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Why Would I Read When the Game is On?: Reasons Adults Give for Reading or Not

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Not

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<u>Abstract</u>

This thesis dives into the ideas of why people read and do not read, beginning in their childhood years. Many different factors add to why people choose to read or why they choose not to read. School plays an important role as to why people choose to read because reading is not necessarily a natural process since it is different from learning how to speak. Reading has to be taught and understood fully in order to read independently, understand the material, expand ideas, and connect with the reading. Without this, individuals can become "poor" readers or have a low reader identity or attitude, whereas individuals who do have those strong cognitive skills can become "good" readers with a high reader identity and attitude. Along with school, social and personal factors play a role in an individual's reading. In the thesis study, a group of individuals were asked to read for fifteen minutes every day for two weeks. The point of this study was to see how individuals read on their own and if any factors played a role in their reading that would supplement the ideas in the literature review. The results suggest that women typically read more than men and individuals with individualized education programs (IEP's), reading difficulties, and/or individuals who come from a non-literate family do not read as much as individuals who came from a literate family and who cognitively grew faster.

Introduction

The reasons why people read and do not read vary based on many different factors. Reading has many different benefits and outcomes for people, but only some choose to read while others avoid reading. Why is that? It is important to understand how an individual was raised, where they came from, what they were reading in school, how they were taught, and how they perceive reading into their adulthood because these factors influence their motivations for reading and establish the importance of reading for them. To answer the question of why people read and do not read, this thesis dives into the ideas of pleasure reading, learning to read compared to learning to speak, "good" and "bad" readers, how school affects reading, reader identity, and reading attitudes. Within these topics it is uncovered why people choose to read and why people choose not to read based on personal, social, and institutional values, along with other factors such as gender and economic status. The study conducted within this thesis helps answer the question as to why people read and do not read, why there are "good" and "bad" readers, and the differences between learning to read and learning to speak.

There are multiple answers as to why people read and do not read and what establishes individuals as "good" or "bad" readers. Many people are influenced by their internal emotions and the people around them, as well as the stigma attached to reading. The study included thirteen individuals from different backgrounds, lifestyles, and generations. They were all asked to fill out a questionnaire before participating where they would be asked to read for fifteen minutes a day for two weeks straight. Throughout this time, each participant was given a reading log to fill out how long they read and if they did not read, then why they did not. This study had many outliers that ranged from not reading at all during the two weeks to reading for hours more than what was asked. The study had a very limited scope that captured a small snapshot in time

as to why people read and do not read, but it helps point to answers asked within the literature review.

The literature review explores the topics of pleasure reading, learning to read compared to learning to speak, good and bad readers, how schools affect reading, reader identity, and reading attitudes. These topics can help show why people choose to read and why some do not, which is the driving question of the study. The study consists of a research question and the methodology that includes: procedures, participants, analysis and results, and the limitations for the study. An appendix is also provided at the end of the thesis.

The literature review focuses on two of the participants: Andrea and Sam. Andrea was an IEP student and Sam did not read for the entire two weeks; instead he would state what he was doing instead or say "why would I read when the game is on?" Both of the participants are brought up multiple times to exemplify further themes from the literature review.

Literature Review

Pleasure Reading

Pleasure reading "embraces the human interaction with written texts and triggers the senses, such as sound, touch, and observation in order to create experiences in the reader's mind in ways that were not previously thought of" (Mohammad 156). Pleasure reading gives off similar senses that a favorite movie would. Reading for pleasure is important because the reader connects with the text using their comprehension skills to feel what the characters are going through. Pleasure reading is for enjoyment purposes and includes a wide range of genres. The reader chooses what they read and it is typically performed voluntarily as it sparks the reader's interest. Mohammad states that people often get insights about themselves when reading for pleasure. People can see themselves in the texts they read which is a very important factor to

pleasure reading. Pleasure reading is also very significant when it comes to communication. This is because a lot of people enjoy sharing knowledge and it can boost a person's self confidence (Mohammad).

Children can benefit from reading because it increases their cognitive processes, which continue to grow over time into adulthood. Pleasure reading also strengthens an individual's social interactions as well as their academic performance because of their increase of cognitive progress. Pleasure reading also brings a sense of comfort. Many people often talk about how they get "sucked into a book" and can read for extended periods of time. Their comfort space can be in a book. This can be very helpful for children growing up as well as adults as it can bring a peace of mind and a sense of belonging. Reading for pleasure helps young readers acquire information as well and "allows them to enhance their skills" and understand themselves better (Mohammad). It is important to also note that pleasure reading involves multiple skills of writing, comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and more. So when individuals are exposed to this form of voluntary pleasure reading, they are learning more while still enjoying the texts they read.

Another term for "pleasure reading" is "recreational reading," which is used by Wilkinson in her literature review. She studied the impacts of reading for pleasure and empowerment, which has three main outcomes: personal, social, and external. As identified in Wilkinson's review, the personal outcomes included relaxation, emotional intelligence, knowledge of self identity, creativity, and others. These factors are important to the reader because they create a personal characteristic of that person and make them who they are. Pleasure reading also helps individuals relax and unwind. Pleasure reading can be an escape from the stressors of society, which can be beneficial to the human mind. Social outcomes

include empathy, communication, focus, and many different health improvements. Pleasure reading is linked with reduced dementia symptoms. This can be very beneficial as reading sharpens a person's cognitive skills. Pleasure reading also reduces depressive symptoms, which can lead to a happier, and healthier lifestyle.

Recreational reading also includes motivation to learn, knowledge of culture and services, and knowledge of other subjects such as mathematics. These are the external outcomes that can connect an individual's pleasure reading to everyday life. Pleasure reading can also give a person more knowledge about people and other factors. All of these outcomes are based on Wilkinson's findings in the review. These factors benefit the reader in more ways than one, as pleasure reading benefits themself and can benefit others around them. Pleasure reading is a tool for the mind as an individual unconsciously learns from their reading. It gives an individual personal development as reading and feeling has a beneficial effect on the enhancement of emotional knowledge and understanding of emotions (Wilkinson). This can help the reader make better connections with others and to themselves, as well as encourage the reader to expose their emotions more instead of masking them.

Romance novels are one genre commonly associated with pleasure reading. As stated above, pleasure reading can involve escapism, which is a common trait about romance reading as it "addresses needs, desires, and wishes that a male partner could not" provide for a woman (Radway 13). In other words, pleasure reading brings in emotions that the individual does not have in the outside world. Radway also states that "romance fiction is compensatory in a second sense because it fills a woman's mental world with the varied details of simulated travel and permits her to converse imaginatively with adults from a broad spectrum of social space" (113). I would like to note that this is not just for women. Any genre can be read by any gender, but since

Reading the Romance was originally written in 1984, it adheres to the traditional heterosexual norms of the time. Escapism from a book helps people get away from the unpleasant realities that they have to face. Having this change of view can reduce stress and depression as stated above and give them more enjoyment in life. Overall, pleasure reading is very beneficial to a person's mental and physical health, no matter the age or gender of the person, as well as their reader abilities.

Learning to Read Compared to Learning to Speak

Reading abilities may be influenced by the fact that reading can be considered an unnatural process. At a young age, we learn to read and write, even though our natural form of communication is speaking. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) conducts a lot of research in regards to reading. In Lyon's *Why Reading Is Not a Natural Process*, he states "that learning to read is critical to a child's overall well-being" (1). The article further states that not learning to read is an educational problem, as well as a public health concern. If a child does not or is unable to learn how to read, they are unable to thrive in a society that is literacy-driven and cannot successfully fulfill a productive life. A child that does not learn how to read can have difficulty finding a job, reading a GPS or map, and it can have a negative impact on their overall wellbeing.

It is important to note that reading has many components to it. While it may be simple to read, phonetic awareness is necessary in order to read and understand phonemes, which are the individual sounds of a word that is spoken. Phonetic awareness is important when learning how to read because the written spellings of a word represent spoken sounds (Lyon 2). The letters present in a text do not directly translate to the letter in the alphabet and how it sounds. There are differences such as the sounds in *cat* and *cinnamon*. The /c/ in *cat* is a harder /c/ sound that

sounds more like a /k/, whereas the /c/ in *cinnamon* is much softer and represents the /c/ when reading the alphabet. When learning how to read, if an individual cannot "hear" the differences and decode the phonemes, they will have difficulty sounding out new words and decoding them. This is the same with Lyon's comparison. If an individual is unable to "hear" the /at/ sound in *fat* and *cat* and find that the difference is in the first sound, they will have difficulty decoding new words. There is no "natural" practice to this as words are composed of very small sound units that may not even be heard when spoken, but they need to be understood when reading.

Another reason why reading is not a natural process is because a beginning reader does not typically have a wide attention span and memory. When starting to read, readers cannot remember everything that they have read, which means that they are not relating to the material, retaining information, or understanding key concepts within the text they choose to read. A text has to mean something to the reader. Reading for long periods of time or being forced to read will not help an individual understand what they are supposed to be comprehending. The NICHD states that "making meaning" requires more than phoneme awareness, phonics, and reading fluency (Lyon 3). To make something meaningful through the text, an individual needs the necessary vocabulary to read, as well as the ability to comprehend, clarify, summarize, and predict within the text to understand and make meaning of it. With that being said, a lot of children enjoy hearing the same books repeated to them. This can help them remember the words to the book since they are hearing it and oftentimes following along. It can be seen that they are not actually reading, meaning they are remembering the book audibly, but repetition could show signs that reading is a natural process.

It is typically seen that most children learn to read as they are learning to speak. This is through natural exposure in a literate environment. While this may be true that individuals can

learn to read through natural exposure, it is important to note that some children do not have a literate environment. Many educators and researchers think that reading is a natural process because phoneme awareness, phonics, and comprehension strategies are unnecessary since spoken language skills can still provide a reader with enough structure to decode and comprehend written words. While this idea may be true, it is important to note that "good" readers often have stronger vocabulary and grammar skills than "poor" readers. "Good" readers are classified as individuals who have had literacy experiences very early on since birth, whereas "poor" readers have not been exposed to reading for that length of time (further examination in *Good and Bad Readers Section*). To be able to read, children need exposure to written forms of language. While there are similar characteristics in written and spoken language, reading requires other components that are needed in order to understand and decode a text.

"Good" and "Bad" Readers

"Good" and "bad" readers exist. While many children learn to read in similar ways, there are differences to take into account that affect how they read in the future. Children who become "good" readers are in a literate household with a lot of exposure to reading, whereas "poor" readers are not. "Poor" readers often have limited exposure to reading, especially at standard reading times such as bedtime or one-on-one time with parents/guardians. In *Why Reading Is Not a Natural Process*, Lyon states that children are at risk of reading failure when a child is raised in poverty, have guardians with limited proficiency in a language or have low reading levels, and have guardians with speech or hearing impairments. Reading failure is defined as individuals who have not been properly taught to read fluently and have difficulty isolating sounds. These factors risk reading failure because of the parents' inability to teach reading skills as well as the possibility of having limited resources to help. Socioeconomic factors can be a big reason why

parents have limited resources. Many parents want to be able to read to their children but are unable to because of work. Some parents are unable to read to their child before bed because they get home past bedtime or some parents might have swing shifts such as one parent working until 10:00pm and another parent having to go to work at that same time. Some parents may not be able to check out children's books from a public library as well if they need to work during the time the library is open or if they do not have the transportation to get there. Many factors play a role in teaching a child reading skills and while some situations may be due to a lack of parenting, most situations involve a poor socioeconomic situation.

In a study conducted in *A Comparison of Good and Poor Readers on a Measure of Adults*, Smith states that the results show that poor reading attitudes correlate to having reading and academic difficulties. This could be seen with Andrea. Andrea was a part of the two-week reading study in which she read for fifteen minutes each day and continued to read after in order to finish her book. In the interview process, she stated that she was read to as a child and was exposed to a lot of literature because both of her parents were professors, one in an English department and one in a theater department. She stated that she was surprised that she never got into reading, but she did have an IEP for the majority of her time in grade school. Andrea could be considered as a developmental student, meaning that the student does not have much metacognitive awareness. This means that reading would not be the best form of learning (Smith 55).

This is where context is very important. "Bad" readers can turn into "good" readers with some help. It is important to help students "pursue their own reading and construct their own meanings" from books (Wilhelm 18). This way, students can make their own meanings from the text and connect to it personally, which can benefit the reading process. Along with this, "poor"

readers need to learn necessary information in order to read so they can feel confident while reading. Reading attitude is very important when it comes to reading and becoming a "good" reader because if an individual has a negative reader attitude, they will not learn how to become an effective and "good" reader (Wilhelm).

"Good" readers often come from literate households and are exposed to reading more than "poor" readers. "Good" readers have a better connection and attitude towards reading compared to others. Smith's study shows that higher education students and adults had a higher enjoyment of reading compared to the developmental students. Higher education students have less anxiety when it comes to reading tasks. These two dimensions are very important "because good readers probably enjoy reading to a greater extent than poor readers, who may experience anxiety when faced with reading tasks" (Smith 54). Reading attitude plays a big role with "good" and "poor" readers. Most "poor" readers will have a negative attitude towards reading, whereas "good" readers have a positive attitude towards reading. A common idea with being a "good" reader is that a person has to read what they enjoy and be confident in their reading abilities, instead of being developmentally behind with reading. An individual could get reading anxiety if they feel like they are behind compared to others. Overall, childhood circumstances often set up individuals to become "good" or "bad" readers, as well as if they have any academic difficulties in their grade school ages.

How Schools Affect Reading

A lot of factors can add to why schools affect students' reading. Some factors may be good while others are bad. In the study conducted in this research, the adults who were pressured to read or the adults who were required to read texts that they did not enjoy, do not enjoy reading now. Among individuals who have completed their schooling, they do not enjoy reading because

it was 'boring' when they were in school. In more effective classrooms there is discussion and sharing. Teachers have to help students learn how to find evidence and test their own ideas. Literature conversations need to be thought provoking instead of reviewing the material (Christenbury 59). School can negatively affect reading by poorly reviewing material, along with how teachers react to their students. Typically in a classroom setting, questions are encouraged, but in some less effective classrooms teachers think questions mean that the student is not understanding the material or did not read it, which results in the student shutting down and not asking any questions (Christenbury 59). This results in students resisting reading because they feel like they cannot understand a text on their own, ask questions, or create their own ideas of the text, which is needed to enjoy reading.

Proficiency in schools can also affect reading. Reading proficiency is very prominent in schools as every student is graded on it. To be proficient in reading, students must "show an overall understanding of the text, including inferential as well as literal information… They should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences from it, by drawing conclusions, and by making connections to their own experiences–including other reading experiences" (Christenbury 83). This can be a lot to ask for for many students, especially students with an IEP or others who enjoy reading at their own pace. On the other hand, this definition of proficiency is very similar to the basic level of proficiency from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Many states set their proficiency level at the NAEP basic level and the basic level does not include making outside connections to the text, meaning that students cannot extend ideas or draw conclusions from the text. Oftentimes adolescents are told that they should be reading critically, but they are not being graded or taught how to do so fully, which hinders their reading proficiency and leaves a bad impression on

reading in schools. Proficiency may help push students to be better readers because they are working towards a goal that is a benefit in schools. Some adolescents may not read on their own time, so by having that push in school they can have the time to read and enjoy it.

Proficiency can also deter students as well. Proficiency can lead to more struggle from students depending on their learning difficulties as well as the stress that comes with trying to achieve a good grade. Proficiency can deter adolescents from reading all together because they feel the need to over analyze texts when they should be enjoying them.

Literacy assessments can also affect reading. High stakes assessments have been a big debate over decades as some believe that they make students learn to read and write better, but the evidence within state testing suggests "that for many students the consequences of testing are neutral or negative" (Christenbury 120). These high stakes tests are not just negative for students, but also for teachers. Some believe that teachers will teach better with state testing in mind because they are held responsible for their students' learning, but testing results in them using test preparation materials and teaching to the test, which adds pressure on the teacher and does not allow them to teach the way that they want. Oftentimes when teachers teach to the test, they are following a strict structure. This does not allow for students to fall behind or allow for more engaging, fun activities. High stakes assessments also do not show how the student can come up with answers or how they can connect their own experiences to the text. Assessments force a student to pick between A, B, C, D, or E which does not show the teacher's effectiveness in teaching or the students' ability to comprehend the material and use their own experiences.

Overall, the research and evidence from state testing and other case studies suggest that schools affect students' reading negatively by forcing students to take high stakes literacy assessments and forcing teachers to teach by the test or else they can receive disciplinary actions.

This then results in students having a bad relationship with reading as they are reading strictly for a grade and not for their enjoyment. In some circumstances proficiency can help students read more and better because they have a goal to push towards, but at what point is proficiency crossing the line between reading for enjoyment and reading for an assessment?

Reader Identity

Schools can also impact reader identity because of the blurred line between reading for pleasure and reading because it is required. Reader identity can be described as how an individual places value on reading and how capable they are at comprehending texts. In other words, an individual can know why they read and understand what they are reading. It is hard for an individual to read if they do not have a good book (Glenn and Ginsberg 84). If an individual gets to choose the books that they read, then reading can become fun and relaxing. There is a huge difference in reading books that are given to an individual and are required to read for a class compared to choosing books based on the person's own interests. With these differences a student will either accept or resist the book, which contributes to their reader identity.

Students bring in their own personal understandings of reading when entering school and their reader identity is already established to an extent before entering the classroom. It is seen that "personal, social, and institutional values combine through discursive norms to shape readers' identities in school" (Glenn and Ginsberg 85). A lot of students in Glenn's study think they have a poor reader identity because they struggle with their reading. Institutional values affect a lot of readers, even in the study as the students are not able to freely express themselves in their reading or relate to texts that were often assigned to them. This creates a bad aura around reading into their adult years, leading to them resisting reading and having a poor reader identity.

Poor grades can also affect reader identity. If a student gets a low grade or fails in an English class, the easiest assumption is that they are poor readers. This is not always the case and the blame can sometimes be placed on the assigned texts. Most students attempt to engage with the texts assigned to them, but the youth do not engage with the texts (Glenn and Ginsberg 86). This means that a lot of texts that are being read in school are not relevant for today's youth. When students choose to read something on their own, they are often choosing newer texts that are culturally relevant to them or something that sparks their interest such as a specific genre. Curriculum based texts do not adhere to the students' interests when reading, but students can personalize their reading on their own time to help form a more positive reader identity. When students choose their own books, they can have a better reader identity as they can choose what they read, read at their own pace, and connect with the book in their own way. Personal values can shape reader identity the most depending on the circumstances. Children, adolescents, and adults can all choose what they read, when they read, and how they read, which heavily affects reader identity. If an individual does not make time to read, their reader identity will be lacking, which results in a lower motivation to read over time and causes a low motivation attitude towards reading by not prioritizing reading. On the other hand, personal decisions towards reading can be very positive to individuals as their reading schedule and capabilities are personalized.

Social values can also affect reader identity. Depending on how an individual grew up, a person may not prioritize their reading or think it is not important, which results in a poor reader identity compared to someone who grew up reading or is around people who read. Reader identity can also be determined by others who influence an individual. Some people share books and materials that they can share an appreciation for. Some think reading is very important,

which can boost another person's reader identity if they are connected to them. Social values can also have a negative impact on reader identity. If an individual is around people who do not prioritize reading or also have a poor reader identity, they can follow the crowd and not prioritize their reading as well. Socially it is also more 'normal' for women to read compared to men. This can be seen with Sam in the thesis study as he prefers to watch television and does not think about reading. More of the women in the study however read the amount that they were asked to or more, whereas the men read less than the women or did not read at all. It is more socially acceptable for women to read compared to men as it is seen as a feminine hobby (Radway). This heavily affects reader identity as women can feel like they are supposed to read and men can feel like they should not read at all.

Overall, what students read impacts their reader identity the most. Language is very important in reader identity so students need texts that are culturally relevant to them in a language that they understand whether that is an easier English language level, a text in their own language, or a culturally relevant text that adheres to their life experiences (Hicks 9). Difficult, abstract language, economic relations, social status, gender, and race are all aspects within a text that can make a text valuable to the reader. If an individual does not enjoy one of these aspects within the text, it can hinder their reader identity and make them not be able to understand what they are reading.

The text's plot can also negatively impact reader identity. Some texts are harder to read than others and some are so skewed from reality that the text starts to lose its power (Hicks 11). This can negatively affect reader identity as the reader is unable to comprehend or imagine the text, which is needed in order to have a strong reader identity. Along these lines, if a reader cannot understand why they are reading the text they chose or were assigned, they will not have

a strong reader identity. A text needs to have purpose and the reader needs to have a purpose to read the text in order for it to have value. If the purpose of the text is strong, the reader will enjoy it more but if the text does not have a strong purpose the reader would be asking themself 'why am I reading this?'

Reading Attitudes

Reading attitudes are the feeling an individual has about reading that results in the acceptance or avoidance of positive reading habits. When reading, it is important to form a habit to read. Habit formation creates behaviors that turn automatic, meaning that once an individual gets used to doing something, such as reading, it becomes a natural process and something that they do continuously (Gardner). When an individual creates a habit to read every day or simply just squeeze in time to read they are already accepting reading and having a more positive attitude towards reading. If individuals have more time to read, this will result in a higher reader attitude whereas individuals who barely read will have a lower reader attitude. This can correlate to reading motivation. "Motivation can be seen as an active process in which children construct ideas about language and literacy as they communicate" (Verhoeven 4). Motivation is important to create a positive reading attitude because in order to accept reading fully, an individual has to construct their own ideas about the text they are reading and understand the language. There is a wide range of why people are motivated to read such as interest in specific topics, goals, escape, and academic purpose (Verhoeven, 4). Most people either read for pleasure or to gain knowledge, which would be seen as having a positive reading attitude.

Some people avoid reading and resist it, though. Many people such as Sam from the study get information through social media apps and television. Some people do not think they need to read for pleasure or knowledge because they can receive it visually or orally, which

results in them not caring to read. This would be a poor reading attitude, along with preferring a movie over the book. Many individuals who avoid reading will watch a movie or television series that started out as a novel. With this, they can avoid reading all together because they do not need to read in order to understand that context or since they have already understood the plot.

In order to have a positive reader attitude, an individual must be taught correctly. Instructional guidance on reading strategies and comprehension is often best for developing positive attitudes towards reading as students develop an appreciation for reading through experiences. This in turn will encourage students to read more often and on their own. By having high quality reading instruction, students will find a love for reading and enjoy it more, which will help them achieve goals in the classroom or achieve their personal reading goals. Going back to poor teaching instruction and state testing from *Resisting Readers' Identity*, Glenn and Ginsberg state that if there is a lack of effective reading instruction or too many high expectations based on assessments, students will not enjoy reading and potentially avoid it outside of the classroom or even inside the classroom, which will affect their grades and their motivation in school.

Many different factors overall affect reading attitude. Girls have a more positive reading attitude than boys and children have a more positive reading attitude than adults. This is because reading can be seen as more feminine and reading at a younger age is typically more for enjoyment. Adults that read are often reading to be tested or to learn, which can make them avoid reading later in life and not read for pleasure. Adults also typically have other stressors that can affect their reading such as work, family issues, and everyday tasks that can get in the way of having leisure time.

Overall, many factors add to why people read and do not read and whether they consider themselves to be a reader. Outside influences such as schooling, stigmas, family, and friends can all affect a person's willingness to read. A person can also be affected by their own understanding of reading, which can sway their opinion on reading as well. Some situations can be difficult to understand when it comes to reading. Individuals who grow up in poor socioeconomic conditions may want to read, but are unable to. That goes for individuals who are also surrounded by people who do not like reading as well. These influences can make a person refuse to read because no one around them is doing it. Overall, an individual's reader identity is the deciding factor as to why or why not the person reads. The reader's identity includes emotions towards reading that are caused by outside factors and internal feelings. It also includes their bias towards reading and whether or not they enjoy reading for pleasure. To be a reader, an individual should begin reading at a younger age, but their attitude towards reading should almost always be positive.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the thesis are:

1. Why do people read or not read?

2. Why do people enjoy reading or not?

3. What affects reading?

4. Do people see themselves as a reader or not?

5. Is reading a natural process or not?

6. What are "good" and "bad" readers?

Methodology

Procedures

Individuals who participated in this study were required to fill out a Google Form a week

before starting the study. In the form, the participants were asked what genre they preferred,

what book they would be reading, whether it was for pleasure or not, and if they considered

themself a reader. The participants were asked to read for fifteen minutes each day for two

weeks, spanning from November twenty-seventh to December tenth. The reason why the study

was for two weeks was to see how people read on their own, without the help of habit formation.

In the end, it was heavily encouraged that the participants continue to read, but the data collected

was intended to be a focus snapshot of how people read in their daily lives. They were to fill out

a reading log that was given to them or they could make their own with the time frame that is

indicated. If they did not read on any given day, they were asked to provide a reason for not

doing so. At the end of the two weeks, the participants were asked to send their reading log in for

analysis. A select few who were the outliers were asked interview questions about their thoughts

after the study.

Participants

Individuals were hand-selected to ensure a variety of ages with different life balances.

The participants' ages ranged from eighteen to fifty-seven with a median age of 31.69. Four of

the participants were college students, three of which were in in-person classes, and one who was

taking online courses. Four of the participants had a salary-based career. Three participants

worked part-time on hourly pay. One participant was a stay-at-home wife and one participant

was unable to work due to health reasons. Eight of the participants were female and five of them

were male. With this variety, the participants had different life goals and different ways they

spent their time. Many of the participants also had different ideas about reading and whether they read for pleasure or not. Before the two-week reading log began, all of the participants were asked if they were readers. Only four participants had a definite 'yes' response. Seven participants wrote that they were not readers, and two of the participants go through stages of reading and not reading. At the end of the two weeks, participants were either informally or formally interviewed with a series of questions about the outcome of their reading. After analyzing the participants' logs, the primary outliers were asked further questions about their views on reading. All of the participants' names in the study have been changed to pseudonyms for confidentiality reasons.

Chase, Paisley, Alfred, Veronica, Maggie, Dan, and Emma all read consistently throughout the study with little to no change in reading patterns. Andrea also read consistently, but she had an IEP in school. This made her an outlier because she was heavily affected by the stigma of reading in school. She did not enjoy reading in school and it took her longer to finish a book compared to the average reader. Sue was a stay at home mom who reads for pleasure and reads to her children. She made time to read to her children when she could and models independent reading to her children when she reads for pleasure. Mike read for the majority of the study, but did not read for five days straight. This was because he was traveling for a business trip and forgot his book and did not make reading a priority during his trip. Angie was a housewife who had a lot of time on her hands. She spent a lot of time reading for enjoyment, which is why she is an outlier. She read significantly more than fifteen minutes a day on each day of the study. Alexis had a busy schedule, but she reads a lot. She finishes books quickly and tries to read over fifty books a year while working full-time and taking care of children. Sam was the biggest outlier of the group. He was excited to participate and filled out the GoogleForm in a

timely manner, but he never read. Instead of reading, he worked, played golf, and watched television. Throughout this, he would make it a priority to state that he did not read at all during the day and what he chose to do instead.

Analysis and Results

Constants

Andrea and Alfred read fifteen minutes every day for the two weeks, which was what was asked of them. With that being said, Andrea had an IEP when she was in school for reading and writing. She was consistently below average throughout grade school and would read at a lower grade level compared to her peers from what she stated from her interview. With that being said, Andrea continued to read after the two weeks were finished so she could finish the book she started reading. Even though Andrea and Alfred read, they do not consider themselves readers. When asked why they read, they had a similar answer. They read because they were asked to, but they ended up enjoying reading. Paisley was able to read for thirty minutes each day of this study, but only assigned readings from her college courses. Dan was very consistent with reading every night for fifteen to thirty minutes.

Outliers

Many of the participants read for the two weeks. Chase only read for five minutes each day. He stated that he only read at night before going to sleep for the two weeks instead of scrolling through the social media app, TikTok. Chase would be considered an outlier because he only read for five minutes each day, stating that he did not have more time to do so. He also stopped reading at the end of the two weeks and continued to watch TikTok at night. During his interview, he stated that he did not get pleasure from reading because his time in school ruined

his thoughts on reading. He was always assigned a lot of readings in grade school, so he never got the time to read for himself. Mike was another outlier in the study. While Mike read for fifteen to twenty minutes each night, he did not read between December fourth through the eighth. In the comments of his reading log, he stated that he was on a business trip. After further interviewing, he stated that he forgot his book while packing. He also stated that he doesn't often read when on business trips because he is too busy working and socializing with colleagues. This poses the question as to what role reading has in his life. He is not as connected to reading as others, but he still tries to make it a priority to read every night, unless it interferes with something else in his daily schedule. Veronica read for fifteen minutes every day, but she did not read between December second through the fifth due to homework. Maggie would read for forty minutes every day, but it was not for pleasure. Emma would read for thirty minutes every day, but on December eighth, she read for ninety minutes because she was not busy.

Above and Beyond Readers

Others have different relationships with reading. Alexis does a book countdown for the year. Her goal this year was to read fifty books and she had already finished sixteen of them. Alexis would read for forty-five minutes every day as a part of her nighttime routine. She reads for pleasure, but she also admits to listening to audiobooks in her countdown. While this counts as reading, she does this to get through books as quickly as possible. In her interview, she said that she is a reader because she enjoyed reading, but also because she liked the idea of being a "book girlie." The term "book girlie" is a new trend in Millennial and Generation Z culture. It is often associated with girls and women who love reading and are often high grade scorers and/or in competition with others. This correlates with her book countdown as she wants to show as many people as possible how much she reads and reads more than the average individual. Angie

had more time on her hands since she is a stay at home wife. She would read consistently for twenty-five to sixty minutes every day. On three of the days, she forgot to read. However, on December seventh, she read for ninety-five minutes. She noted that in her interview, along with her desire to read more. She does not enjoy social media so in her free time, she walks her dogs and reads as much as she can. This was a similar circumstance to Emma. Emma was a college student, but she read instead of going on social media when she can. On her days off, she tries to read as much as she can. Sue read for a total of forty minutes each day, twenty minutes for pleasure reading, and twenty minutes for reading to children. She stated that she always read to her children at bedtime or throughout the day if they wanted to. During the day she would read picture books or short sections from novels such as *Harry Potter*. She believes that it is important to read to her children so they can gather more cognitive skills and obtain higher comprehension levels at a younger age. After the children's bedtime she would read for her pleasure. This would be her time to relax and decompress.

The Resister

Sam was considered the resister of the study. He did not read at all or fill out a log. He did fill out the Google Form, but it was very evident that he is not a reader or wants to read. Sam was thirty years old and was reminded about the form and log. He gave small updates throughout the week via text message stating, "After work tonight I didn't even think about reading a book, I just watched football 'cause it's better!" Many of the updates were similar to this as he does not consider himself a reader or have the urge to want to read.

Sam was also very up-front on the topic of reading. He stated that he reads a lot because of Facebook and work documents. When he comes home from work he does not want to read to unwind because it takes too much effort, he would prefer to watch television or cook. He also

made it known the day after the study began that he wanted to participate, but was not planning on doing what was asked. This was interesting because why participate if you do not want to do it? After asking him further questions he disclosed that he never did any required reading in his classes when he was in high school. He had hardly picked up a book in many years. Sam told me in an interview that he was never going to read, but it was easy to answer why he didn't. This points us in some direction that the explanation part of the log would be an easier task to complete than the reading itself, but he never filled out the log. He instead would send his responses via text as it was easier to do than typing in a Google Doc. When Sam would send his responses he would often brag about his ability to not read. He would consistently say "I'm not gonna read" and state something else he would do instead such as golfing or scrolling through social media.

Limitations

Within this study there were limitations that rose from the beginning. The major limitations included the sample size, time constraints, and convenience of the overall sample of participants. The sample size was thirteen with a wide variety of participants, but it would be more beneficial to have a broader sample size in the future in order to draw more accurate conclusions. With this sample size, there were not as many repeats in the participants' trends, which led to more frequent outliers, compared to others who were more consistent. Time constraints were also another limitation. Since this study began in November, many individuals were preparing for the holidays, which left them with little time to prepare and complete their fifteen minutes of reading. With this, the reading could be considered as an added stress compared to a natural process. Along with this, due to the time constraints of winter break, as well as the date of completion for the thesis, a longer study would not have been able to be

completed in a short amount of time. Lastly, this sample of individuals was primarily based on convenience. Most of the individuals in the study know me either personally or are acquaintances. With this, some participants may have had a bias to either do this study or read more to benefit me.

Even though there were limitations in the study, the information provided is still valuable. The sample size of the study was large enough to identify further outliers to shine a light on the issue of why people read and do not read. The time spent on this study was still valuable as well. The people in the study were able to help give insights as to why people read and do not read from their interviews and were able to verbalize whether they read consistently or not from the timeframe they were given. The individuals in the study were made aware of what was to come weeks prior to the study. They were also given the Google Form and reading log a week prior to starting the study. The two week duration of the study was also enough to see any trends in the participants' reading and be incorporated into their daily routine. With this, the participants were able to become more aware of their reading habits and find time to read more naturally. The participants were also given a week after the study was over to send me their reading logs as well as be asked further questions. This way, the participants did not feel rushed or feel obligated to answer further questions. Lastly, since this was a convenience sample, many people knew me previously. Even with this information, the participants still read how they would typically read or used this as a gateway to read more. One participant also used this study to resist reading more and brag that they did not read, such as Sam. The participants were often continuing their lives how they normally would during this study or they were trying to personally benefit themselves with the help of this study.

It is also valuable that the participants knew me because it led to a more comfortable interviewing process. All of the individuals were able to give me more information about their personal lives and reading habits, as well as many of them being open to further questions about their mindset towards reading. This allowed me to ask more vulnerable and psychological questions regarding their reader identity to further my analysis on why people read and do not read.

For future studies, I would potentially choose a different direction to conduct this study. I would prefer to give months' notice and put up advertisements or create a post to social media to gather more participants and give them further notice about the study. I would draw from a bigger variety of participants and more participants who do not know me. I would also create a longer reading process. With this, I would still have a Google Form and reading log, but the study would be longer than two weeks. I would prefer to have the study be at or over ten weeks. This is because on average it takes sixty-six days for a habit formation to plateau (Gardner). By creating a longer study, participants will subconsciously create a habit to read or resist reading, but still create the habit of filling out the reading log. While some individuals might forget or begin to grow tired of the study, it would show me more in-depth research regarding people's mindsets towards reading as well as any major changes in their mindsets. These two changes would then change the previous convenience sample. With a longer time duration and a more public approach to gathering participants, it would ensure that not many participants would know me personally or get to know me personally. I would still like to include personal relationships within this sample because the interview process would still be beneficial, but having a less convenient sample would allow me to have more data. In this process, I would also have more

individuals working with me to conduct the study. If more people were contributing to the study, they could help me gather participants and sort data more efficiently.

Conclusion

Researching reading like this can be very important in understanding why people choose to read or not. This study can help individuals see how different circumstances affect reading and what individuals do in response to that. While this study is focused on adults, it can benefit teachers as many of them will have students similar to the participants. There will be students who are finishing novels every two days and there will be students who refuse to read what is asked of them. This study can help show how reading can impact a child positively and negatively so teachers can help connect their students to reading in an appropriate way that benefits them. By knowing and understanding how students learn and how they read, a teacher can gauge that and help students pick out texts to read that they will enjoy, even if they refuse at first. Teachers can connect texts with students when they know the student's background, personal interests, etc. which will help the student feel more comfortable and inclined to read. Overall, understanding the importance of pleasure reading, the differences of learning to read compared to learning to speak, along with the differences between "good" and "bad" readers can help teachers assist students with their reading choices. How school can affect reading and how reader identity and attitudes are formed can also help teachers assist their students to ensure they have a comfortable reading environment and a positive mindset about reading.

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Appendix

Formal and Informal Questions Asked during the Pre and Post Interview Processes

1. **Google Form Questionnaire**

    a. First and last name.

    b. What will you be reading during the two weeks?

    c. What genre is this?

    d. Do you consider yourself a reader?

    e. Please state why you consider yourself a reader or not. For example, I'm not a reader because I cannot visualize what I'm reading so it is difficult to want to read.

    f. Do you enjoy reading? Why or why not?

    g. How do you see yourself (from a reader/nonreader perspective)? For example, I love reading and I consider myself a reader, but sometimes I would rather watch TikTok and sometimes I don't have time to read for pleasure because of school reading.

2. **Post Interview Formal Questions**

    a. Did you read for two weeks?

    b. How did you enjoy the process of reading?

    c. Do you think you would start reading more?

    d. Is reading important to you?

    e. When did you start reading as a child?

3. **Post Interview Informal Questions**

a. Why did you read more than was expected?/Why didn't you read for fifteen

   minutes each day?

b. Was it difficult to find time out of your day to read?