank you! (101:55)
Interview Extract - Emma (Student Two) - 10th August 2010

Abbreviations:

T: Teacher
S2: Student Two, Emma

******* indicates a section of the transcript has been removed
...
Indicates an overlap in conversation or part of the conversation has been removed
-
Indicates a pause in the conversation

italicised words Indicate the words or thoughts of another person other than the interviewee

italicised words used to indicate the title of a text that the student is referring to

(happy voice) words in brackets are used to indicate the interviewee's mood

(12:46) indicates the interview's time on the digital recorder for example 12 minutes and 46 seconds
T: Tell me a little bit about yourself okay? So, your age where you went to school - um just you know, things about yourself - you can tell me a bit about the course you are doing now um just give me a general sort of idea.

******

S2: Okay, um my name is Emma I'm 19 years old now -19 sounds old now (laughter) - 18 sounds so much better. In Year 12 I studied English, Health and Human Development, Biology, Chemistry, Religion and Math Methods. Now I am studying Biomedicine at Melbourne University - I am a first year student there - it's a three year course - it’s pretty full on but it's enjoyable. Um, the subjects I am doing this semester are Genetics, Anthropology, Physics and Statistics and last semester I did Biology, Chemistry, History and Calculus.

******

T: And when you complete the three year degree?
S2: Yep!
T: What then?
S2: What then is a big question - um I am not really sure at the moment - um the majority of Biomed students are hoping to get into Medicine.

******

T: Okay - Let's go back to Year 12 what was your overall Enter?
S2: 99.7.
T: 99.7 - Okay very good -take me through all your subjects. Did you do all of them in Year 12?
S2: No, I did Biology and Religion in Year 11 - and then I just did the four subjects in Year 12, which they let me do because of CF and that was a big help.
T: Explain that please!
S2: So, I was throughout all of high school under Individual Differences - under their wing sort of thing. Um and yeah when I was in Year 9 I had a meeting with them and a representative from the Children's Hospital and she was just like, I think Melissa is capable of doing one more one extra VCE subject in Year 11, or starting from Year 10 and that way she could do one less in Year 12. So it would take the burden off me in Year 12.
T: Please take me back a step because I don't know the full story!
S2: Owww! ( Totally surprised)
T: I don't know anything about you Emma.
S2: Really? Oh sorry I've got Cystic fibrosis. I was born with that um and yeah that just takes a chunk out of my day. It means that I can't like, it just doesn't give me as much flexibility as other people. So in times when other people are staying up all hours and really pushing themselves, if I did that, I would end up in hospital for a couple of weeks. So it was always that I had to sort of plan and make sure that I was organised and I was doing things sort of one step ahead.

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T: Can I know what were your study scores?
S2: Yeah, I got a 50 in both Health and Biology, 48 in Religion, 44 in Chemistry a 43 in English and a 39 in Maths Methods.

T: Well done!
S2: Thank you!

T: It's quite an achievement. So, with that Enter - um you automatically got a National Scholarship?

S2: I got an Access Scholarship. To get the National Scholarship you have to get 99.9 and above - so I got an Access Scholarship because of entering under medical condition grounds so yeah!

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T: Tell me a little about primary school!
S2: Hmmm what do I remember?

T: Teachers? Things that you did? Things that you liked?

S2: I was always - I always liked school - like I can never remember - like I never tried to take days off or anything like that umm I was always like I remember in Year One in the Independent Learning Group of four kids that were just like go off and the teacher would let us look up big words in the dictionary and stuff like that and we felt that we were pretty good. I just remember like when the teachers would say go and read the book and just talk about it. The teacher would give us all a dictionary and she would like give us all pick out like twenty words and she would say learn what they mean and we would find the hardest ones.

T: Before you went to primary school? (12:15)
S2: Yeah?

T: What sort of tools were you equipped with? Could you read? Could you recognise the alphabet?
S2: I think so. I can always remember - I have a really vivid memory of always asking my sister how to spell “the” all the time and I was in three year old Kinder.

T: So how old was your sister?

S2: My sister is three years older than me, so obviously I was writing, if I wanted to know how to spell “the.”

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T: So when you got to primary school you’ve been put in this little group how do things progress what happens in terms of reading?

S2: I remember - each year level we sort of had – you know you were segregated into reading groups or something like that. There was always one group that was the advanced group and I always remember being in that one. I don’t remember much about Year 2 but I remember in Year 3 we had like an extra teacher or someone that would come in and she would just take our group out and we would like go to this other room and we read a book about cockatoos. I do remember that - there were about six of us - so that was always fun - in a special in a little room and we would like chat about a book yeah!

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T: Did you have a particular book or novel that you liked reading in Year 5 or 6?

S2: I read a lot – I don’t think I ever had a favourite though!

T: What sort of genre? What type of books were you reading?

S2: Just like umm novels - I guess not always easy for my age – not sort of – well I liked the novels that everyone else would be reading- even stuff that my sister would be reading for Year 7 and Year 8

T: So you were reading your sister's books?

S2: She is a bigger reader than I am and so she always had quite a few books. I remember we had library classes - I had forgotten about them and yeah the library teacher would always like oh give me ones like and we just got this in and you have this one so you will really like this one – it was that kind of thing - so that was always good

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T: Alright let’s now move into secondary school okay?

S2: I remember doing the Literacy program and receiving and award - it wasn’t something I particularly looked forward to or enjoyed.

T: Oh really?
S2: I suppose I could just read for myself. I didn’t really need to read out the plot to the class.

T: So you found that tedious did you?

S2: Not tedious but just another thing to do and it wasn’t exciting or really rewarding or anything

T: Did the fact that you were getting these awards, did that motivate you more?

S2: Probably yeah – I think that's something that has always motivated me. Um yeah! So trying to keep that up and also the prospect of tying to do better always sort of motivated me.

T: What interests me is why - why is that you would want to be better? What is it?

S2: Nah! I think it’s always been a personal thing. The prospect of just doing better, being able to do better and knowing that I can, has always motivated me along the way.

S2: Well I was never one of those people that went crazy with books – but I did read on the side. Like we would be reading in class and I would always be reading on the side.

T: Okay – what about – what about when you got to Year 10? What was your reading like then?

S2: Umm I just read for school. I didn’t read outside school. We did Midsummer Night's Dream or no - it was Much to do about Nothing sorry – Paper Nautilus didn’t really enjoy that too much - What's Eating Gilbert Grape yeah there was a fourth one umm can’t remember!

S2: In Yr 11 and Yr 12 I would read everything. I would read my entire text book. I would read every bit of note I was given. I would read it all and then I would always summarise it and make a complete huge volume. I had these huge volumes of notes but they were like in my own words - a compilation of every single source I ever received. So that's how I dealt with VCE. I would write notes and people would always say Oh writing notes it's a waste of time just highlight stuff. No! This is what I needed to do.

T: Who taught you these tools – who taught you these sorts of techniques?

S2: Um!
T: How did you know to do this?
S2: I don't know - I guess it was kind of intrinsic.

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S2: Well, I guess what helped in VCE was knowing what was in the Study Design. People don’t read those sort of things. But I knew what we were being assessed on so it could kind of help me kind to hone in on the message. But I don’t know it was kind of like something innate, that kind of told me: that’s important, that’s got to be important or this comes under that heading so therefore that must be a main point!

T: So you are looking at topics or key points?
S2: Yeah I suppose so!

T: Were you ever taught to summarise in high school?
S2: Don’t remember ever being taught to do that – I just – my summaries are very detailed summaries because and then as I go along I will make them a little simpler.

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T: Um I want to ask you – you said something about reading - would you say it was important to you?
S2: Like when I was younger it was something that I did. I read every day for pleasure –

T: For pleasure? You enjoyed it?
S2: Yeah! yeah! yeah!

T: How did you feel when you were doing that?
S2: Just something I did I think it was part of my routine –and I would be like oh I will just read another chapter of this book whatever. Oh I definitely got pleasure out of it! That is why I did it – so obviously I enjoyed it. I enjoyed finishing a book and then I starting a new one, and then finding out what that one was about, and then the ending, and getting new books, and then reading my sister's. So, it was definitely out of pleasure!

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S2: Yes I read through all of primary school at the time I was at school and at the start of high school and then I guess school got busier and I started going on extra curricula – I started to drop off at the end (35:24)

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T: How important is it to you to do well at school?
S2: Umm – just like I said before it has always been a personal thing that I have wanted - wanted to do the best I can and show myself that I can. So, yeah! (Laughter)

104
S2: I was always into reading. First it was pleasurable and then I was reading anything I could for academic purposes. I remember like when I was in Year 11, I was doing year 12 Biology, I would read the whole text book and I would get another text book out and then I would read that entire text book. We had like thousands of PowerPoint slides – because the Biology Department purchased them from some sort of company. And so we'd get all their manuals, just huge volumes of these slides, and I read all of them. And then I would read all the study guides and all the checkpoints for both semesters – I read those as well. Then I read all the work sheets the teacher gave us and everything she wrote on the board.

T: Um okay and Health - were your teachers giving you things to read as well?
S2: Teachers would give a few handouts...
T: Mmmhhh!
S2: So I would always read them.
T: Mmmhhh!
S2: And usually what I would do when I'd get the handout I would read it. I would like highlight, if we were going through it in class or whatever. But I would pick out the points that I thought were important or that I hadn’t seen elsewhere. I would then type them into my own notes and then just throw out the handout.

T: When you are reading, what were you doing?
S2: Um! I would have been doing something more because I am not the type of person who would be like, yep I am just skipping through this stuff and it doesn't matter if I don't understand it! For example I can remember reading *In The Lake Of The Woods* and being like hold on what’s going on here? I was obviously asking myself questions if I didn't know something, I would read a little bit more. If it didn't make sense, or whatever, I would be like - I need to understand it, so I might as well try!

S2: I did try to research the book and read reviews and read - just things that people had written about it to get a range of views. I remember I did that all throughout Year 12 actually with English. I would get credible sources and just look at what other people had to say. If they had something good to say I would note that I might be able to use it (56:55)
So Yeah I was always reading more! I was always reading more than the minimum - that was for sure - in all my subjects yep!

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T: How did that make you feel when you received the perfect study score?
S2: I think it was a big boost to my self esteem it was just an encouragement and it justified all the hard work I had put in. It made the rest of VCE seem manageable knowing that I could do well because it was possible - so it was a comfort to me.

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T: Do you think you would have done as well if you weren't as well equipped with the reading?
S2: Probably not. No, I don't think - I definitely don't think I would have been as well equipped because reading is important in all subjects not just English. Even in things, like I was saying before, Maths, you have to be able to read you have got that - like you do need to be able to read something and pick out the important things and sort of deconstruct it. It is important in all subjects. Especially when you get to exam strategies and stuff it is critical.

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S2: I think reading is important. There are many things, so many things we can read about and so many reasons to read. Like I just think, if I never read how would I possible know all the stuff I know?

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S2: One day I would like to read to my kids, (chirpy and happy voice) and yeah I think I would like to do what my parents did. I think they gave me a good start because I don't want them to get to school and be What is this? A book - it's scary! I want them to be reading and reading is always going to be something that is important. It should always be important. So, I will just try to give them the resources and opportunities that they will need to excel but not push them at all.

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T: That was really good thank you so much!
S2: Oh that was okay!
T: Thank-you!

(86:21)
Laura's childhood: pleasure for reading embedded - intrinsically motivated

Laura's primary school experience with reading is positive

Laura intrinsically motivated reader evident as she begins and continues in high school

Laura's literate companion is her Father

Laura's reading is enhanced by the Reading Program at school in the Early Junior Years and the teachers' recommendations

Laura highly analytical - focus on themes and character analysis, empathises with characters

Laura English and Literature Student

Emma's childhood: pleasure for reading embedded - intrinsically motivated

Emma's primary school experience with reading is positive

Emma intrinsically motivated reader evident as she begins and continues in high school

Emma's Literate companion is her older Sister

Emma's reading is not motivated by Reading Program at school in the Early Junior Years

Middle Years of high school Emma is a strategic reader - reading to understand and master concepts Note takes and synthesises information

Emma Maths and Science Student

Emma highly analytical - focus on linguistic features of text

Middle Years of high school Laura is a strategic reader - reading to understand and master concepts Note takes and synthesises information

Laura English and Literature Student

Emma achieves exemplary VCE results. Reading is seen as important and invaluable

Laura achieves exemplary VCE results. Reading is seen as important and invaluable