Reading Practices in the Shadows: Context, Text and Identities

by

Akila Tabbi

Canterbury Christ Church University

Thesis Submitted

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2021

Abstract

This thesis provides an in-depth account of reading practices of graduates in Algeria. Significantly, the study offers fresh insights by drawing together two perspectives to understand readers: how their social environments shape reading identities and practices and the way that texts offer spaces for readers to 'try on' different identities, and (re)construct their own.

Regarding the relationship between readers and their social environments, this thesis shows that family and peers are among the strongest influencers of reading. They trigger and maintain readers' interest, respectively, by validating their reading identities and making reading a 'common' practice. The evidence presented indicates that reading is either reinforced or challenged by the predominant cultures in public spaces, educational institutions and places of work. Struggles over whether to conform with or resist these prevailing cultural rules emerge, thereby creating shaming experiences and feelings of guilt and humiliation. The analysis indicates that participants experience conflicts when reading a particular type of book or reading in a certain language, or a given public place due to the assumed hierarchy of fiction and other texts, the correct language to use and notions about the most appropriate places to read. Despite these difficult experiences, readers themselves played an active role in reproducing these cultural reading conventions and imposing definitions on who are real and who are fake readers.

This research stresses the importance of recognising intricacy, nuance and variation, and avoiding the imposition of binary divisions between 'reader' and 'non-reader'. The findings suggest that reading identities for these participants are shaped by various sub-identities – they are evident, for example, in reading in particular languages and reading the *Quran*. Reading identities are, hence, coloured by sub-identities, resulting in 'mosaic reader identities'. They, in this sense, are diverse and should not be subsumed under the 'reader' label, with imposed forms of reading.

This in-depth qualitative interpretive study, inspired by a phenomenographic approach, offers fresh insights into reading practices. Data collection was carried out in Algeria over a period of three months, consisting of focus group discussions, individual semi-structured interviews, visual representations of perceptions and feelings about reading, and informal conversations. It involved nine graduates of various disciplines: English language studies, translation studies, medical sciences, intercultural studies, law studies, economic sciences and physics. All participants identified as multilingual. The conceptual frame that helped deepen

the analysis and frame the findings comprise: Bourdieu (1986) – *habitus*, capital and field – and Holland *et al.* (1998) – identity, artefact and figured worlds, with Kamhieh's (2012) and Gee's (2017) notions of 'reader-as-XYZ' and 'sub-type principle' respectively, helping to enrich my thinking throughout.

The findings of this investigation have implications on readers' social environments, as they indicate that democratising reading requires the coming together of various societal and cultural bodies, including families, peer groups, educational institutions, as well as the readers themselves. Diversity of reading practices and identities needs acknowledgement and celebration, rather than legitimisations of certain ways of reading and keeping others in the shadows.

Acknowledgments

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, whose inspiration, sacrifices and strength were my fuel throughout these years: “This is for you *mama azeezati*”. I also dedicate it to the memory of my father who would have been proud, and to my sisters, my nephews, and my nieces for having been a breath of fresh air during my study breaks.

My profound gratitude goes to my first supervisor, Dr Patricia Driscoll, for her constant support throughout this research project. Her kindness, encouragement and, above all, patience made my journey more delightful than it could have been without her presence. I extend my thanks to my second supervisor, Dr Alexandra Polyzou, for her valuable feedback and guidance, and my chair, Prof. Adrian Holliday, for his precious insights and enjoyable discussions. My gratitude also goes to Dr John Kullman, Prof. Hazel Reid, Dr Simon Hoult, Dr Anas Hajar, and Dr Alganesh Messele for sharing their expertise at various stages of this research.

I owe my deepest thanks to the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for sponsoring me. I would not have been able to conduct this research without their funding. Special thanks go to Canterbury Christ Church University, especially the Graduate School, for their constant and prompt assistance.

I would also like to thank my former teachers Prof. Abdelhak Nemouchi, Prof. Samir Laraba (may he rest in peace), and Dr Mohamed Rafik Fadel for their encouragement to embark on this PhD journey, and to Jesús León for his help.

I am deeply thankful to my brilliant participants, without whom this research would not be possible. I am very grateful for their time, passion and willingness to offer help whenever required.

To my numerous and dear friends and colleagues who were there for me whenever I needed – mental or academic – support, and who added a nice flavour to my research experience: “You are amazing, and I cherish you all”. Special thanks to Dounyazed, Fatima, Leyla, Salima and Siham for being great friends and housemates.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 01: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis focus

This thesis presents a qualitative inquiry into the reading practices of some graduates in Algeria. It draws attention to the nuanced nature of reading practices, in that it reveals a complex relationship between reading practices, social environments and identities. Reading practices refer to the: 'what', 'when', 'where', 'why', and 'with whom' participants read, as well as the languages in which they read. That is, readers construct and negotiate their reading identities and practices through their interactions with their social environments. These include their families and friends. As readers take their reading practices beyond these two circles, their interactions extend to people within larger settings such as the workplace, educational institutions, and public places. Thus, this research offers fine-grained details of reading instances experienced by participants in various settings.

The intricacy of reading lies in the fact that readers' reading practices and reading identities are influenced by the various social groups with which they interact. Readers describe the role played by their immediate environments, including their families and friends, in planting the reading seed in them. The complexity of reading practices shows in readers' accounts of the struggles they experience when they read within wider settings, such as educational institutions, the workplace and public places, which do not appear to welcome the practice of reading, or seem to favour certain texts or languages over others. These impositions, the data reveals, cause readers to be shamed and treated with hostility for not abiding by them, and to experience feelings of shame and guilt for not fitting within them.

As a result, some readers feel compelled to conceal their reading identities, and read 'behind closed doors' and 'in the shadows' to attract less attention, hence the title of the thesis. Others tend to exhibit reading identities, giving rise to the 'reading fashion', to appeal to the prevailing rules that dictate this currency within certain settings. The reading fashion refers to the act of reading to 'seem' as a 'reader' to others, in which case reading becomes a performance. Participants refer to reading in a certain language to be a form of enacting a 'cultured' identity within fields that value this. Surprisingly, participants' accounts further indicate that readers tend to feed into the struggles they experience and, thereby, reproduce

them. That is, there was a tendency to believe that their reading choices are better than those of others, which I refer to as 'reading narcissism'. It entails that readers perceived reading in terms of a hierarchy categorising certain readers as 'fake', '*faux-riches*' and that they read materials with 'no substance'. This thereby contributes to limiting reading to a particular definition as a benchmark against which other readers are judged.

The complexity of reading further extends to readers (re)constructing their identities through the texts they read. Although participants' accounts are full of expressions referring to reading as a route to escapism, much more happens when readers read. Through the act of escaping, readers engage in an exploration of their agencies, possible selves and the (re)construction of their identities. By so doing, readers escape their 'real' worlds into 'unreal' worlds to eventually reconnect with the former with (re)constructed identities and views of the world around them. In this sense, reading provides readers with a space to experiment with various identities and realities, and refigure their worlds, rendering the act of reading more intricate than it sounds with the mere thought of escaping.

My thesis reveals that looking at both perspectives – reading and identity both in relation to social environments and in relation to the texts that readers read – provides a useful lens to see the nuances of reading practices. It also reinforces the idea that reading is too multifaceted to be viewed as simple and homogenous, and that it should not be defined within rigid boundaries, leading to validating particular types of reading and excluding others. As such, I use the concept of 'mosaic reader identities' to depict the nuance and diversity inherent in reading identities, in that, like a mosaic that is made up of colourful pebbles, they are coloured by various sub-identities. In relation to reading, the data reveals that these include identities related to their religious practices, the languages they speak and vocation-related identities. Thus, reading identities are diverse and no impositions should be put on readers to be certain kinds of readers to fit within the 'reader' label.

Interestingly, and arguably surprisingly, the findings reported in this study were on reading books rather than digital media practices. In this respect, participants perceived reading to be limited to the reading of books, and that is why the scope of the study does not go beyond 'traditional' forms of reading – namely, reading books rather than digital reading. My respondents' complex social and economic contexts have forged their reading practices and their perceptions of them in specific ways. Arguably, the absence of technology, and the internet, in their formative reading years explains these conceptions of reading. They are the

first generation of adults to have access to the internet in Algeria. Algeria received its first computer in 1960, but it did not have any cable connection to the internet until the early 2000s (Pandit and Han, 2021). Even so, internet access was limited to the minority that could afford it, accounting for less than 1% of the population at the time (World Bank, 2021). It is only recently that Algeria has become almost comparable to the rest of the world in relation to the internet. The number of internet users saw a significant increase and reached over 57% in 2019 while it only accounted for over 38% in 2015 (World Bank, 2021). Significantly, 92% of those rely on their mobile phone network providers to access the internet rather than copper cabling or fibre optic cables (Pandit and Han, 2021). The conditions and times in which my participants have lived explain the fact that they conceived reading in more traditional forms and, given the qualitative nature of this study, I abstained from imposing any definitions of reading on them and instead focused on their own views.

The main participants in this study are graduates, aged twenty-four to thirty-five. They speak various languages due to being Algerian. These participants live in a setting where code-switching could be said to be the norm, and where there could be an exchange of various languages in a discussion.

What follow are the aim and research questions, some background on my participants and my research setting, and an account of my reading experience. I then provide a brief discussion on the shift in reading research to position the present study, as well as the theoretical framework developed to explain my findings. The methodological approach is also presented, and is followed by the layout of the thesis.

1.2 Aim and research questions

This research seeks to investigate reading practices within a group of graduates. More specifically, it sets out to investigate what influences their reading, and the significance of reading in their lives. As this study is qualitative and inductive in nature, the following research questions emerged throughout the research process and guided the present inquiry:

- How do participants' social environments influence their reading practices?

- How do participants' social environments influence the construction of their 'reader' identity?
- To what extent do participants' reading practices impact on their social environments?
- How do the texts participants read impact on their identities?

1.3 Participants and research setting

This section provides details of the social and economic contexts of this study, as well as information about my participants so readers of the thesis have a better grasp of the conditions in which respondents are describing their reading practices. It is important to do so given the view of reading in this research – a social practice that needs to be understood against the backdrop of the social environments within which it takes place. Stephens (2009) argues that meaning is to be derived from the triangular relationship between theory, data and the research setting. I start by introducing my participants and move to discuss the broader setting. Some of the key influences on their reading practices are also discussed: literacy, economy, religion, and language conflicts.

1.3.1 Participants

My participants were Algerian graduates and multilinguals from aspiring middle class families. As discussed in greater detail in the 'ethical issues' section, I had originally intended to interview university students and graduates but there were difficulties of access (see section 5.5.2, paragraph 4). Thus, the views reported in this thesis are those of educated professionals who are considered an economic success in the country. They are either first- or second-generation university students with the exception of one whose parents are illiterate. They all live in or around a large, and one of the most populated cities in the country. With the exception of one, they all graduated from one of the well-established and respected Algerian universities. Participants in this research have experienced an Algeria unlike their parents and grandparents. They have had better chances in terms of: significant increase in literacy rates; public investments in education and compulsory education (6 to 16 years); rise of the internet providing an opportunity for them to be linked to the rest of the world, among others. All that

said, their profiles are similar to my own, as can be shown in my personal statement (section 1.4). They, however, are not a group of friends.

1.3.2 Broader setting: A large and young country

Algeria, situated in North Africa, is the largest country in the continent, bordering the Mediterranean Sea with a coastline of 1,622 km, and the largest country in Africa (Benrabah, 2005; CIA, 2019). Its population reached approximately 43 million in January 2019, according to the Algerian National Office of Statistics, and was expected to reach 43.9 million in January 2020 (ONS, 2018). The population is mainly composed of Berbers and Arabs, with other minorities from European descendants (Atlapedia, 2011). It is also known for being a young country. In 2018, people aged less than fifteen years reached 30.1%. Those aged between fifteen and fifty-nine years represent the highest proportion (60.6%) and symbolise a powerful force of young people whose experiences are an important voice for Algeria's future. Only 9.3% of the population are over sixty years old (ONS, 2018). Most of the population is based in the northern area of the country along the Mediterranean coast. Its massive area and population comprise a diversity of landscapes, languages and customs from one region to another. Its strategic position, linking Africa to the rest of the world, is a major reason for its chequered past.

1.3.3 Brief historical background: A postcolonial country

Algeria is a postcolonial country with a complex history and, therefore, an intricate cultural and socio-economic status quo. The amalgam of historical events shapes the various practices in which people engage, one of which is reading. It has been characterised by a significant rise in literacy rates since independence, which came as a result of substantial investments in promoting education, expanding schools and universities, and providing equal opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds (UNICEF, 2015). Furthermore, it is characterised by an economic flux throughout the years that is an outcome of colonisers leaving the country and Algerians occupying those vacated social and economic positions and experiencing an unprecedented social mobility. Additionally, oil prices have in recent times dropped drastically and caused severe poverty, rendering the economic situation more unstable. The religious and linguistic landscapes are two other defining characteristics. They are both deeply incorporated

into people's lives and daily practices. The linguistic situation projects a richness that adds complexity to reading practices when it comes to the choice of language due to Algeria's colonial past. This is all explored in greater detail in this section.

1.3.3.1 Literacy

Undergoing French colonialism for over a century (1830 - 1962), and later on a decade of civil war (1990s), Algeria was left with significant rates of illiteracy. Over 85% of the population was illiterate after independence in 1962 (UNESCO, 2015). Fortunately, Algeria has seen a significant increase in literacy rates over the past years. Arguably, this could be attributed to the fact that since independence, education has been among Algeria's primary concerns. According to the UNICEF (2015) report, 28% of the total population currently attend schools and that over a fifth of the state budget is spent on education, stating that it increased from 20 billion Algerian Dinars (DA) to 1,260 billion DA between 1984 and 2013, and that the government is working towards increasing quality in education. The Algerian educational system, therefore, can be said to be characterised by increasingly high rates of school enrolment (UNICEF, 2015). The literacy rates recorded between 2000 and 2012 indicate that 92% of the people aged fifteen to twenty-four were literate, hence the rising middle classes. Furthermore, in 2018, literacy rates of people aged fifteen and above reached 81.4% after they accounted for only 18.5% in 1965 and 49.6% in 1987 (UNESCO, 2021). That said, the younger generation, or my participants' generation, lived in better conditions and had more chances, including education, that became more accessible.

Although literacy levels are higher, and although Algeria is performing better in terms of ensuring more children are being schooled and are staying in schools for longer (UNICEF, 2015), reading does not seem to receive enough attention. For instance, very few schools possess libraries. Bouanaka (2015) suggests that 93% of schools in Algeria do not have libraries or reading rooms. The editing director of *Casbah* Edition, one of the Algerian publishing houses, describes Algeria's culture as an 'anti-reading' one (Chaib Draa Tani, 2012). Despite these claims from popular publishers, there is a lack of empirical evidence about reading practices in Algeria. Their statements, however, indicate the need for more research. In recent years, while this study was being undertaken, reading began to attract some attention. For instance, increasing numbers of publishing houses have been recorded. According to Abdelillah (2016), 400 of them exist nowadays. A step towards the promotion of reading in schools has similarly been taken. In 2018, an official document has been issued from the

Algerian Ministry of Education and Culture to include reading activities across primary, middle and secondary schools, as well as ensure that schools are equipped with libraries. All these events reinforce the view that this research is opportune (this is discussed more fully in chapter 02).

1.3.3.2 Socio-economic situation

The socio-economic situation in Algeria witnessed tremendous changes after independence, resulting in the emergence of an aspiring middle class, to which my participants seem to belong. The colonisation period caused poverty and inequality among the majority of Algerians, as well as the polarisation of two opposed communities: colonisers and the rest (Derras, 2011). The colonisers, that is, forced Algerians to flee their cities in order for the newcomers to populate those places and take their jobs. This segregation of population into European colonists and colonised Algerians resulted in acute poverty among Algerians (Kassel, 1977). In 1962, following decolonisation, the European supremacy crumbled with many Europeans leaving the country (Kassel, 1977), and the isolation of the upper stratum from the rest diminished (Kassel, 1977, p. 8). Algerians occupied the social and work positions left by colonisers, thereby moving into higher positions in financial, commercial and educational organisations. This unprecedented social mobility of a great portion of society gave rise to the emergence of a middle class in Algeria (Boulekiban, 2018). What also helped this newly-emergent social class to increase was the need for engineers and managers to lead development projects, for Algeria relied on state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as the primary source of economic growth after independence (Akacem, 2004). As a consequence, more people accessed education and many more moved towards an emerging middle class (Boulekiban, 2018) – my participants included.

Algeria's economy is an aspect that affected participants' reading experiences in that they found themselves unable to afford book prices (end of sections 6.2.1.2 and 6.2.2.3). The country relies heavily on hydrocarbon production and exportation. It is one of the ten biggest countries producing gas, and the fifteenth in oil production (ONS, 2017). In the mid-1980s, Algeria was hit by the "oil shock" in that oil prices dropped from $40 to $6 a barrel, leading to a 50% decrease in the country's budgetary revenues (Akacem, 2004, p. 115). Hydrocarbons formed around 96% of exports from Algeria between 2004 and 2018 (Direction Générale du Trésor, 2019). Since mid-2014, however, the prices of petrol and oil dropped again and,

consequently, the economy of the country was affected. Since 2015, Algeria took measures to reduce its imports by encouraging domestic production of non-oil and -gas industries.

Nevertheless, because Algeria derives its economic prosperity from hydrocarbons, the fall in the prices witnessed in 2014 was a serious economic concern (LADDH, 2018). As a result of the decrease in oil and gas production and prices and, thus, the economic instability of the country, unemployment once again became widespread among Algerians. According to the LADDH (2018) report, unemployment in Algeria reached 11.7% in 2017 and increased to 13,2% in 2018. This explains my participants' statements about not being able to afford book prices, and especially that they were unemployed at the time of their university studies. They, however, affirmed finding it challenging to purchase books even at the time of conducting my research although many of them had jobs after leaving university.

1.3.3.3 Religion

Religion tends to be deeply incorporated within most Algerians' daily practices including those of my participants, such as their reading of the *Quran* (section 6.3.1). Interestingly, when discussing reading the *Quran*, they viewed it as a leisure as well as a religious practice. Thus, it is important to provide some background on Algeria's religious landscape to understand participants' accounts.

Islam is the state religion according to 'Article 2' of the Algerian Constitution last amended in 2016. Placing Islam in the second article of the constitution is an indication of the status assigned to religion. Throughout the history of the country, Islam has been considered a pivotal element of national unity (Achoui, 2006). Moreover, the integration of religious teachings in some parts of Algeria, including reading the *Quran*, starts at an early age. Islamic education is provided in *Quranic* schools, referred to in Arabic as *Medersas*, where children – including the majority of my participants – learn to read, write and recite the *Quran* during preschool age or during out-of-school time (Tiliouine and Achoui, 2018). The incorporation of Islamic teachings also shows in some family rituals and lifestyles. An example of this is the *Adhan* ('call to prayer') that is read in the right ear of a new-born, so that the first words ever heard are the name of God (Tiliouine and Achoui, 2018). Additionally, Lakjaa (2007), using a questionnaire within 496 Algerians aged fifteen to thirty-five and interviewing ninety-six amongst them, reports that many participants asserted visiting mosques, performing prayer and reading the *Quran* in their leisure time. Religion, accordingly, plays an important role in many people's lives and their daily practices.

The discussion above explains the fact that the scope of this research includes, but is not limited to, *Quranic* reading, as participants mentioned it among their reading. Some explained their almost exclusive exposure to religious books when they were children. Growing up, and with some exposure to the internet as stated earlier in section 1.1, their reading became more diversified. That is, with technological advances, many participants mentioned learning about books from social media and movies. Therefore, their reading practices included *Quranic* as well as other reading genres, and given the qualitative nature of this study, the scope of this research included anything that participants conceptualised as reading. These are all factors that led readers to perceive their reading practices in the specific ways reported in this thesis.

1.3.3.4 Language conflicts

As for languages, the multilingual nature of Algeria's linguistic landscape is another defining characteristic that shapes readers' reading practices and adds to the complexity of their experiences. Arabic, Tamazight or Berber, several dialects (Algerian Arabic, Kabyle Berber, Mzab Berber, Shawiya Berber, Tuareg Berber) and French (lingua franca) constitute the current linguistic landscape (CIA, 2019), with English gaining popularity in recent years (Benrabah, 2014). The various conquests that Algeria had undergone resulted in a multilingual population (Chemami, 2011), as well as a "language rivalry" (Benrabah, 2014, p. 38). That is, there were complexities around reading in Arabic and French amongst some participants, leading them to opt out of reading in a certain language, either due to the colonial connotation it holds or the symbolic value attached to it. Arguably, despite the linguistic richness characterising Algeria, the events described below illustrate the complexity inherent in the choice of language when it comes to reading, and that it is never a simple matter for readers in this study.

At different times of Algeria's history, one or two languages were promoted above others as the most superior, sacred or suitable. The perceived sacredness of Arabic was associated with the language of the *Quran* (Belmihoub, 2018), while the perceived 'superiority' of French was associated the language of the 'civilised' and the 'educated'. During the period of French colonialism, efforts were directed towards eliminating Arabic and bilingual (Arabic-French) schools (Djité, 1992), using an "assimilationist policy of total Frenchification" for the purpose of a "deracination and deculturization" of the colonised (Benrabah, 2014, p. 44). The replacement of Arabic with French led to illiteracy among many Algerians (Daoudi, 2018), as

only a few people had access to education in French. Arguably, this might explain the view that people who speak or read in French were considered 'educated' and 'cultured'. It was, then, crucial for Algerians to fight back against the coloniser and claim the status of their language (and religion). Putting this into action, fighters against colonialism opened *Quranic* schools, cultural centres, newspapers and mosques, among other centres, the purpose of which was to promote Arabic (and Islam) and raise awareness among Algerians against the French colonialism (Djité, 1992).

The fight against colonialism and the pursuit of regaining the Arab Muslim identity persisted after Algeria's independence. In 1990, a law of total Arabisation was voted by the People's National Assembly of Algeria. This meant the exclusive use of Arabic in administration and tertiary education, including the media (except for already-approved French newspapers), films, road signs and any other text-related matters. If otherwise, fines were to be attributed to those not abiding by the law (Djité, 1992). There was substantial opposition to this law, describing it as unpragmatic and rather "nationalist" (Djité, 1992, p. 15). In the minds of so many, however, this was a way of eradicating the years of the colonial war. The Arabisation policy, Daoudi (2018) argues, created a divide between Algerians, and contributed to alienating the majority of Algerians who had a French education, whom she describes as experiencing "exile" in their own country (p. 465). She further asserts that the Arabisation caused violence exerted on the Algerian French elites, especially during the Civil War, by Islamists who reinforced the idea that Arabic was the language of Islam and French was the language of "non-believers" or "Hizb Fransa" ('Allies of France') (Daoudi, 2018, p. 466). Speaking French was perceived as a trait of betraying the "nationalist sentiment" (p. 466). Thus, anyone who might have opposing views could be seen as threatening the sacredness of the language and the national identity of the country. If a preference was shown towards French, people might be accused of being 'leftovers' of colonisers.

All these events illustrate the complexity of the linguistic situation that Algeria faced and still faces amongst some individuals or groups of people, as this research shows. Thus, this linguistic richness has brought conflicts as to which language has more status and symbolic value. These events also help to explain the choices of readers to read in certain languages and reject others, and the fact that for some multilingual readers, choosing a language in which to read is not a simple matter. These complexities can only be understood if readers' social environments are taken into consideration when examining their reading practices.

Given the complex living conditions that Algerians witnessed throughout the years and that are described above, it is of interest to this study to investigate the reading practices

pertaining to a group of readers and how these have been influenced by their social environments. I will now move to provide some background on the researcher.

1.4 Personal background

In this section, I present a personal account of my background and relationship with reading to establish the perspective from which I approached my research topic. Furthermore, I refer to the critical incident that spurred this investigation. I occasionally refer to some relevant literature on Algeria in order to provide a better understanding of my participants' stories.

My love affair with reading goes back to when I was a child. Growing up playing 'hide and seek' with my twin sister between book rows, books and their smell felt like 'home' since childhood. Too little to look after ourselves, we spent part of our childhood at my mother's workplace, being a former librarian. Playing with books in her office helped her to keep us distracted for longer. Therefore, these artefacts were present throughout my childhood and symbolised 'play' and 'fun'. The image I hold of my father is also that of a reader, his glasses maintained on his forehead, or with a string around his neck, in case an opportunity to quickly read few pages presented itself. Thus, my reading *habitus* started forming within my home environment. As time passed, my mother kept providing books. For her this was as important as providing food and shelter. I then was enrolled in *Quranic* school, referred to in Arabic as *Medersa*, during my preschool age to learn how to read, write and recite the *Quran*. Thus, my initial readings were predominantly religion-related. My mother's encouragement to read persisted throughout my primary school years, and my reading life was limited to the home, as it did not feel that it mattered at school. I have no recollection of any of my teachers encouraging leisure reading, nor was there a library in my school. As noted earlier, it is reported that 93% of Algerian schools do not possess libraries or reading rooms (Bouanaka, 2015). It is, nonetheless, worth mentioning that during my primary school years, Algeria was experiencing a civil war during which many people involved in any form of cultural practices were either killed or exiled (Abdelillah, 2016).

I grew up in a home environment where books in French were predominant and the use of Algerian dialect was extensively mixed with French. This mixture was the primary language that I have learned. Both my parents, moreover, went to predominantly French schools, and

our television was almost always on French channels with the exception of one Algerian channel. This made bilingualism the norm for me, before going to the *Medersa* and learning Standard Arabic, and then to primary school where Arabic was the main language of instruction. This is no wonder given the Algerian multilingual landscape described earlier and Algeria's colonial past, especially the French colonialism that lasted for 132 years, shaping Algeria's current status. Throughout history, there was a constant conflict between Arabic and French over symbolic power, as explained in section 1.3.3.4.

As soon as I learned a few words in Standard Arabic, I started using them at home out of excitement for having learned something new. I remember once using the Arabic word to refer to 'table', after which my aunt abruptly said: "why would you use Standard Arabic? Say *la table* instead!" I did not understand much of what this meant at the time, but I assumed she knew better and abstained from using Standard Arabic for a long time after this. I also recall my primary school teacher, as a treat for the whole class, requesting my twin sister and me to sing a song in French to the whole class at the end of lessons almost every day. Conversely, a couple of years ago someone referred to me as having no personality, a 'leftover' of the coloniser, because I used French during a discussion. This "language rivalry", as Benrabah (2014) refers to it, still persists nowadays and judgments are made about people as soon as they utter a few sentences (p. 38). This shows how much these conflicts and complexities surrounding language are very much part of people's daily lives and practices, including reading.

Growing older, I realised that I had many advantages in relation to reading that not everybody had. Books were scarce and expensive, making it harder for everybody to have them. Because of the nature of my mother's job, she constantly received sets of books as gifts by book sellers. Additionally, she had discounts on most books during SILA (*Salon International du Livre d'Alger*), the annual international book fair in Algeria. With this, however, and especially during my early university years, it was hard to find books that matched my interests: mainly fiction. Almost everything I had read before then were religious books, short stories, BDs (*bandes dessinées*), art and craft books, astronomy books, grammar books and dictionaries that I almost memorised. The publishing industry in Algeria has only seen an increase in recent years, with 400 publishing houses and organisations, as reported by the Algerian National Library (Abdelillah, 2016). Another advantage that I had was an aunt and a brother-in-law who lived in France. One of my friends, at university, also had a fiancée who lived in America. It was, therefore, common for a whole group of friends to wait for one

of these relatives to travel to Algeria – usually in the summertime – to get us the books for which we waited the whole year. I can still feel the impatience and excitement that we all felt as time was ticking and their visits approached. We would then lend them to the group to read, one after the other. I remember how much privilege others in the group thought we had for being able to get the books everybody else fancied – it formed cultural capital. This did not only mean I had access to a wider variety of books, but I also enjoyed some status within the group and it reinforced my relationship with other readers.

A case-in-point

Leaving my love for reading aside, there is an emblematic incident that spurred my decision to undertake the present research. Running late for my class one day, after having been to the American Corner, a space that is part of the university's library, I was holding two novels – Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* – that I did not manage to place inside my backpack out of my rush. This is when I stumbled upon one of my teachers who not only appeared surprised, but also called upon another teacher and commented: "come, come see! She has got books in her hand. Miss Tabbi reads. That's amazing. This is how we want our students to be". Witnessing this, one of my classmates, also surprised, approached me and enquired: "how many books have you read until now?" He further asked whether I could recommend any for him. It was the first and last time ever I held a book. This incident left me astonished because of how 'uncommon' reading was perceived in a higher education setting that was full of students. What surprised me the most was the attention that this attracted, be it positive or negative. It was also interesting that my classmate seemed to want to read because of the praise I received and that he, perhaps, wanted. Although I am fond of reading and believe in its power and benefits, I believe that none should be obliged – explicitly or implicitly – to read if they do not want to.

This same teacher repeatedly told us during his class: "read! Why don't you ever read? You are a generation of non-readers". Such statements are echoed in the media (e.g., Ahmed, 2009; Berryah, 2015), although there is a shortage of robust evidence to refute or confirm these claims (section 2.3). Furthermore, the editing director of *Casbah* Edition, one of the Algerian publishing houses, describes Algeria's culture as an 'anti-reading' one (Chaib Draa Tani, 2012). This grand narrative, in addition to my own experience with reading, triggered my curiosity to investigate reading practices within a group of people with whom I shared

characteristics: Algerian, multilingual and graduates. In this sense, instead of lamenting the claimed “reading wars”, “end of the book”, “death of the reader”, I decided to undertake the present research (Furedi, 2015, p. 1).

My reading experience made me realised how complex and personal reading is, meaning various things to different people, and that individuals are driven to reading by distinct reasons. This shaped the way I approached my research at its various stages. For instance, bearing in mind language conflicts, I allowed my participants the freedom to choose the language of interviews (section 5.2). I similarly abstained from defining reading, and allowed my participants to mention anything they considered leisure reading. Based on my connection to reading and the setting of my research, I understand that, as a researcher, I carried with me my own *habitus* – dispositions, history, assumptions, values – throughout the research process (Clarke and Braun, 2013). I, therefore, reflect upon my reflexivity and how I ensured rigour throughout this study in section 5.9.

1.5 A focus on readers’ accounts

Reading research has witnessed a shift in focus throughout the years. It moved from perceiving reading, and literacy more broadly, as a skill that is provided by schools (Lambirth, 2011) and used in a variety of situations (Stierer and Bloome, 1994) with universal consequences at the individual and society’s levels (Bartlett and Holland, 2002), to being perceived as a more complex and social practice (e.g., Scribner and Cole, 1981; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Barton, 2007; Street and Lefstein, 2007; Graff, 2010). As such, conceiving reading as a social practice entails acknowledging its situated nature and the influence of the social environments on people’s reading practices. This, using Cherland’s (1994) words, is a “worthwhile enterprise”, as it helps fathom what reading means and how the meanings attributed to it are shaped (p. 6). This body of research was revolutionary for drawing links between literacy or reading practices and identities (e.g., Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019, to cite a few).

This present study takes its place alongside these, but adds another perspective to link identity and reading practices. That is, while studies successfully shifted the lens from perceiving reading as a skill that is immune to social influence, to being a complex

phenomenon that can only be understood if seen in light of the people experiencing it and their social environments, most of the focus has been on the construction of 'literate' or 'reader' identities. The relationship between reading and identity, however, extends to constructing identities through the texts that readers read (e.g., Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011). My research, thus, argues that bringing both perspectives together helps fathom the relationships that exist between reading practices, social environments and identities, to which there seems to be scant attention.

This inquiry, in addition to my personal account, arose from the need to investigate reading among adult readers. Although this is an important area of study, there is a lack of research scrutinising reading practices of adults, as most of the literature focuses on children. The Reading Agency (2015) argues that qualitative research that investigates adult readers' experiences is scarce, leading to a lack of understanding of the role of reading in their lives, as opposed to children and young people who appear to be well-researched. It also argues for the need to "generate or locate research findings from 'developing' countries" (p. 32). Most of the existing literature on reader identities and the influence of the social groups they interact with focused on young readers, and mostly in school contexts (e.g., Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Compton-Lilly, 2008; Enriquez, 2014; Scholes, 2015; Glenn and Ginsberg, 2016; Swift, 2016; Frankel, 2017; Sellers, 2019). This highlights the need to investigate reading among adult readers outside school settings.

Algeria's profile makes it even more important to study the reading practices within a group of graduates: a predominantly young nation. In 2018, the percentage of children aged under five years reached 11.8% while the percentage of people aged less than fifteen years reached 30.1%. Additionally, the percentage of people ranging between fifteen and fifty-nine years was 60.6%, while those above sixty years old only reached 9.3% (ONS, 2018). My participants fall within the proportion that accounts for nearly two thirds of the whole population. They represent a force of young people shaping Algeria's future, and their voices are important to bring out of the shadows. The importance of scrutinising their reading practices and identities could be summarised by McCarthey's (2001) assertion that these practices are means through which readers come to an understanding of themselves.

1.6 Theoretical concepts

The stories recounted by my participants were imbued with references to the influence of their social environments on their reading, thereby acknowledging that it is not immune to the social settings within which it takes place. It became clear that their milieux and their interactions with various social groups shaped their reading dispositions, their views of themselves as readers, their reading practices and the meanings they attributed to reading. Their stories similarly projected a sense of complexity in relation to these interactions, as explained at the outset of the chapter. Understanding readers' accounts required some theoretical concepts and a development of a theoretical framework that would help articulate these stories.

After much deliberation and thought, Bourdieu's (1986) *habitus* seemed a good fit to help understand the relation between individual practices and the social structures within which they take place. That is, it facilitated viewing reading against the backdrop of readers' family environments, peers, as well as their interactions within larger settings – such as the workplace, educational institutions, public places and so on – to understand how they become readers. Intertwined with *habitus* are his concepts of capital and field. They were useful to explain that *habitus* changes as readers move within and between the various fields mentioned earlier, depending on the cultural capital, or currency, that prevails within them. This similarly explains the case of those who read particular books, and in particular languages, to gain status and capital in fields that value these practices.

Along with this, something else was emerging from the data regarding my participants being subjected to shaming experiences for revealing their 'reader' identities in certain places, such as: the workplace or public spaces, as well as for not reading what others deemed a 'must-read'. In this sense, there were impositions upon them to read in certain places, certain texts and in particular languages. What was more interesting, however, was the fact that readers unconsciously repeated some of these behaviours by judging other readers and referring to them as 'fake' readers: a concept that I named 'reading narcissism'. This is when Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence was helpful in explaining how certain behaviours become the 'norm' out of being repeated and reproduced by agents.

With more findings emerging, it became apparent that Bourdieu's (1986) concepts were not sufficient to articulate all the findings, necessitating another set of tools. There was a

change of the family's *habitus* or my participants' *habitus*, in that although some parents were described as illiterate or uninterested in reading, they encouraged their children to read by providing books. Furthermore, some became readers after meeting friends who encouraged their reading. In both cases, books and reading were used as artefacts to construct 'reader' identities. Although Bourdieu's (1986) tools were useful in the way described above, and although he mentions the possibility for change in people's *habitus* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), he does not delve into deeper levels of how this change occurs. Thus, Holland *et al.*'s (1998) conceptualisation of identity as constructed and reconstructed by engaging in social practices, using artefacts – such as books, reading and languages – and interacting with others was well-suited for these findings. In this sense, readers used these artefacts to improvise upon their *habitus*, construct 'reader' identities and, therefore, refigure their worlds. Furthermore, Holland *et al.*'s (1998) propositions helped argue that reading offers readers a space for an exploration of multiple identities and possibilities. In this sense, the texts they read were used as artefacts to 'try on' various identities, refashion theirs and refigure their worlds.

'Reader' identity, or viewing oneself as a reader, was more of a notion that I had in mind from my personal experience without necessarily giving it a name. Through my readings across the literature, however, I realised that it is a coined term that is commonly used by other scholars: 'reader identity' (e.g., Glenn and Ginsberg, 2016; Scholes, 2015; Meier, 2015) or 'reading identity' (Hall, 2012; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). Delving into more analysis of the data, I realised how salient readers' sub-identities, or 'whole' identities, were in their reading choices: reading religious texts, reading in Arabic or French, reading vocation-related texts and so on. This led to the construction of diverse 'reader' identities that were coloured by their other sub-identities, or what I refer to as 'mosaic reader identities'. Back to the literature, Gee's (2017) sub-type principle and Kamhieh's (2012) notion of reader-as-XYZ resonated with these findings and helped understand the key role played by these sub-identities in shaping readers' choices and also maintaining their reading. More importantly, however, scrutinising the sub-levels (and sub-sub-levels) of the 'reader' label was crucial in stressing the diversity inherent in 'reader' identities and, therefore, keeping the scope of what reading means wide to avoid any impositions that would lead to legitimising certain 'reader' identities and delegitimising others.

As could be seen, there was a constant conversation between my data analysis, my literature review and the theories that were thought to potentially offer a language that is

capable of articulating my participants' complex reading practices. This level of nuance required a methodology that unveils it, rendering a qualitative research approach suitable for this study.

1.7 Methodological approach

I spent a period of three months in the eastern part of Algeria to collect data. This time allowed for interactions with participants and for establishing trust relationships. As a result, I could tap into the nuances and details of their reading worlds. Significantly, spending time in the field also permitted me to know more about the participants and allowed for a first impression on their language preferences. For instance, I met one of the participants through a friend who introduced him as a potential participant. Throughout our first discussion, I could get a sense of his preference for a mixture of Algerian dialect and French. This is important given the language conflicts pinpointed earlier, and the degree to which some people position others based on the language they speak. Navigating my way in the field allowed me to better know my participants and diminish my degree of influence as much as I could, although this can sometimes be inevitable.

A qualitative approach was clearly appropriate to unravel the intricacies inherent in reading practices. I deployed a qualitative research inspired by phenomenographic principles, for they acknowledge the influence of people's social worlds on their experiences and perceptions of phenomena and, therefore, recognise the diverse ways of experiencing them (Marton, 1986; Akerlind, 2012). I utilised a variety of data collection methods to yield deep insights into leisure reading practices: focus groups, semi-structured interviews, visual representations and informal conversations (section 5.7.2 and 5.7.4).

Focus groups, particularly, played a defining role in directing this research to its current focus: reading practices in relation to the social environments within which readers interact, including reading within settings that go beyond their families, peers and schools. The hostility and the feelings of alienation that readers encountered in the workplace, educational institutions and public places were surprising (section 7.2.1). These stories were primarily revealed in the focus groups, when an informal discussion amongst my participants unfolded around a poster that was on the wall of the library room where the sessions took place. The

poster was about *The Ten Rights of the Reader* from Daniel Pennac's (1992/2006) book. Each of them chose the rights they could identify with the most. This revealed rich insights that became a major part of my data chapters, due to participants' interaction, identification with each other and sharing of emotional stories. The visual representations similarly allowed me to tap into readers' deeper levels of consciousness when they were unable to give form to their thoughts (Bates *et al.*, 2017). All discussions were in the languages chosen by my participants. They mostly shifted between various languages. As soon as they ran out of words in one, they switched to the other, and no one interview was monolingual. I transcribed the interviews in their original languages because meanings were deeper, given that participants occasionally used idioms and expressions that are hard to find equivalents for in English. Such expressions are kept in the original language in some of the quotes used throughout the data chapters. The data gathered was thematically analysed.

It is hoped that the findings of this research, with the nuances and depth they offer, will contribute to furthering our understanding of reading practices within a group of multilingual readers. It is also hoped that this study will contribute to the broader literature on reading and identity, especially in multilingual settings where there appears to be a dearth of research.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises nine chapters. Chapter 01 introduces the research topic, highlighting its focus, aim and research questions. It also provides details of my participants and the social and economic contexts of this study. These are followed by a personal account that sketches my reading experience. The chapter moves on to highlight the shift of reading research to perceive reading as a social practice, accounting for the social environments within which it takes place and its meaning is embedded. The theoretical framework and the methodological approach deployed in this study are both highlighted.

Chapter 02 provides an overview of the literature related to reading in Algeria to set the scene and provide insights into my participants' reading environments. It argues for a dearth of reading research in Algeria, and the Arab world more broadly. It also argues for a lack of promotion of reading, and highlights that reading initiatives only started attracting some attention in recent years, reinforcing the idea that this research is opportune. In chapter 03, the

second literature review chapter, I outline the various terms and definitions of leisure reading across the literature and argue that they fall short of accounting for the complexity inherent in reading practices by mostly restricting reading to pleasure and enjoyment, and also not accounting for the languages in which readers read. The chapter similarly draws upon the relationship between reading and identity, and highlights two perspectives: (1) 'reader' identities and social environments; (2) readers' 'whole' identities and the texts they read. The structure of this chapter is inspired by the organisation of the data chapters in the sense that I first consider how readers' environment shapes their 'reader' identities and I then move on to consider their construction of various identities through the texts they read. Chapter 04 includes a discussion on the theoretical framework developed in this study to articulate and explain the findings. Chapter 05 elaborates on the methodological approach used to conduct this research. I also examine some ethical considerations, my choices regarding the data collection methods and analysis, and a discussion on research rigour and limitations.

My data chapters are presented in a particular order with the flow of the story that my thesis tells. I, therefore, start in chapter 06 with providing insights into how readers construct 'reader' identities and how their immediate environments, including family and peers, shape their views of reading and themselves as readers. I also address how readers' sub-identities inform their reading choices. I then move in chapter 07 to report on the struggles that readers face when their 'reader' identities are not congruent with the predominant culture of their wider environments, including various settings such as: education institutions, public transport, parks, the workplace and social media. It also focuses on how readers react to these struggles and how they themselves reproduce some of them. Finally, in chapter 08, and to finish the story, I focus more on the relationship between readers and reading, and its potential in offering them a means to escape to 'unreal' worlds. In this escapist act, they experiment with various identities, explore their possibilities, (re)construct their identities and, eventually, reconnect with their 'real' worlds. This said, the research questions are answered across these chapters, rather than each question being addressed in one of them. Accordingly, the first pair of research questions are addressed in chapters 06, 07 and 08, while the third question is answered in chapter 07 and the fourth in chapter 08. This thesis terminates with chapter 09. It includes a discussion of the findings, the contribution, and the implications. It ends with a personal note to reflect upon this study.

CHAPTER 02: READING IN ALGERIA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature related to reading in the Arab world and Algeria. It argues for the existence of a grand narrative that overstates the lack of a 'reading culture' in the Arab World, more broadly, and in Algeria, more specifically. It equally argues for the lack of robust evidence to confirm or refute these claims, as there is a dearth of research in the Arab world, and in the Algerian context. Furthermore, the available research is contradictory, which makes it difficult to plot the progress of reading in these contexts. Thus, it is important to note, from the outset of the chapter that official statistics and data related to reading, libraries and the publishing industry in Algeria are very scarce.

Interestingly, the official websites of the Algerian Ministry of Culture and the Algerian National Office of Statistics (ONS) – both of which I consulted in the hope of accessing official statistics regarding the above-mentioned – either read '*en construction*' ('in progress') or were blank. The abundance of unreliable newspaper articles is at best extremely unhelpful, for it only reinforces the narrative with little evidence. Therefore, I refer heavily to the few references I have encountered, and use data from UNESCO and other reports produced internationally rather than locally. I occasionally insert some of my own observations based on visits to book fairs, book shops, or based on surfing on Facebook reading groups. The lack of evidence and scrutiny of reading tells its own story about the lack of interest among policy makers, ministers and all the parties involved in reading-related activities in promoting it. That is, throughout the chapter, the reader will gain insights into the lack of initiatives and efforts directed towards promoting reading in Algeria, in comparison to other Arab countries.

Attention has only begun to be directed to reading in Algeria in recent years, which indicates a change in its culture. The government, as well as readers, started engaging in initiatives to promote reading. This 'delay' in attention towards reading might be partially explained by the fact that Algeria's history was a medley of violent events. The country was colonised by the French from 1830 until 1962, and later suffered a civil war during the 1990s (Abdelillah, 2016). During this period, as pinpointed by the same source, anyone who was involved in the book industry and cultural practices was either killed or exiled. This left the country devastated at all levels, with huge rates of illiteracy. The fact that reading can, thus, be

said to be in its infancy in Algeria stresses the importance of the present research, which investigates reading within a group of Algerians.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section briefly sketches reading in the Arab world, because of its relevance to the context of my research, and the initiatives taken by various Arab countries to promote reading. The second section discusses reading in Algeria. It comprises four sub-sections. The first reports on studies related to leisure in Algeria. The second discusses reading in schools and the educational system. The third and fourth consider the initiatives taken by the government and readers, respectively, to promote reading in the region.

2.2 Reading in the Arab world

In this section, I start by highlighting the limited literature on reading in the Arab world, and then move to discuss the few existing reports and the contradictory claims they make, mainly due the different definitions of 'reader' and 'non-reader'. Some of the initiatives to promote reading in the region are also discussed at the end of this section. Thus, this section argues that reading has only started attracting the attention of some governments in the Arab world in recent years.

There exists limited and contradictory evidence regarding reading in the Arab world. Furthermore, newspaper articles appear to have contributed to a grand narrative: 'Arabs do not read'. Accordingly, some research organisations took the initiative of examining reading in the Arab world. For example, the Arab Thought Foundation (2020) – established in 2002 by Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, the Governor of Makkah Province in Saudi Arabia and other intellectuals and businessmen – states in its cultural development report that Arab children read for an average of six minutes per year, compared to an average of 12,000 minutes among Western children. The involvement of the Prince, academics and business magnates indicates that reading is a concern at all levels (intellectual capital, economic capital, status…). Similarly, according to the Supreme Council of Culture in Egypt, an Arab reads a quarter of a page a year while eleven and seven books are read in the US and the UK respectively (UNESCO, 2015). These represent depressing numbers regarding the state of reading in the Arab world. Of particular note, however, is the fact that these reports have been released by Arab organisations

that appear to be taking various initiatives to promote reading in the region. Thus, there might be a conflict of interest, in that it might be of benefit to them to promote reading. One way of achieving this could be amplifying the situation to trigger action on the part of the government and the public. If, however, these numbers are to be taken as accurate, and considering that (functional) literacy rates have undergone a drastic increase in recent years in many of the Arab countries (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2018), this becomes worrying.

Contradictory evidence, however, exists in others reports, which makes it difficult to plot progress. It appears that the existing discrepancies across these reports are due to the different definitions they attribute to reading. For example, in the Next Page Foundation and Synovate's (2007) report, readers are defined as those "who have read in the last 12 months… newspapers, magazines, books, etc." (p. 10). Reading, as defined in MBRF and UNDP (2016), covers all types of texts such as books, magazines, articles, and so on, in a paper or electronic form. Thus, while the reports mentioned above portray the Arab reader as someone who is almost divorced from reading, the findings reported by the Next Page Foundation and Synovate (2007) and MBRF and UNDP (2016) reports, as well as a recent study conducted by Hejase *et al.* (2019) are slightly more optimistic.

Hejase *et al*. (2019) surveyed 3,997 people across universities, malls and buses, including students and non-students in Lebanon. The 3,867 valid surveys suggest that there is a decline in reading and that a Lebanese reads an average of five books per year. Furthermore, the numbers reported by the Next Page Foundation and Synovate's (2007) investigation into reading habits and attitudes across five Arab countries – Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Morocco – are more generous than those above. For example, it suggests that out of 1,000 individuals in each country, 88% of Egyptians and 94% of Saudis are readers. In a larger study across twelve countries, including Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, UAE, Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Palestine, Algeria and Oman, the MBRF and UNDP (2016) report surveyed 148,294 people among whom were students at different stages of their education, and non-students from different social and professional backgrounds. According to their chart, the average number of reading hours per year in Algeria is around thirty-six or thirty-seven hours, while the average number of books read per year is around eighteen or nineteen (MBRF and UNDP, 2016). Hanafy (2007), commenting on the Next Page Foundation and Synovate's report, explains that the numbers are unreasonably high, knowing that illiteracy levels in Egypt

that year stood at 28.6%. Regardless of the reliability of these findings, initiatives were undertaken by some Arab countries.

This recent shift towards an interest in reading in the Arab world triggered several initiatives in the region, aimed at promoting reading. For instance, the Arab Thought Foundation *Fikr*, in collaboration with publishing houses, introduced the '*Iqraa lahum*' ('read to them') initiative that makes free children's eBooks available to families. The aim of the initiative, as the name suggests, is to promote reading within families and Arab homes by involving parents in the reading experience of their children (Arab Thought Foundation, 2020). Another and, perhaps, by far the largest initiative is the Arab Reading Challenge, or the 50 million books challenge, launched in September 2015 by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE vice president, prime minister and ruler of Dubai (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019). This initiative was part of promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expression in the UAE, a convention deposited with UNESCO in 2012 (UNESCO, 2015). The president Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan declared 2016 to be the year of reading in the UAE, aiming to "create a generation of book lovers and lifetime readers" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 4). Reading and Arabic language skills were key components of the UAE Vision 2021 agenda (UAE Vision, 2018), and this challenge seemed to be among the best ways of achieving this vision. At the outset of the Arab Reading Challenge manual, it is clearly stated that the challenge aims to ignite a reading revolution among schools and universities across the Arab world as well as Arabic speakers in other countries (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019).

The challenge consists of five stages, through which readers should read and summarise fifty – scientific or literary – extra-curricular books per year. The books should be in the Arabic language, including translations of foreign publications. The evaluation starts at school level and ends in a ceremony that is held annually in Dubai (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019). Students from levels one to twelve – which, in Algeria, would include primary, middle and high schools – are all eligible for participation. The overall award's value for the winner of the challenge is estimated at $3 million. The winner will be awarded $150,000, part of which consists of a university scholarship and an award to the family. Another $1 million goes to the school of the winner (UNESCO, 2015). Among the aims of the challenge are raising awareness about the importance of reading among Arab youth, promoting the Arabic language, forming a network of Arab readers, and fostering a sense of belonging to one Arab nation (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019). With this challenge, and with the highly inviting rewards, Arab countries are

‘hitting two birds with one stone’, in that they are not only promoting reading in the region, but also preserving the Arabic language, an important identity trait.

This initiative resonated across four continents including Asia, Africa, Europe and America (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019). Algeria was no exception: the Arab Reading Challenge (2019) website indicates that 8,221 schools and 2,218,826 Algerian young readers have participated in the challenge, which is over twice the number of participating schools in both Tunisia and Morocco (3,213 and 3,842 respectively), and over ten times the number of schools from Mauritania, although in the latter, the number of pupils who participated equals the number of pupils from Morocco. Egypt, however, has seen the participation of 20,550 schools and 6,500,000 pupils, which is over twice the number of schools and almost three times the number of pupils from Algeria. Saudi Arabia entered more schools – 12,420 – but fewer pupils – 1,044,096 – than Algeria (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019). In 2016, the first year of the challenge, a seven-year-old Algerian reader Mohammed Abdullah Farah won the competition, out of 3.59 million students from twenty-one countries (Zakaria, 2016). Recently, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, the founder of the challenge and ruler of Dubai, has announced that 21 million students from fifty-two countries joined this year’s Arab Reading Challenge 2020, being its fifth consecutive year. This is said to be an increase of 55% from last year’s record of 13.5 million students from forty-nine countries (Bashir, 2020). It is worth mentioning that these numbers only reflect what they claim to reflect – those who took part in the competition. However, it may be that more people are interested but unable to join the challenge for various reasons. For instance, a requirement to participate in the challenge, as indicated in their website, is that registration should be made through the school director or a teacher of any student who shows interest in participation (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019). This poses an obstacle if the predominant school culture or the teachers do not support reading, as a portion of my data indicates, in which case readers are deprived of participation or progress in the competition (section 7.2.1.2).

2.3 Reading in Algeria

In this section, I discuss the state of reading in Algeria. I argue for the dearth of research on reading in Algeria, and the lack of considerable attention to reading in schools and, thus, the educational system. I discuss some of the initiatives taken by the government and readers that,

although steps forward towards the promotion of reading, are not enough and need improvement. As was explained earlier, robust evidence on reading in Algeria is scarce. Unreliable newspaper articles about reading in Algeria, however, are abundant and appear to add to the general malaise regarding reading, rather than its promotion – a judgment based upon a discussion I had with a journalist writing about the matter. She explained that many of these articles, including hers, rely upon questioning people on the streets and reporting what they say. In this sense, the big and misleading statements of the public with no expertise in the subject become titles of newspaper articles. This is not to make a generalisation and assume that all newspaper articles do the same. Nonetheless, even those that do not seem to do so, display statistics and mention large scale studies that have apparently been conducted, without providing any references.

2.3.1 Leisure and reading

Studies suggest that reading is not necessarily considered the first leisure activity in Algeria. Lakjaa (2007), in his study of young Algerians' concerns and aspirations about the future of Algeria, gave copies of a questionnaire to 496 Algerians (238 males and 258 females) aged fifteen to thirty-five, from a city in the north-west of Algeria, and interviewed ninety-six of them. His sample was diverse and included illiterates and literates with different educational levels. In relation to their leisure activities, his findings indicate that for males they mainly included: sports (38.5%), music (19%), television (10.5%) and reading (3.5%). For females, leisure time was spent in handcrafts (21.5%), intellectual activities (19%), sports (12.5%) and arts (12%). They claimed to spend most of their leisure time with family (58%) and friends (28.5%). 76.5% of females considered television as the leisure activity that has the most influence on their lives, compared to books cited by only 18.5% and magazines by 5%. Although he does not explain what 'intellectual activities' means, his findings suggest that reading does not occupy an important role in their daily lives. Similarly, Miliani (2016), in a survey of 647 first-year students and seventy-two Master students of French drawn from eight institutions, aimed at obtaining insights into their leisure reading practices, using a close-ended questionnaire. His findings suggest that the most predominant leisure time activities are: television, sports and music, with reading in fourth position.

In line with this, and in an attempt to obtain insights into time use among Algerians, a study of 9,015 households across the country was conducted by the ONS (2012) in Algeria. It

included individuals aged from fifteen to over eighty, residing in rural and urban areas, educated and uneducated, working and non-working. It concludes that television seems to be the predominant leisure activity among Algerians (ONS, 2013). A study published by the *Centre Mondiale de Consulting Économique et de Prospective* reports that the total number of book readers in Algeria is 6.8%. Another survey conducted among 1,000 people across ten cities suggests that book reading is almost non-existent, except for utilitarian purposes: 16% religious books, 9% computer science, 8% law books, 14.2% newspapers and magazines (cited in Chaib Draa Tani, 2012). Reading appears to take a back seat in the lives of the groups of people studied. Getting the bigger picture of this state of affairs requires scrutinising other actors involved in the promotion of reading, or lack thereof – the environment surrounding readers, as most of the literature on leisure reading demonstrates (see section 3.4).

Most of these studies are not about reading but rather about leisure activities, which further indicates the scarcity of research on reading. Furthermore, the closed nature of some of the methods used in these studies makes it difficult to obtain in-depth data, hence, the need for qualitative investigative research into reading.

2.3.2 Reading and schools

A few studies suggest, and make statements about, the lack of attention in Algerian schools - and, thus, in the educational system - to reading among children. Bouanaka (2015), in her study of the reading environment surrounding children in Algeria, found that there is a low tendency towards reading among children. She related this to the lack of reading spaces for Algerian children and the lack of a national cultural programme to promote reading. According to Bouanaka (2015), 93% of Algerian schools do not possess a library or reading rooms, and that big cities only have a few libraries – an example being Algiers with only ten. Mustapha Madi, the editing director of *Casbah* Edition, one of the publishing houses in Algeria, refers to the Algerian environment as ‘anti-reading’. He further stresses the fact that literary texts are not part of the school curriculum, and that teachers themselves have no interest in reading (Chaib Draa Tani, 2012). These are big statements, for they do not seem to be based upon any empirical research, but rather observational remarks. He, however, is not the only one lamenting the place of reading in Algeria in general, and particularly in schools. In an interview on one of the Algerian national television channels, Rachid Nekkaz, a former potential participant in Algeria’s 2019 presidential election, declared: “I see that in Algeria people are

not reading at all... In the Algerian school, it needs to be compulsory that any Algerian should read at least one book every three months" (El Djazairia One, 2019). This bearing in mind that, as noted by Chaib Draa Tani (2012), the Ministry of Culture in Algeria has plans to integrate the reading of at least four books a year into school curricula.

A quick search on the official website of the Ministry of National Education, with 'reading' in French as a keyword showed two results dated 2019, one of which was related to the visit of delegates from the UAE regarding the Arab Reading Challenge, and the other to a study day to promote reading services among autistic children (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2020). Results of a search using Arabic were more generous and showed five, one of which was related to the Arab Reading Challenge, while two were irrelevant and, most importantly, two were about decisions taken regarding leisure reading in schools. One of them indicates that an agreement was made between the Ministries of Education and Culture in 2015 to implement a reading initiative in schools in one of the Algerian cities that entails free access to the city's libraries and free books. This, the website indicates, was implemented in 2016.

In line with this refreshing news, an official document was issued in June 2018 and officially published on the website in January 2019 encouraging schools to promote reading by: (1) integrating two leisure reading activities in the school curriculum, although not much has been said about what these activities should consist of, apart from being named "The Book Minute" and "Sentence of the Day"; (2) creating reading and creative writing clubs in primary, middle and secondary schools; (3) refurbishing school libraries and equipping them with books; (4) raising awareness among parents, teachers and pupils about the importance of reading and writing. It is striking that, in 2019, the subject of discussion in Algeria is how to integrate book reading, while in many other countries the focus of research has moved to types of books: to make the curricula more inclusive (Yandell, 2015; Swift, 2016) and to look at how communities of parents and teachers can work together to promote enjoyable experiences for children (Cremin *et al.*, 2014). On a side note, most of the studies mentioned in this section about reading in Algeria, excluding reports, have been carried out by researchers from a librarianship background (Bouanaka, 2015; Abdelillah, 2016), information sciences (Chaib Draa Tani, 2012), or literature (Miliani, 2016) rather than educational researchers. Nonetheless, there seems to be a glimmer of hope that all the appeals, whether founded on solid or shaky grounds, are starting to be heeded.

2.3.3 Initiatives taken by the government

The initiatives taken by the Algerian government are smaller than those of some Arab world countries, referred to above. They are, however, worth mentioning for being considerable steps towards promoting reading in Algeria. The international annual book fair SILA (*Salon International du Livre d'Alger*) can be said to be one of them, although whether to call it an 'initiative' is debatable because, after all, its purpose is to sell books. However, it can still be seen as an initiative because it gathers readers and authors, and promotes reading. This cultural event takes place every year for ten days, starting around the end of October. According to SILA's official website, 1.1 million visitors attended the book fair in 2019 (its 24th edition), as did 1,030 exhibitors from thirty-six countries with 250,000 titles (SILA, 2019). This is a considerable increase on its 16th edition in 2011, with only 521 exhibitors, and the 20th edition in 2016 with 910 exhibitors. The number of visitors is relatively stable compared to the 1.5 million recorded in 2015 - said to have been the peak (SILA, 2017). More than being a place for book purchases, it is an opportunity for readers to meet some of their favourite authors. For instance, Ahlam Mosteghanemi and Rachid Boudjedra participated in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

Perhaps one of the motives that made the government devote more efforts towards cultural and leisure centres was the nomination of some of Algeria's big cities as capitals of culture in the Arab world. The budget devoted to cultural investments has been increasing each year between 2003 and 2012 (Abdelillah, 2016), as Algeria is among the North African and Arab countries shifting their attention to the cultural side of the country (Abdelillah, 2016). For instance, in December 2012, Constantine was nominated by the *Organisation pour l'Éducation, la Science et la Culture de la Ligue Arabe* (ALESCO) 'Capital of the Arab Culture' for the year 2015 (Constantine d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, n.d.). One of the projects within this entailed the construction of a central library, in addition to other cultural centres, as announced by Khalida Toumi, then Minister of Culture. Unfortunately, the library was not ready to be inaugurated on time (Ghioua, 2015), and was only finished two years later (Algérie Presse Service, 2017).

Nonetheless, libraries remain among the main projects that Algeria seems to have. Among the ten projects displayed on the website of the Algerian Ministry of Culture are three libraries, two of which have already been realised: The Main Library of Public Reading of

Constantine and that of Mostaganem, situated in the northeast and northwest of Algeria respectively (Ministère de la culture, 2016). The Ministry's website indicates that the total number of libraries across Algeria equals only 229 – a quantity that seems out of date as Constantine and Mostaganem, for example, are inaccurately shown to have zero libraries. According to the *Commission Nationale Algérienne pour l'Éducation la Science et la Culture* (n.d.), Algeria has constructed 318 libraries and 306 are in progress, in addition to the few mobile libraries. The Ministry of the Interior and local groups have established a plan of building 995 municipal libraries and 181 reading halls, with a budget of 15 billion dinars (Boukrouh and Kessab, 2010). The Algerian authorities seem to have realised the deficiency of libraries and reading centres.

Now that libraries have been built and books have been made available for the reader – which is not to say that there are enough of both (or not) as official statistics are not available – another conundrum facing the Algerian reader are book prices. Making reading part of Algerians' everyday lives entails leaving a budget for it: 200 to 350 DA (which is the equivalent of around £1 to £2), as reported by Chaib Draa Tani (2012), who also observes that this does not seem to be much, unless reading is not considered a priority. In this case, any amount spent on books becomes important regardless of how small it might seem. It should, nonetheless, be noted that the prices indicated by Chaib Draa Tani (2012) are the minimum. During my visit to a book fair in Algeria in 2019, the prices were much higher. For instance, one of Malek Bennabi's books was 1,000 DA, Elif Shafak's 1,300 DA, John Green's 1,300 DA, Dan Brown's 1,200 DA and JK Rowling's 2,150 DA. This, compared to the minimum wage, accounting for 22,000 DA (a little over £100), is not very affordable as it constitutes around 5% to 10% of their wages per book. On the online bookstore of 'Algeria Reads', that I discuss further below, the prices of books range from 200 DA to 8,000 DA, which certainly exceeds what a family can afford.

It is important to remember that these initiatives, although they took time to manifest – or are still on paper –, are significant steps to move forward with leisure reading, considering that the history of Algeria was full of violent events. The latter mainly include, as mentioned earlier, the French colonialism that lasted 132 years, and the Algerian Civil War during the 1990s, or what is referred to as the *Décennie Noire* ('Black Decade') causing huge rates of illiteracy, among other social issues. Furthermore, as pinpointed by Abdelillah (2016), the book industry has been the victim of the events that Algeria witnessed during the Black Decade,

including all that is involved in book production and distribution. He further explains that writers and editors have been sent into exile, or have been killed for their engagement in cultural practices, books and writing (Abdelillah, 2016). He asserts that there exist 400 publishing houses and organisations nowadays, according to statistics generated by the *Bibliothèque Nationale d'Algérie* (Abdelillah, 2016). Thus, Algeria could be said to be in a phase of reconstructing itself, which can only be achieved through efforts by different actors, including readers themselves.

2.3.4 Initiatives taken by readers

I would argue that the government's promotion of reading is better than before, but not enough for readers. Thus, Algerian readers contributed in their own ways through social media. While 'Facebook', and other social media platforms, sound oxymoronic with 'reading', in the sense that they are usually thought of as hindering it, they are being used in Algeria as ways of promoting reading. In recent years, Algeria has seen a trend among some Facebook users to connect to readers around the country by creating 'reading' Facebook pages or groups. Examples include two closed groups: *Arabesk* and *Oasis Littéraire* ('Literary Oasis'), and two open pages: *Aljazair Taqraa* ('Algeria Reads') and *Constantine Reads*. These virtual spaces aim at promoting reading by organising encounters between readers across the country.

Arabesk, the reading club for multilingual readers, was created in 2008 while *Oasis Littéraire* was created two years later (Chaib Draa Tani, 2012). Both groups aim at promoting reading and providing a space where readers all over the country can make recommendations, critique or even share their favourite passages. In 2011, as reported by Chaib Draa Tani (2002), *Oasis Littéraire* and *Arabesk* reached 1,208 and 536 members respectively. However, in May 2020, as I have observed, *Oasis Littéraire* reached 54,372 while *Arabesk*'s members decreased to 123. Clearly, these numbers do not say much about whether their members identify as readers. They, however, are relatively small in comparison to other Facebook groups such as: *Oum Walid*, a famous Algerian cook who went viral in recent years with 481,313 members, or even that of Turkish Soap Operas with 130,958 members.

The virtual space was only the starting point for these groups, for they took the 'virtual' to 'real' encounters. For instance, the *Oasis Littéraire* made it a ritual to meet almost every month in cafes that they called *Île Lettrée* ('Literate Island') (Chaib Draa Tani, 2012, p. 28).

This name implies a sense of isolation and a refuge in which to engage in reading, away from the eyes of others who might not share the same passion. Wanis Ziat, the administrator of *Oasis Littéraire*, avowed that his aim behind creating the group was to gather as many readers as possible, for he thought that the literary culture finds it hard to survive in Algeria (Chaib Draa Tani, 2012). Unfortunately, both groups were based in Algiers and, as the group members live in different parts of Algeria, it is difficult for them to join the gatherings. This capital centrism, once again, prevents some readers from fully participating in these reading-related events – as pinpointed earlier with the international book fair.

Aljazair Taqraa ('Algeria Reads') and Constantine Reads, with 482,602 and 18,086 respectively, took the initiatives further. What is exceptional, for instance, about *Aljazair Taqraa* is that two years after its creation in 2015, it expanded from being a virtual encounter of readers across Algeria to a house for the publication, translation and distribution of books, that goes by the same name. A website for selling books has also been created and named 'Algeria Reads Store' (dzreads.com). In an interview with Kada Zaoui, the founder of the page and the publishing house, he explained that his motives were to promote reading and writing among the youth, and to bring the author, the reader and the publisher closer, by attending to their interests and producing books accordingly (Dzair TV, 2018). The slogan of the publishing house is 'we contaminate you with reading', encapsulating the hope of spreading the reading virus among Algerians. It publishes books by Algerian and non-Algerian authors, including those from Palestine, Iran, Sudan, Tunisia, among others (Dzair TV, 2018).

The slogan 'we contaminate you with reading' seems to have worked its magic, for more and more groups have since been created. Nowadays, many Facebook pages go by the name of *X Taqraa* ('X reads', X being the name of the city), indicating that initiatives taken in one part of Algeria inspired other readers across the country. Interviewed on Algerian television channel, El Hayat, Mossaab Gharbi, founder of 'Constantine Reads', maintained that the idea of creating this group came from a post on Facebook in 2016, regarding the first street library in Algeria. This was created in Batna, a city situated in the northeast of Algeria, around the logo 'Take a book and bring a book' (El Hayat TV, 2019). The club, according to him, has been founded by a group of Algerian university students from different disciplines including architecture, medical sciences, biology and Arabic literature, who were drawn together by their passion for reading. The initiatives between this and many other Facebook groups include sharing reading interests virtually, as well as organising reading days in parks and encounters

between young authors and readers. Recently, a video has been posted by the founder of the group documenting his meeting with Alberto Manguel, in which he addressed the club members and encouraged them to continue reading. Furthermore, some of the club members volunteered to travel to the capital, where the annual international book fair takes place, bearing lists of all the books wanted by members who could not attend it, and delivered the books for free (El Hayat TV, 2019). Most importantly, their street library has been built and placed.

In the region where my data was collected, a small urban library has also been established. After speaking to one of the readers who contributed to establishing this library, she confessed having had difficulties doing so, as it was hard to obtain permissions from the higher bodies whose signatures were required. Luckily, the project has received the necessary licences and been realised. The urban library has been placed in the city centre where most of the leisure facilities are. Below is a note that I have written in my diary after traveling to see it:

> I woke up this morning overwhelmed with excitement to visit the street library – yes, the very first street library in the region. That was a first for me, but also a good step towards promoting the reading culture in Algeria. After traveling one hour by car to the place where the library has been placed, and after only a few days of its establishment, to my surprise, it was different from what I have seen on the pictures posted on Facebook. The beautiful street library that I have seen, previously full of books, was empty of novels and any other books apart from some school books, torn apart and not adequate for usage. The wooden frame of the library was also partially destroyed, and some of the glass was broken. When establishing this small library, it was clearly stated that school books should not be put there, for it was strictly made for leisure reading. In the end, however, it became a storage for the old schoolbooks that were no longer needed. I travelled back home with all the excitement replaced by disappointment (#RJ, e20).

This incident is in keeping with the assertions made by Mossaab Gharbi, who had said that, although the experience worked well at the beginning, books were not found, the glass was broken and it became a repository of academic books (El Hayat TV, 2019).

2.4 Conclusion

To sum up, there seems to be a discrepancy in the data that addresses the state of reading in the Arab world in general and Algeria in particular. This reinforces the importance of the present research in unveiling the leisure reading experiences within a group of graduates. Of course, the aim of this research is not to provide numbers on how many people read or do not read in Algeria. Rather, the aim is to yield in-depth data about readers' reading practices. Considering the complex nature of leisure reading, it stands to reason, in my view, to employ a qualitative approach to untangle the complexities inherent in readers' practices. Furthermore, reading in Algeria seems to be at its infancy stage, where initiatives have been taken by the government only in recent years, as well as by readers themselves. This might explain the reasons for which, in some places and within some groups of individuals, reading-related matters might still be perceived as 'uncommon', such as the street library. There is still room for a considerable amount of improvement and efforts to be made in schools, among families – noticeably missing from the literature reviewed on reading in Algeria – and members of the public for the promotion of reading. Improvement, however, starts with researching the subject matter, which is what the present research aims at: investigating leisure reading within a group of Algerian graduates.

CHAPTER 03: READING AND IDENTITY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the various definitions attributed to reading. This is not because it needs to be defined, as this would contradict the claims made throughout this thesis: reading is complex and should not be limited to a single definition, lest this lead to binary divisions between 'reader' and 'non-reader'. In this sense, I concur with Skjerdingstad and Rothbauer (2016) who are disinclined to define reading as it "must still be understood as an open and uncertain phenomenon" (p. 2). It is, however, important to reflect upon the existing definitions, whilst acknowledging their limitations. I, therefore, argue that they mostly restrict reading to enjoyment and pleasure, while its complexity goes beyond this to include reading as a form of resistance or conformity to social structures, as further sections demonstrate. Furthermore, none of the existing definitions refers to the voluntary choice of 'reading in whatever languages readers choose', ignoring the fact that for some multilingual readers, the choice of languages can add more complexities to the reading practice.

This chapter then moves on to consider the link between reading and identity. The intricate relationships that exist between the two can be fathomed to a certain extent by looking at two perspectives: (1) 'reader' identities and social environments; (2) readers' 'whole' identities and their reading. The first refers to the influence of readers' social environments (e.g., family, peers…) on the construction of reader identities and their identification as such. The second refers to readers constructing various identities (e.g., linguistic, religious, possible selves…) through their engagement in reading. I argue that there is a dearth of research that looks at both perspectives, and for the usefulness of approaching reading and identity as such in providing a clearer picture of readers' complex practices.

Furthermore, in relation to the first perspective – reader identities and social environments – the literature reviewed shows the strong influence of the various social groups that readers interact with on their construction of reader identities. It similarly demonstrates the struggles that readers experience when a dominant model of reading is imposed on them and when their reading identities are not congruent with the predominant culture of those groups, leading some of them to conceal their passion for reading and hide their reader identities. Significantly, this leads some of them to quit reading altogether. The opposite is also true in

that some readers engage in reading to 'seem' readers (Bartlett, 2007). As far as the second perspective – readers' 'whole' identities and their reading – is concerned, this chapter argues that readers' engagement in reading certain texts offers them opportunities to experiment with various identities, explore their possible selves and, eventually, (re)construct their identities. To do so, I draw upon a body of literature on reading and escapism in which the relationship between identities and texts is discussed at length. Thus, this chapter also argues that it is in the escapist act of reading that readers engage in the vicarious exploration of their possibilities and agencies to cope with their difficulties, making it an active process and, therefore, dispelling the myth that reading to escape is passive. This, in fact, could be argued to be readers' way of retreating to their worlds to reconnect through them with (re)constructed identities.

3.2 'Defining' leisure reading

Across the literature, leisure reading is often denoted by other names. References in English include: leisure-time reading (Greaney and Hegarty, 1987); ludic reading (Nell, 1988); recreational reading (Manzo and Manzo, 1995; Gallik, 1999); independent reading (Cullinan, 2000); voluntary reading (Krashen, 2004; Rothbauer, 2004; Richardson and Eccles, 2007); self-selected reading (Hughes-Hassel and Rodge, 2007); extra-curricular reading (Chen, 2008); reading for pleasure (Cremin *et al.*, 2014; Rajab and Al-Sadi, 2015; Kucirkova and Cremin, 2020); pleasure reading (Ross *et al.*, 2006; Howard, 2011); aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1969; 1978; 2004). French references use *lecture* ('reading') (Michaudon, 2001; Chaib Draa Tani, 2012; Daoud, 2012; Abdelillah, 2016; Miliani, 2016). Those in Arabic refer to it as: *al-mutala'a al-mumti'a* ('enjoyable reading') (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2020); *al-qiraa al-hurra* ('free reading') (Rakhamya and Al Fawal, 2017). In Spanish, it is referred to as: *lectura por placer* ('reading for pleasure') (Dezcallar *et al.*, 2014); *lectura libre y voluntaria* ('free and voluntary reading') (Neira, 2011). At the heart of leisure reading, as these terms suggest, is a consensus that readers 'choose' to engage in reading and derive enjoyment and pleasure from it.

Volition and agency are also evident in reading definitions. Cremin (2014), for instance, defines it as reading "any kind of text - novel, magazine, comic, non-fiction - in electronic as well as in printed form. It can take place anywhere - at home, at school, in the community, on

a bus (or any other form of transport), on a beach, in the park (or any other leisure location)" (p. 5). This definition is reflective of others in the literature (e.g., Greaney and Hegarty, 1987; Gallik, 1999; Cullinan, 2000; Krashen, 2004; Love and Hamston, 2004; Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Kucirkova and Cremin, 2020). Cullinan (2000) adds that it can be done "for information or for pleasure" but should not be assigned and followed up by a report of comprehension (p. 1), thus, excluding school texts and assignments (Greaney and Hegarty, 1987, p. 7). Clark and Rumbold (2006) add that it could include reading that is triggered by a request from another individual but continues out of interest. Krashen (2004) further asserts that in free and voluntary reading "you don't have to finish the book if you don't like it" (p. 1). This is cognate with one of Pennac's (1992/2006) ten rights that any readers should have. These include the right to: (1) not read; (2) skip; (3) not finish a book; (4) read it again; (5) read anything; (6) mistake a book for real life; (7) read anywhere; (8) dip in; (9) read out loud; (10) be quiet (p. 68/p.145) (see Appendix A). Pennac (1992/2006) justifies his ten rights as the inverse of the ten commandments that imply rules and regulations. Leisure reading is thus defined as any reading that individuals do, in whatever place and time they find suitable, for whichever reasons they wish, without any impositions.

Not all the terms and definitions mentioned above capture both the complexity and the diversity the concept of leisure reading comprises. For instance, 'ludic reading' is mostly used to refer to fiction reading – Nell (1988) believes that it is "the most common vehicle for pleasure reading" – and some narrative nonfiction (travel and biographies). Nell (1988) associates ludic reading with escapism, absorption and lack of consciousness, and limits it to those who self-identify as "reading addicts" (p. 2). As such, reading is portrayed as an "unproductive" and almost passive process where readers only submit to the text (p. 2). Although his definition might well faithfully mirror what some readers do with reading, as argued by Kamhieh (2012), it tends to be reductive to one reason, excluding the other diverse reasons for reading, as well as the variety of texts read. Regarding the term 'reading for pleasure', Csikszentmihalyi (1990) highlights the difference between 'pleasure' and 'enjoyment', and argues that the latter involves active processes that require complex skills, which the former does not: "choosing the book, identifying with the characters, trying to recreate visually the places and the events described, anticipating turns of the plot, and responding with empathy, yet critically, to the writer's craft" (p. 132). This can be compared with Ross' (1999) notion of 'finding without seeking', which insinuates that readers unintentionally encounter information, while reading, that is useful in their everyday lives.

Therefore, both 'ludic reading' and 'reading for pleasure' place rigid boundaries on the concept of reading and dull its complexity. I use 'leisure' reading for the broader meaning it conveys: activity practised "at one's convenience" (Merriam-Webster, 2020, n.p.).

Although attempts to expand the scope of what leisure reading means are evident in the definitions above, most of the focus has only been on researching literature or, more precisely, fiction reading (e.g., Radway, 1984; Cherland, 1994; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011; Coban, 2018). This is important because a more holistic approach allows findings to unfold from participants, and a great deal is discovered about what reading means to them. A significant example is that of Alateeq's (2016) study. In his work, the scope of reading is pushed further to include the *Quran* and religion-related texts. In fact, his participants perceived reading to be exclusively limited to these texts, which would have remained unknown if Alateeq (2016) predefined reading or only scrutinised fiction books. Therefore, the wider the scope, the more is learned about the concept of leisure reading and its complexity.

Significantly, language is not mentioned in any of the definitions reviewed, although some of them show an attempt to be as inclusive as possible: anything that readers choose to read, in any place, at any time and for whatever reasons. Overlooking the languages in which readers read is even more interesting within studies that draw upon the link between this and identity (e.g., Radway, 1984; Cherland, 1994; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019), knowing that reading in certain languages is a means for readers to reinforce and sustain certain identities. Dali (2012), for example, in his study of reading in the lives of fourteen Russian immigrant readers in Canada aged thirty to sixty-five, asserts that reading books in Russian means "knowing who [they] are, which stabilizes participants' self-image" (p. 270). Reading books in their native language served as a reminder of "their roots" (p. 270). Thus, language is an important component of readers' identities, which adds another layer of complexity, and would reveal much more about readers' reading practices if investigated.

There is more to the 'practice' of leisure reading than the 'enjoyment' and 'pleasure' portrayed in the definitions and terms mentioned earlier. Leisure reading is used to project certain identities and perform acts of resistance or conformity to the social rules – explicit or implicit – embedded in readers' social worlds (Radway, 1984; Cherland, 1994; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). Lessons from these studies (discussed in section 2.3) help us

understand the complexity inherent in reading practices, rendering the enjoyment, pleasure and fun associated with reading only the 'tip of the iceberg'. I emphasise the word 'practice' in relation to reading to infer an acknowledgment of its situated nature and, hence, the importance of looking at it in relation to the social environments within which it takes place, and where its meaning is constructed (Scribner and Cole, 1981; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007). Perceiving reading as a social practice infers acknowledging the intricate potpourri of influences from readers' social environments that interact to produce reading identities and practices. This also entails deploying a research approach that would allow for an in-depth investigation of reading practices: a qualitative research approach (chapter 05).

This section discussed the various terms and definitions attributed to leisure reading. It argued that these definitions project an aura of pleasure and enjoyment that fails to capture the complexity and diversity that lie beneath the practice of reading. It also argued that scant attention is paid to languages and, thus, reading in multilingual settings. I, moreover, noted that this research views reading as a social practice, emphasising the social environments within which it happens and its meaning is embedded. As highlighted at the outset of this thesis, in section 1.2, this research aimed to investigate reading practices and their influences. Thus, the next section focuses on the literature related to this. 'Leisure reading' will be shortened to 'reading' throughout the thesis starting from section 3.3.

3.3 Reviewing the relationship between reading and identity

In recent decades, there has been an increasing focus on the relationship between literacy practices – reading in this case – and identity. This is referred to by Moje and Luke (2009) as the "identity turn" that was part of the social turn in literacy research (p. 415). This was part of refuting the view of reading as a cognitive skill that is immune to people's social worlds, and rather perceiving it as a social practice (Scribner and Cole, 1981; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). This entails a shift in focus towards readers and their experiences from their own accounts. This turn directed theorists' and researchers' attention towards scrutinising people's literacy practices and their role in constructing, performing and exploring identities (Moje and Luke, 2009).

An international body of evidence argues for a link between reading and identity. This can be broadly put into two categories. The first category examines reading and identity in relation to readers' social environments. It investigates the ways in which readers develop a sense of themselves as such ('reader' identities), and how this is affected by their social environments, such as family, peers and schools. The second category looks at reading and identity ('whole' identity) in relation to the texts that readers read. It looks at how readers construct various identities through what they read. I write in this section about these two categories and discuss their findings. I also argue that there is a dearth of research bringing the two perspectives – social environments and texts in relation to reading and identity – together. Thus, there is a need for both to understand the interplay that exists between their identities, their social environments and the texts they read. Rather than adopting a binary view, therefore, the present research takes a holistic view and considers both categories. As a matter of organisation, I review the literature related to each perspective separately in the following two main sections, each comprising sub-headings. Furthermore, most of the literature reviewed in the following two sections draws mainly on young readers, and does not focus on multilingual readers. It also scrutinises readers' interactions with their family members, peers and schools only, without accounting for wider settings such as public places, among others. Despite this, the evidence presented is highly relevant to the present study.

3.4 Reading, identity and social environments

A large portion of the work reviewed indicates that there is a strong link between readers' reading identities and their social environments. I look at few studies for their direct relevance to my work (e.g., Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Kamhieh, 2012; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). These studies mostly focus on readers' interactions solely within family, peers and school settings. Considering the strong influence of social environments on readers and their reading, and the fact that readers interact beyond the previously-mentioned groups, I argue for the need to scrutinise reading practices within other settings. Studies that highlight the key role played by family and peer groups in shaping readers' reading practices are also discussed.

3.4.1 Reader identities are shaped by their social environments

Robust evidence suggests that reading identities are shaped by their interactions with their social environments, with their families, peers and schools argued to be the most influential. For instance, Cherland (1994), undertaking a year-long ethnographic study in a Canadian town to explore the reading experiences of seven sixth-grade schoolgirls aged eleven to thirteen, reports that her participants identify as readers by emulating their mothers' reading, including what they read and how they do it. In the United States, McCarthey (2001) looked at the role of literacy in identity construction within twelve fifth-grade children from different cultural and social backgrounds. She interviewed them alongside their parents, teachers and peers, thereby gathering more perspectives. Observation and journal entries were also utilised. Her findings indicate that pupils' perceptions of themselves as readers (and writers) are influenced by their parents', peers' and teacher's perceptions. For instance, reporting on the influence of schools, she asserts that readers' positioning of themselves as readers is related to the labels they are ascribed in the classroom: high, average or struggling, based on their scores. Significantly, her study shows that pupils' perceptions of themselves, as well as their parents' and teachers' perceptions, in relation to their literacy practices influenced their senses of themselves more broadly.

Kamhieh's (2012) research in the United Arab Emirates, focusing on adult readers instead, investigated reading habits within a group of female students. She used a rich variety of data collection methods over three years: 250 snapshot surveys, thirty journal entries, twenty interviews, 100 questionnaires, conversations and emails. She also developed a conceptual framework that traces the development of a reading habit through three stages: (1) triggering stage; (2) facilitating stage; (3) sustaining stage (p. 203). The influence of family members, teachers and peers is evident, especially, in the two first stages. The triggering stage refers to early year experiences, where readers form positive thoughts about reading and engage in literacy practices by emulating their family members or teachers (Kamhieh, 2012). In the facilitating stage, readers become "semi-independent", in that they take some ownership of their reading choices, yet with their parents co-facilitating their reading (p. 225). The sustaining stage refers to the phase in which readers become independent, and when reading becomes an integral part of their self-definitions: "reading habits are seen as an identity or character", or a *qana'a* for reading (p. 225). *Qana'a* refers to the "long-term affective factors" that influence readers to engage in reading, unlike purposes for reading that are "short-term, conscious

intentions, aimed at particular outcomes" (p. 177). Her *qana'a* concept is reflective of Bourdieu's (1977) *habitus* as a set of "durable" dispositions (p. 72). She, in fact, asserts that reader identities "shape and are shaped by their *qana'a* and reading choices, or habitus" (p. 225). In this sense, she argues that what sustains a reading habit is a reading *habitus* in which readers are driven to read by "liking, being happy and convinced", rather than feeling obliged to do so (p. 176). This said, readers' reading *habitus* is continuously being developed, which in fact shapes their reader identities (Kamhieh, 2012). The presence of an external trigger, and then a facilitator, paves the way for them to view themselves as readers.

The strong influence of readers' interactions with their social environments on their views of themselves as readers, and on reading in general, is further echoed in Scholes (2015), Swift (2016) and Sellers (2019). Scholes (2015), using a mixed-method approach with groups of pupils aged eight to ten across seven schools in Australia, investigated how readers' interactions with various social groups – home, school and community contexts – enable or hinder their reading experiences. Data was collected in two phases: (1) a survey of 297 students; (2) follow-up semi-structured interviews with thirty-four of them. In the United Kingdom, and on a smaller scale, Swift's (2016) research focused on the development and negotiation of the meanings attributed to reading and being a reader among pupils aged thirteen to fourteen, as they interact with their social environments. Data collection similarly took place in two phases: (1) a critical incident charting activity among ninety-six pupils; (2) semi-structured interviews with twenty-eight of them. The critical charting activity consisted of asking pupils to think about their attitudes towards reading and themselves as readers, and the experiences that had an effect on these (Swift, 2016). These were recorded verbally or visually on images representing their reading journeys (rivers or roads). More recently-published is Sellers' (2019) paper. As part of this broader study (previously published as Swift), she specifically explored the effect of peer groups on the development of reading identities among young learners.

All three works reported some of their findings by grouping readers according to their reader identities. While Scholes' (2015) paper solely discusses one group of readers that she names "clandestine readers" (p. 364), Swift's (2016) and Sellers' (2019) focus on four different categories: "resistant reader", "indifferent reader", "outsider reader" and "social reader" (p. 942). Scholes (2015) defines clandestine readers as those who seem to enjoy reading but feel compelled to conceal their endeavours to appeal to the "anti-reading culture" of their peer

groups (p. 364). This group of readers is reminiscent of Swift's (2016) and Sellers' (2019) resistant readers: those who perceive reading as an "anti-social" practice that prevents their full participation within their peer groups, due to reading being in "conflict with social norms" (p. 943). That is, reading has a "negative currency" within peer groups, leading readers to hide their reading or abandon it (p. 942). Indifferent readers are those who do not necessarily perceive reading as opposing social norms. Nonetheless, they view it as "non-social", in that it is not a facilitator of social interactions (p. 943). Because none of their friends or family members shares their interest in reading, and due to their desire to fully engage with these two groups, their engagement in reading is hindered (Sellers, 2019). Social readers are the opposites of resistant readers. They refer to those whose engagement in reading is driven by their desire to fully participate within their peer groups, rather than by their own interest in reading (Sellers, 2019). Reading has a 'positive currency' within these groups. As put by Sellers (2019), "[p]eer pressure and the need to conform required these young people to identify as readers" (p. 946). Reading becomes similar to a passport that allows their entrance into these spaces. Unlike the three previous categories, outside readers are those whose concern is not to "fit in" within their peer groups. They "actively positioned themselves" against the prevailing social norms and constructed their identities as "outsider[s]" by "standing out" in their choices of reading what is not popular among their peers (Sellers, 2019, p. 945). Thus, these studies taken together demonstrate how readers' interactions with various social groups result in the construction of different reading identities.

All these studies shed light on the strong influence that readers' social environments have on their perceptions of reading, and of themselves as readers. The focus, however, has only been on family, peers and school settings. While this shows how important these social groups are in readers' reading journeys, they are certainly not the only settings within which readers interact and, therefore, it is crucial to scrutinise reading practices beyond these spaces to include, for instance, reading on public transport, in parks, at the workplace, at universities and so on. This would reveal the extent to which readers' reading practices and reading identities are affected by their interactions outside the usually-scrutinised settings. Moreover, readers' perceptions can either be in harmony or dissonance with those prevailing among their social environments. In the case of the latter, this creates further struggles amongst readers, as to whether to openly, or secretly, identify as such.

3.4.2 Struggles amongst readers over their reading identities

Struggles among readers, regarding whether to mask their interests in reading, reveal them, or pretend to have any, is evident throughout some of the studies reviewed above. For instance, although Scholes' (2015) participants associated reading with being "good" and non-reading with being "naughty", they abstained from expressing their reading enjoyment due to their desire to belong to their peer groups, within which the dominant culture was antithetical to reading (p. 370). These readers, therefore, experienced "dissonance" and lack of harmony between their aspirations for reading and the perceived lack of support within peer groups to which they wished to belong (p. 369). Swift's (2016) findings, similarly, indicate that young learners engage in constant negotiations of their perceptions of reading, and of themselves as readers, as they interact with their family members, peers and school settings. She posits that each of these contexts serves as a means to challenge or reinforce readers' perceptions. A similar claim is captured in Sellers' (2019) paper. Her findings show that young readers' willingness to identify (or not) as readers and engage in reading depends on their peer groups' perceptions of reading, and on their own consistency or discordance with "the identity of the group" (p. 947). This is especially evident in the resistant and social readers, whose engagement in reading (or the lack thereof) was based upon its "social acceptability" amongst their peer groups (p. 947). Akin to Scholes' (2015) participants, young readers were able to "consciously position themselves in relation to social and cultural norms, enabling them to either 'fit in' or 'stand out' among their peers", based on the value ascribed to reading (Sellers, 2019, p. 948). McCarthey's (2001) findings also indicate the extent to which these groups affect readers' perceptions of themselves as readers. Some of the students' views of themselves as readers (and writers) were either in alignment or in conflict with those of their teachers, parents or peers. Using Mishler's (1999) identity metaphor, she asserts that "the chorus of voices was in harmony" with some and was "less harmonious" with others (p. 133). The point to retain here is that readers engage in processes of negotiation with the voices they hear and position themselves accordingly, by adhering to or resisting them.

Resistance and adherence are captured in Cherland's (1994) work among schoolgirls, mentioned earlier. Her participants, akin to some of Sellers' (2019), rebelled against the cultural messages that prevailed within their communities, and which dictated that being a 'good' girl and a female meant being a reader, reading fiction, and exchanging fiction books with their friends. Cherland (1994) asserts that among their ways of resisting cultural messages

was reading some fiction types that included stories contradicting the prevailing social norms, discussed more fully in section 2.3.2.2. Significantly, in Cherland's (1994) study, the same readers resisted and conformed, while Sellers' (2019) categorisation seems more rigid in that she does not mention that the same readers can construct some, or all four, identities with different social groups. Interestingly, Kamhieh (2012) does not report on any findings of struggles among her respondents regarding concealing or showing their identities. One possible interpretation is that struggles are mostly witnessed among young readers lacking full ownership of their reading choices, as in all the previous studies the participants were school pupils. Or perhaps Kamhieh (2012), similarly to the other studies, did not scrutinise other social settings apart from the family, peers and schools in which readers might encounter predominant cultures that are incompatible with theirs. This is an indication that more research needs to scrutinise adult readers' interactions within other social settings, and their influence on their reading identities, rather than focusing solely on children.

The consequence of these struggles is best illustrated in Swift's (2016) assertion, that some of her participants tend to not realise that what they read could be referred to as 'reading'. Among the standards against which pupils decide whether to identify as readers, she explains, are: their ability to read aloud, and their knowledge of particular texts and authors considered high in status by the school. Consequently, some pupils confessed that they did not believe that "their experiences and interests 'counted' as reading" (p. 199). Furthermore, McCarthey's (2001) findings indicate that literacy affects people's sense of self – whether they see themselves as smart and cultured or not – thus, making a standard of classroom norms and labels. Their identities are seen as "isomorphic with literacy" (p. 143). These struggles seem to result from the lack of congruence between readers' various sub-identities, such as being a reader and being a pupil (part of a peer group). This indicates that the lack of support and freedom of choice to a certain extent create tensions within readers, which accords with Mishler's (1999) proposition that identity is viewed as a collective term referring to "the dynamic organization of sub-identities that might conflict with or align with each other" (p. 8). The importance of scrutinising readers' identities in relation to their social worlds lies in the fact that the social contexts within which they interact seem to either validate or invalidate them as readers. The significance of this lies in McCarthey's (2001) assertion:

> When there is harmony, the multiplicity of voices is singing together; it is comfortable for most listeners to hear, understand, and appreciate the music. For students, having the voices of their parents, teachers, and peers blending together in a harmonious way offers them a level of comfort in understanding themselves... Likewise a lack of blending together, discordant voices, suggests conflict, breakdown of communication, and much personal discomfort (pp. 144-145).

Although McCarthey's (2001) research, unlike most of those previously-cited, focuses on school settings, her findings apply to the current research as they look at the influence of social environments on readers' views of themselves.

3.4.3 Family and peers as strong influencers

Since reading is perceived as a social practice in this research (Scribner and Cole, 1981; Street, 1984; Street and Lefstein, 2007; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007; Barton, 2007), it is sensible to scrutinise the social groups within which readers interact. Family and peers were mentioned earlier as among the most significant influences on the construction of reader identities, and on readers' perceptions of reading. This section discusses the relevance of both to my research in more detail.

3.4.3.1 Family

A weight of evidence from an international body of literature demonstrates the influence of family environments on children's reading practices: quantitative (e.g., Michaudon, 2001; Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Allington *et al*., 2010; Clark and Hawkins, 2010; Evans *et al.*, 2010; Yeo *et al.*, 2014); qualitative (e.g., Cherland, 1994; Compton-Lilly, 2003; Kamhieh, 2012; Alateeq, 2016; Swift, 2016; Merga and Roni, 2018); mixed-method studies (e.g., Baker and Scher, 2002), some of which are reviewed here. Clark and Hawkins (2010) surveyed 17,089 primary and secondary pupils aged eight to sixteen across the UK. Their findings show that children who are encouraged to read, own books, see their parents read, and have reading discussions with family members, express more positive attitudes towards and frequency of reading than those who do not. Similarly, Yeo *et al.*'s (2014) in Singapore focused on 193 preschool children aged six years across fourteen preschools, as well as their parents. The latter were given reading belief and literacy activity inventories, as well as a demographic

questionnaire to complete, on their children's reading interests. The children were assigned some literacy tests. The findings back up the claims previously-mentioned: that the active involvement of parents in their children's literacy practices – holding positive attitudes towards reading, reading to their offspring, and engaging in reading discussions with them – leads to an interest in reading at an early age.

These findings resonate in other parts of the world. In the USA, Allington *et al.*'s (2010) longitudinal experimental study tested the hypothesis that providing pupils of low socio-economic status with self-selected books would improve their summer reading setback. 852 elementary school pupils were provided with books over three consecutive summers while 478 were not. The findings indicate that the first group was more willing to engage in summer reading than the second group. In its recent report, the National Literacy Trust (2019) surveyed 56,906 people aged nine to eighteen across the UK. Its findings show that those who owned books were almost three times more likely to enjoy reading, and over twice as likely to hold positive attitudes towards reading. In a larger study across twenty-seven countries with over 70,000 cases, Evans *et al.* (2010) stress the importance of children growing up in a "scholarly culture", which they define as "the way of life in homes where books are numerous, esteemed, read, and enjoyed" (p. 171). Their findings show that immersing children in a scholarly culture is more important than other features, such as parents' education, occupation and class. In this sense, a reading home environment can be more important than other factors, usually deemed essential in the possession of cultural capital.

These large-scale studies inevitably have their limitations. Whilst they provide robust evidence on the key role played by the family environment in fostering reading among children, they do not tap into the lived experiences of readers from their own accounts. That is, the complexity and nuances inherent in reading practices tend to be overlooked by these studies, as more weight is given to numbers. Furthermore, they delimit the exploration of other emerging facets of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 9). It is important to examine their findings, nonetheless, as these studies taken together pinpoint that children's engagement in reading rests greatly on their parents' involvement in their literacy practices. Encouraging them to read, holding positive attitudes towards reading, providing a bookish environment, reading to them, discussing reading with them and engaging in reading are powerful ways of shaping the early reading *habitus* and instilling reading into them.

A few qualitative studies similarly address the influence of the home environment on readers and back up the claims made earlier, offering more nuances than the quantitative studies reviewed above. They furthermore show that the influence of the home environment extends to what readers read, and the languages in which they choose to read. For example, Ooi and Liew (2011), writing from the field of information management and librarianship, interviewed twelve adult readers of fiction aged thirty-four to eighty-five. They found that family members play a role in book selection among these readers. Similarly, one of Kamhieh's (2012) participants asserted: "I was enjoying the way of how my father was reading the newspaper, so, I was running to my room with the newspaper in my hand... and started to imitate him..." (p. 205). The schoolgirls in Cherland's (1994) study also mentioned reading fiction because their mothers did so. Alateeq (2016), following a mixed-methods approach, used surveys of thirty-seven Saudi primary pupils aged nine to eleven, and interviewed twelve of them. His use of interviews allowed deeper delving into readers' perceptions of reading as exclusively related to religious texts. His participants reported their family members' engagement in reading and memorising the *Quran* and being asked to do so. This, Alateeq (2016) asserts, may have subsequently shaped their views and choices of what to read, prioritising the *Quran* and stories of prophets over any other readings. As far as languages are concerned, Chong (2017), deploying interviews and diary-writing, explored the reading experiences of eight multilingual Malaysian undergraduates aged nineteen to twenty-three, studying at a British university. Her participants mentioned reading in the languages that were promoted by their parents. That said, readers' reading *habitus* is initiated within their home environments and encompasses initially reading what is perceived by the family members as capital.

Early years reading experiences can equally be negative. Some of Swift's (2016) and Chong's (2017) participants best illustrate this, albeit in two different ways. Swift (2016) states that those who hold negative attitudes towards reading, and themselves as readers, have either been: forced to read by their parents, punished for not reading well, or unsupported by their families. Some of her participants also mentioned their families ridiculing them for being readers, or simply attributing no value to reading and their children becoming readers (Swift, 2016). In Chong's (2017) respondents' case, nonetheless, it was being obliged to read in certain languages that led to an aversion to reading. Jon, one of her participants, explained that he had been forced by his mother into reading books, such as Harry Potter in Malay, to improve his language. He explained that he ceased reading the series right after finishing the two that he was obliged to read (Chong, 2017).

While the importance of the home environment in promoting reading has been highlighted throughout this section, it is concerning to learn that support within families is reported to be missing in parts of the Arab world. The MBRF and UNDP (2016) report, surveying 148,294 people – including students at different stages of their education and non-students from different social and professional backgrounds – across twelve countries (Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, UAE, Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Palestine, Algeria and Oman), reports on this lack of support. The report argues that children encounter reading experiences for the first time at school, where these experiences are associated with assignments and exams and, thus, stress and negative feelings (MBRF and UNDP, 2016). The report further mentions a poll that has been conducted by the 'What?' magazine among Arab authors and intellectuals. Although no information is provided regarding the poll and the magazine, the results suggest that there is agreement among respondents that lack of parental support was at the heart of the issue around reading. They reported that the absence of libraries at home has led to "generations that are averse to reading" (MBRF and UNDP, 2016, p. 11). Shelley Lawson, an English instructor in the UAE, reported to The Media Line that sitting down and reading to children does not happen in the Middle East, because reading is perceived as an academic practice more than a leisure one, and that if any activity of the sort is to take place, it is storytelling (Altmann, 2019). Although this is anecdotal evidence, her claims are partially cognate with Bendriss and Golkowska's (2011) study. Surveying seventy-two Qatari university students from various disciplines and aged eighteen to twenty-four, they looked at the role of family involvement, and that of school, in the formation of reading habits. They contend that oral narratives are more present in the homes of those surveyed than read stories, pinpointing that the presence of both is low. It is evident that studies in the Arab world regarding the influence of the family environment are scarce, which further stresses the need to conduct the present research.

In this section, I discussed the importance of the home environment in fostering a reading *habitus* amongst children and "normalising" reading for them (Swift, 2016, p. 106). This could be done by engaging in literacy practices with children, such as: encouraging them; reading to them; engaging in book discussions with them; providing access to reading materials; holding positive attitudes towards reading. As posited by Clark, Osborne and Dugdale (2009), parents "are not only role models in a general sense but are also the prime figures who can inspire reading" (p. 7). Significantly, possession of books is reported to be particularly important in promoting reading among children, sometimes regardless of their

parents' educational levels. Furthermore, as much as family members can play a facilitating role, they can equally hinder reading experiences by imposing reading on their children, showing negative attitudes towards reading or simply being indifferent towards them. This all sheds light on the roles that families play, being the places where the initial reading *habitus* is formed (or not). In the case of its absence, as witnessed by some of Swift's (2019) participants, peer groups can be more supportive of readers' reading practices, and can make it possible for them to "negate any negative influence or lack of support in the family context" (p. 119). As rightfully put by Ross and her colleagues (2006), although early years' inculcation of reading is the bedrock of fostering a reading habit throughout life, it is never too late to engage in reading. As children advance in age, their social worlds expand to include more social groups. I discuss the influence of peers in the next section.

3.4.3.2 Peers

The terms 'peers' and 'friends' tend to be used interchangeably across most of the literature (e.g., Hopper, 2005; Howard, 2008; Mansor *et al*., 2012). Peers are often among the most influential groups on readers, whether that influence is encouraging or hindering. Research studies mentioned earlier, such as those undertaken by Scholes (2015), Swift (2016) and Sellers (2019) all demonstrate the huge influence that peers' predominant culture can have on readers either concealing their endeavours to read or engaging in it to fully participate within peer groups, and avoid being perceived as social 'outcasts'. In this sense, reading, or the lack thereof, is used as a currency within these groups to increase their social capital. The influence of peers extends to affecting readers' perceptions of reading (Merga, 2014), themselves as readers (Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019), their reading choices (Hopper, 2005; Ooi and Liew, 2011; Jones, 2015), as well as developing, maintaining (Mansor *et al*., 2012) or even triggering their reading interest (Kamhieh, 2012). These influences have been further highlighted by a sizeable international body of literature (e.g., Sterponi, 2007; Clark, Osborne and Dugdale, 2009; Ooi and Liew, 2011; Mottram, 2014; Powell, 2014; Jones, 2015). The similarity that could be discerned between these studies is their focus on children or teens, except for Ooi and Liew (2011) and Kamhieh (2012), indicating a lack of research on peers' influence on adult readers.

Readers' engagement in reading-related practices with their peers – such as discussing their readings and exchanging reading materials – is crucial, as it entails being validated as a reader. Sterponi (2007), using ethnographic fieldwork in second- and third-grade elementary school classrooms in America, explored children's reading practices by drawing upon video-recordings, fieldnotes and interviews with two classroom teachers. Sterponi (2007) contends that children engaged in what she refers to as "clandestine interactional reading", in that they preferred and engaged in "collaborative" reading with their peers, although this was not allowed by their teachers (p. 6). Their engagement in this "covert peer activity" indicates the importance of peers in the reading experience, and the significance of feeling surrounded by people who share their reading interest in validating their reader identities (p. 6). Hopper (2005), in her study of the reading choices of 707 school students, aged eleven to fifteen, across thirty schools in the south-west of England, found peers to be among the most significant influences on readers' choices. She found that many of the students read the same books as their peers in the same class: those that "validate reading as a peer group cultural experience" (p. 118). Similarly, Howard (2008), conducting nine focus groups comprising sixty-eight teenagers aged twelve to fifteen in Canada, found that readers were keen to read what their friends were reading, leading to exchanges of, and discussions around, books. Most importantly, she found that, for many of her participants, reading takes place "almost exclusively in a social context" and is perceived as an efficient way to "cement peer friendships" and a means to "social bonding" (p. 9). She coins "Avid Social Communal Readers" to refer to those who long to read the same materials as their friends do to solidify their participation in the group, and who experience a mutual reinforcement of their friendships and reading (p. 13).

Similar findings are echoed in Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and Singapore. Mansor *et al*. (2012), investigating the factors triggering and sustaining the interest in reading of seven fifteen-year-old Malaysians, deployed observations, interviews and documentary analyses. They extend these findings to argue that reading-related practices amongst peers are an essential element in sustaining their reading habits, because "youths look for recognition and support from peers", leading to peers with similar interests playing the most important role (p. 362). Two of their participants exemplified this: "I actually went into reading seriously when I heard my friends talk about Harry Potter, felt left out and a great need to read and then found the book was fantastic"; "[t]here is a group of about 10 of us who share books and ideas (about the books read). It really helps to encourage us to read more and yet save money" (p.

362). These assertions link closely to those made by two of Kamhieh's (2012) female Emirati students. These, however, suggest that not only can peers help sustain reading habits, but also trigger them. The first participant reported not being a reader until her father brought guests to the house, the daughter of whom was a reader. As the latter started discussing her readings with her, the participant felt ashamed for not knowing the books or authors the other girl mentioned. This, Kamhieh (2012) explains, triggered her interest in reading. The second participant claimed not to have been interested in reading before going to university, after which she received encouragement from friends that helped her become a reader (Kamhieh, 2012).

Jones (2015), using interviews with seventy-six nine-year-old Singaporean children across three schools, their teachers and some parents, explored their reading in English. Her findings indicate that their engagement in reading book series serves as a means to participate in their peer groups, and develop their reading skills and motivation. Her research found that children expressed an enthusiasm towards reading series books and that, most importantly, reading and learning about them happened within their peer groups. Children took ownership of their reading choices and expressed their agencies within their peer groups: "agentively enjoying, discussing, collecting, recommending and reading series" (p. 318). Unlike Mansor *et al.*, (2012) and Jones (2005), Merga's (2014) analysis of survey data, drawn from 520 students across twenty high schools, found that peers' influence is of a limited significance. This is consistent with Hughes-Hassell and Rodge's (2007) findings, in that among 584 respondents to a questionnaire, only 15% of adolescents reported that their friends encouraged them to read. This, however, does not negate the fact that there was an influence.

The findings discussed above are significant because they stress the role played by peers in influencing readers' perceptions of reading and themselves as readers, as well as their engagement in reading. This being said, it is important to create and promote opportunities for readers – young or adult – to engage in reading discussions, recommendations and exchanges of books. Because peers' perceptions of reading influence readers' perceptions immensely, it is crucial to promote reading as an enjoyable practice. Merga's (2014) research provides evidence that adolescents who perceive reading as socially unacceptable are less likely to read in their leisure time. She argues that this stresses the importance of increasing the social capital of books in classrooms (Merga, 2014) and, I would add, in various other settings including family and larger settings within which readers interact. The two-phase UKLA project – phase I includes a survey of 1,200 teachers' knowledge and use of children's literature, their reading

practices and preferences; phase II involves forty-three teachers seeking to develop their knowledge and use of children's literature and other texts in schools – similarly shows how creating "communities of engaged readers" helps change readers' perceptions and attitudes towards reading (Cremin, 2014, p. 4).

Mottram (2014) and Powell (2014), both reporting on some of the projects' findings, draw upon the importance of allowing children to speak to each other about their self-selected books and celebrate their reader identities. Mottram (2014) argues that the concept of "reciprocity" is central in their findings, in that readers experience a sense of "complementarity" and "a degree of giving and receiving as readers" (p. 108). Furthermore, a change of children's attitudes towards reading was also noted by their teachers, even among students who were not previously keen on reading or talking about it (Mottram, 2014). Facilitating readers' interactions around their reading similarly contributes to raising their awareness about the diversity of reading: there is an array of texts they can choose to read (Powell, 2014). Powel (2014) concludes that these readers "seized opportunities to exert their own choices and control over what, when and how they read" (p. 146). All these findings, thus, suggest that peers' support helps readers feel validated, and see their reading experiences as legitimate, fostering their reading engagement. This appears to be the case for children, teens and adolescents, with a lack of attention being paid to adult readers, who warrant more research.

This section argued that there is a strong relationship between reading, identity and social environments. It showed that readers' views of themselves as such, and their perceptions of reading are greatly shaped by their interactions within various settings. Their families and peers play key roles in their constructions of reading identities and in 'normalising' reading. This is achieved by engaging in reading-related activities and being surrounded by a reading-friendly environment within their homes and peer groups. Moreover, their reading identities might be in harmony or discord with the prevailing cultures of those settings. In case of discord, readers tend to experience struggles as to whether to reveal or conceal their reading identities and endeavours to read.

While this section focused on reader identities and the social environments, the next section addresses how readers' 'whole' identities shape, and are shaped by, the texts they read.

3.5 Reading, identity and texts

The large body of literature reviewed indicates a strong relationship between readers' 'whole' identities (e.g., linguistic, religious, possible selves…) and the texts they read. Similar to the above section, this one focuses on studies that directly resonate with my work (e.g., Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011; Kamhieh, 2012), as well as literature on escapism, in which the relationship between identities and texts is discussed in depth.

3.5.1 Sub-identities and reading choices

Readers bring their identities into the texts they choose to read. McCarthey (2001) argues that readers enact their racial, cultural and linguistic sub-identities through what they read. Her findings indicate that they affirm and value their sub-identities through their literacy practices. For instance, Carmen, one of her participants, affirmed her identity as an African American by choosing books written by African American authors. Elena, another respondent, used her literacy skills – writing in Spanish – to write about the discrimination she experienced. This allowed her, McCarthey (2001) argues, to connect her "literate self" with her "Mexican and Spanish-speaking selves" (p. 143). These findings bear similarity to Kamhieh's (2012). In addition to race, culture and language, religion appears to be an important driver for readers' choice of texts in her study and equally in the present research, unlike McCarthey's (2001).

Kamhieh (2012) argues that readers' reading choices are shaped by their sub-identities, or "elements of identity" (p. 69). Among these, she mentions: "Reader-as-Muslim" to speak about a participant who read a book about Ramadan; "Reader-as-Muslim" and "as-Arab" for reading the *Quran*; "Reader-as-future graduate" for reading about future career goals, among others. Thus, she developed her notion of "reader-as-XYZ" (p. 96). Dali (2012), investigating the role of reading in the lives of fourteen Russian immigrant readers in Canada aged thirty to sixty-five, asserts that reading in certain languages is a means for some readers to reinforce and sustain their identities. His participants described reading books in Russian as means to know who they were and to remember their roots (Dali, 2012). Therefore, language is an important component of readers' identities: one that adds another layer of intricacy, and reveals more about reading practices if investigated. These studies taken together highlight the fact that

readers' reading choices are driven by their various sub-identities, demonstrating the diversity inherent in reading practices.

3.5.1.1 Multilingual readers

There is a noticeable lack of research on multilingual readers in relation to identity (Wagner, 2020). Although Wagner's (2020) focus was on children, his statement is also true for studies of adult readers (e.g., Radway, 1984; Cherland, 1994; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). This lack of attention to multilingual readers' linguistic identities is particularly interesting, especially if the multiplicity of identities is acknowledged (Holland *et al.*, 1998), and if linguistic identities form one of many readers' sub-identities (Mishler, 1999; Kamhieh, 2012). Furthermore, the language element is absent from the definitions mentioned in section 2.2, providing more evidence that most of the research on reading focuses on monolingual readers (Wagner, 2020). Furthermore, although Kamhieh's (2012) and Dali's (2012) studies report on the linguistic sub-identity, their findings do not show any conflicts over the choices of language.

The choice of language in relation to reading could be a complicated matter. Chong (2017) argues that it is often assumed that "when languages are learnt, reading necessarily occurs" (Chong, 2017, p. 4). Having access to a large linguistic capital might entail the possibility of reading in a variety of languages. This, however, might not always the case, as shown by Chong's (2017) study. Investigating the reading experiences of eight multilingual Malaysian undergraduates aged nineteen to twenty-three, she reports that although some of her participants were literate in various languages, they consciously abstained from reading in some of them, due to this being imposed on them by their parents, as was noted in section 3.4.3.1, for language learning purposes. That is, some readers' relationships with languages could be much more complicated than 'automatically' reading in all or any of the languages they speak. Furthermore, Wagner (2020) examined the reader identities of ten multilingual children, aged four and five years, across two pre-kindergarten classrooms in the US: one, monolingual (English); the other, bilingual (English and Spanish). Using a variety of data collection tools, including interviewing children and teachers, classroom observations, and a family questionnaire, his study shows that children are perfectly capable of expressing their language preferences and choices from the languages available to them in relation to reading.

For instance, two of his participants, Max and Yara, insisted on reading in English and Spanish respectively, although they were within groups of peers who predominantly spoke/read in Spanish and English respectively. Although they were enrolled in a bilingual classroom and, therefore, were allowed to use both English and Spanish, they were able to make their choices. Wagner (2020) argues that when choice is allowed, readers practice their agencies and reading becomes more of a voluntary, engaging practice than a language task. That is, being allowed the chance to develop preferences regarding which languages to use in reading is important, and facilitates the construction of a reader identity in that language.

The studies reviewed in this section reveal how readers' sub-identities shape their reading choices. Shedding light on these 'elements of identity' helps us fathom the diversity inherent in readers' reasons for reading and, therefore, their diverse reading practices: readers of certain texts and particular languages and so on. This is crucial because it problematises any impositions on readers, which eventually leads to aversion (Chong, 2017) or struggles over whether to conceal or reveal their reader identities (Scholes, 2015; Swift. 2016; Sellers, 2019). Thus, it is crucial that readers are given opportunities to choose from a wide range of reading materials and, as argued by McCarthey (2001), engage their reading selves with other aspects of their identities through reading literature about people like themselves. The next section sheds more light on this.

3.5.2 Identity (re)construction through escapist reading

A weight of evidence supports the link between escaping through reading and (re)constructing identities. As such, this section argues for this relationship, drawing upon an international body of literature, including: America, Canada, England, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (e.g., Radway, 1984; Cherland, 1994; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Compton-Lilly, 2003; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Lindell, 2009; Begum, 2011; Howard, 2011; Kamhieh, 2012; The Reading Agency, 2015; Coban, 2018).

3.5.2.1 Reading and escapism

Escapism is both a complex and a composite concept (Begum, 2011) that can have negative connotations, as it infers a lack of participation in the 'real' world (Usherwood and Toyne, 2002). The Reading Agency (2015) defines it as "seeking distraction and relief from unpleasant

realities, especially by seeking entertainment or engaging in fantasy" (p. 39). Harding (1967) observes that the term 'escape' is usually used "in criticism as a term of disparagement to refer to an activity that the evaluator believes has no merit in and of itself" (cited in Radway, 1984, p. 89). Ross (2006) maintains that when reading is practiced in "solitude and for pleasure, the suspicion arises that it may be unproductive and involve an escape from, or even a substitute for, life itself" (Ross, 2006, p. 13). This can be further detected in the terms used to imply escapism: being "*into* the book" or experiencing "absorption" (Radway, 1984, p. 91, emphasis in original); "lost in a book" (Nell, 1988); "transportation" through narrative worlds, and the depiction of the reader as a "*traveler*" who "*goes some distance from his or her world of origin*" (Gerrig, 1993, pp. 11-13, emphasis in original); the "ivory tower of the reader" that carries a connotation of "inaction and disinterest in social matters" (Manguel, 2013, p. 3). These references imply that readers retreat to their imaginary worlds and completely refrain from participating in their 'real' worlds. This view of escapism, however, is called into question by other scholars, who claim that it does not have to be an 'either/or' discussion, but rather one uniting both: escaping from and reconnecting with their worlds.

Reading for escapism appeals to readers as young as eleven, and as old as over seventy-five years. Starting with young readers, Cherland's (1994) ethnographic study and Howard's (2011) focus group study, both in Canada, found that escapism is the main reason why readers aged eleven to thirteen and twelve to fifteen respectively engage in reading. These findings are supported by Swift's (2016) study in England, using a critical incident charting activity and interviews with teenage readers aged thirteen to fourteen, and reinforced by Richardson and Eccles' (2007) study in the United States deploying survey and interview data among readers aged twelve to twenty-two. Interestingly, these findings are not cognate with those of The Reading Agency's (2015) systematic review in the UK. Although the studies reviewed in the "Children and Young People" section of the report include children of the same age as Cherland's (1994) and Howard's (2011) participants, their "impact and outcomes for children and young people" map does not include escapism (p. 20). This might be explained by the fact that most of the studies included in that section of their report were longitudinal and survey-based studies that, although providing robust evidence, might have prevented in-depth exploration of the outcomes of, and reasons for, reading – including escapism.

More recently, and in line with these studies, Coban (2018) investigated the reading choices of Turkish adolescent readers, the effects of fiction and their responses to it. In his case

study research with a mixed-methods design, he included 381 students aged sixteen to eighteen who responded to an online survey, ten of whom participated in in-depth interviews and reading activities and discussions. His findings support those mentioned earlier. More importantly, escapism, along with relaxation, knowledge, encountering the right book and loving reading, were all stronger triggers than having parents as role models. Interestingly, while Kamhieh's (2012) study among female Emirati university students also found escapism to be one of the reasons for reading, it was only an outcome-focused purpose, as opposed to a *qana'a* for reading (p. 176). The difference between the two, according to her, is that the first refer to reasons for reading until the purpose has been reached and, therefore, could include any kind of reading purpose (to gain knowledge, improve a language, or escape). The second, however, refers to long-lasting affective factors that determine whether readers like or dislike reading and, thus, contribute (or not) to the making of a reading habit (Kamhieh, 2012). She states that these outcome-focused purposes for reading are "of limited importance in the formation of a reading habit" (p. 189). While Coban's (2018) research identifies escapism as among the most important triggers for reading, Kamhieh's (2012) classification appears to underestimate its potential not only in sustaining reading habits, but also providing spaces for readers to explore their possibilities and experiment with various identities, as shall be discussed later in the section.

Reading for escapist reasons extends to older adults, which reinforces the importance of escapist reading for readers across different ages. Escapism, as maintained by Usherwood and Toyne (2002) in England, was the typical answer for readers aged eighteen to over seventy-five when discussing the benefits of reading during interviews and focus group discussions. Compton-Lilly's (2003) ethnographic study on literacy practices among urban communities in America – one that uses interview data with ten pupils and their parents, classroom data comprising audiotapes of classroom discussions and reading groups, student portfolios, as well as field notes – reports on the parents who read for escape reasons. In fact, she asserts that one of the main reasons why they engaged in reading was to escape their worlds, along with being able to enter the workforce and physically navigate their ways through their everyday lives. Placing escapism alongside these two utilitarian functions of reading indicates the importance of reading for escapism in their lives. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the importance of reading to escape for readers as young as eleven and as old as seventy-five or more.

Knowing the reasons why readers escape is crucial to understanding the link between readers' reading practices and their social environments, and how these shape their reading choices. Radway (1994), on this enquiry, argues that it reveals insights into the "cultural conditions that had prepared" readers in her study to choose to read romance novels from amongst the other books available to them (p. 12). Curiously, this is a line of enquiry that was not delved into by many researchers. Although escapism was a finding in, for instance, Kamhieh's (2012) and Coban's (2018) studies, they did not thoroughly consider the triggers of escape. The studies reviewed in this section indicate that escaping through reading ranges from escaping daily routine and problems to escaping injustices and traumas.

Some readers read to escape their daily lives and problems, and experience something different to their own realities. The parents in Compton-Lilly's (2003) study asserted that reading helped them escape their worlds: "it takes [their] mind[s] away" and allows them to "explore new worlds and new experiences" (p. 51). She argues that reading is a means of "escape from their everyday lives and an opportunity to travel within their minds" (p. 51). Similarly, one of Kamhieh's (2012) participants maintained: "[reading] helps me get away from this world that we live in. It helps me escape to another world where anything can happen" (p. 148). Their desire to escape their realities in some cases is an attempt to temporarily leave their problems. Providing more detailed reasons, Jane and Leon, two of Richardson and Eccles' (2007) participants, reported reading to escape their problems and reality respectively. Jane engaged in reading to escape from thinking about her break up with her boyfriend, while Leon's escape was from a reality that he disliked. Reading provided "an escape into a different reality; a means of not having to dwell on things that he did not want to have to think about" (p. 8). This is what Swift (2016) refers to as an "alternative reality" through which readers seek to distance themselves from their problems and deal with other people around them (p. 133). Two of her participants used reading to escape the "classroom politics" that meant they were intimidated by the popular girls. They asserted that certain spaces within the school do not welcome the practice of reading, and that it attracts ridicule, preventing them from openly identifying as readers (Swift, 2016). Rothbauer (2004), in her study of the reading experiences of young women aged eighteen to twenty-three, explains that one of her participants perceived reading as an alternative that prevented her from consuming drugs to forget her problems. These studies taken together show the key role that reading plays in the lives of readers. It offers a space where they temporarily switch off from their predicaments and escape to more desired realities.

3.5.2.2 Reconnecting and (re)constructing identities

The body of literature reviewed in this section shows that escaping through reading allows readers to reconnect with their 'real' worlds. As Begum (2011) puts it, although escaping through reading to "reconnect" with reality "may sound like an oxymoron" (p. 742), it, nonetheless, offers a way to "cement the reader's link to the 'real' world" (p. 743). Thus, the encounter of readers with characters and scenarios in texts helps them better understand themselves and the world around them. Reading is a catalyst in identity construction (Richardson and Eccles, 2007). One of Richardson and Eccles' (2007) participants asserted that, by reading about history, he developed values that would not conform to gender stereotypes of an African American male in terms of dress, race and occupational ambitions. In this sense, reading practices are important means through which people "directly and vicariously contemplate who [they] are at any one point in time, who [they] might hope to be in the future, who [they] fear being, and who [they] expect to be" (p. 342). This bears similarity to Usherwood and Toyne's (2002) and Howard's (2011) studies investigating the reasons for, and benefits of, reading imaginative literature – all types of fiction, play scripts, and poetry. Usherwood and Toyne (2002), using a combination of focus groups and interviews with adults aged eighteen to over seventy-five in the UK, and Howard's (2011) focus groups comprising sixty-eight young teens across nine junior high schools in Canada, both provide more evidence of the use of reading to experiment with various identities and future selves by living as if other characters and, therefore, understanding themselves and the world around them. Not only do these future selves relate to career goals, but also to empowerment and the ability to act upon their gained principles, such as empathy and justice, as Howard's (2011) study shows. Reading is, thus, as much an exploration as it is an escape. These studies dispel the myth of the 'isolated' readers who completely retreat to their worlds and divorce themselves from their 'real' worlds.

Resistance and practicing agency through escaping is evidenced in some of the reading research literature. For instance, Radway's (1984) and Cherland's (1994) studies represent two of the most substantial contributions to the literature related to resisting social structures through reading. The schoolgirls in Cherland's (1994) study used reading to escape their parents' demands and the cultural messages embedded in their environment, including being 'good' girls. They used reading to explore their agencies and possibilities, and challenged imposed gender roles. For South Dakota farm women in Lindell's (2009) study, reading was a

means through which they could escape and cope with the Great Depression era. The tales of strong female protagonists appealed to them and they found in these stories “validation and encouragement to persevere... broadened horizons and challenged assumptions...” in difficult times (p. 503). Similar to the schoolgirls in Cherland’s (1994) study, they were attracted to female characters deemed strong. This allowed them to imagine their possible selves and explore their agencies by experimenting with other characters’ identities. One of these women avowed that books had “the power to lift disheartened spirits and enable them to endure more bravely” (Lindell, 2009, p. 505). These farm women were inspired by the “heroic tales [farm stories] of characters who surmounted daunting challenges” (p. 519). In this sense, reading about people who went through challenges akin to theirs helped them survive the difficult times. Farm women found in the books they were reading “validation of their way of life and strengthened faith in their ability to cope” (p. 521).

The Smithton older women in Radway’s (1984) seminal ethnographic work, conducted a decade earlier using questionnaires and interviews to explore how forty-two women read romantic novels, also expressed a sense of agency through resisting the expectations of their families and the wider community to be only uncared-for carers in their homes. They read as a “declaration of independence” to escape from these expectations and, at the same time, to find a source of hope and emotional nourishment that was missing in their lives (p. 7). As argued by Radway (1984) “romance reading creates a feeling of hope, provides emotional sustenance, and produces a fully visceral sense of well-being” (p. 12). In this sense, they vicariously nourished their lack of emotional support and attention by engaging in reading about other women’s experiences with romantic relationships. The act of reading in general, or reading specific texts, can both be means to practise one’s agency and resistance to impositions. The first case can be illustrated by some of Swift’s (2016) participants who resisted submitting to the dominant culture within their peer groups, and ‘suspended’ social participation by reading. “[S]uspend[ing] temporarily... familial relationships” through reading was also common among Radway’s (1984) participants.

Reading can, however, have negative outcomes as illustrated, for instance, by the experiences of Sweeney’s (2008) and Swift’s (2016) participants for whom reading to escape was at times a trigger for engaging in acts driven by illicit desires. Sweeney’s (2008) participant recounted how reading magazines and catalogues made her imagine that all the clothes were hers, which caused her to no longer be able to differentiate between reality and fantasy and

triggered the pleasure of stealing when shopping. Another example is Swift's (2016) participant for whom reading texts with violence was appealing. She explained that she liked reading about people getting hurt and dying; that knives appealed to her more than guns, and that reading was a means through which she was exploring death and suicide. Begum's (2011) analogy, between a medicine with side effects and escapist reading, enquires whether we should quit it because of the side effects. Given what has been discussed throughout the section regarding the merits of reading for escapist reasons in the lives of readers, with their potential to help them explore themselves and possibilities, and navigate difficult times, I argue that reading provides much more than what the term "escape" might suggest. Thus, reading for escapism should be encouraged, and its perception as an indication of laziness and irresponsibility on the part of readers should be readjusted.

In this section, I argued for the strong relationship that exists between readers' 'whole' identities and the texts they read. This relationship is a circular one, in that they both feed into each other. That is, readers' whole identities influence their choices of texts while, at the same time, the content of these texts influences readers' whole identities. They offer them spaces for identity reinforcement, explorations of potential future selves and opportunities to exercise their agencies. Thus, readers engage in a (re)construction of their identities through their engagement in reading.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with a body of literature on reading practices. It has started with a discussion regarding the wide variety of terms and definitions used across the literature to refer to leisure reading. I argued that the complexity of reading is not captured by them, and that insufficient attention has been paid to the languages in which readers read. Furthermore, it has pinpointed that perceiving reading as a social practice helps investigate and understand reading practices, taking into consideration the social environments within which reading takes place and its meanings are embedded.

The relationship between reading and identity has been shown to fall into two main categories: (1) 'reader' identity construction and the influence of readers' social environments; (2) 'whole' identities and the texts that readers read. This chapter has shown the importance of

taking a holistic approach and viewing reading practices in light of these two perspectives to yield deeper insights and nuances. I also argued that there is a dearth of research bringing them together. Furthermore, most of the scholarship that scrutinises reading, identity and social environments focuses on readers' interactions within their families, peer groups and school settings, without going beyond these circles. Thus, I argued that other settings within which readers interact, such as universities, their workplaces, or public places, warrant more research. Additionally, most of the focus is on young and monolingual readers, with scant attention drawn to adult and multilingual readers, requiring the need to research their reading practices.

It has been shown that family members and peers play key roles in normalising and validating reading identities and practices by: reading to children; encouraging them to read; showing positive attitudes towards reading within families, as well as by: reading in groups; exchanging books within peer groups. The struggles that readers go through when their reading identities and perceptions of reading are not congruent with the predominant cultures of their surrounding environments have similarly been pinpointed, causing them to reveal or conceal their reader identities.

I similarly argued that readers' choices of texts are shaped by various sub-identities such as their ethnic, religious and linguistic. These are evident through readers choosing to read certain texts rather than others. This highlights the variation inherent in reading identities, being shaped by other sub-identities. Furthermore, the texts that readers read play a significant role in their lives. Reading for escapist reasons offers readers the potential to cope with issues, vicariously explore their possibilities and agencies and, eventually, (re)construct their identities. This challenges the view of reading for escapism as a negative concept that assumes readers, passive and irresponsible, retreat to their private worlds and cease to participate in their social worlds.

The qualitative nature of most of the studies reviewed in this chapter revealed a fascinating depth of data and addressed questions such as 'how?' and 'why', instead of limiting the inquiry to 'what?' questions. This allowed for an exploration of the complexities behind reading practices and the various influences that come together to construct a particular meaning of reading and reader identity. Adding to the efforts deployed to "put the readers at the heart of the reading experience" (Skjerdingstad and Rothbauer, 2016, p. 1), my research similarly approaches reading from a qualitative perspective, discussed in chapter 05. The next

chapter discusses the theoretical framework developed to deepen and articulate the research findings.

CHAPTER 04: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I draw upon the theoretical concepts that framed my analysis. These include Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, capital and field (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), Holland *et al.*'s concepts of identity, figured worlds and cultural artefacts (Holland *et al.*, 1998), Kamhieh's (2012) reader-as-XYZ concept, and Gee's (2017) sub-type principle. I argue that these theoretical tools, blended together, provide a useful lens through which reading practices can be understood. They are used in this study to unveil what lies beneath readers' reading practices. In this sense, their explicative potential helps fathom the influence of social environments on readers' reading identities and practices, and how they respond to these influences. They also help explain readers' engagement in reading certain texts, and the fact that these texts provide readers with spaces for the exploration of various possibilities and the reconstruction of their identities. I start by defining Bourdieu's (1986) concepts. I then draw upon some critiques of his work before moving on to consider Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts and how the two theories work together. This is followed by a brief account of Kamhieh's (2012) and Gee's (2017) concepts. It is worth noting that the examples I occasionally refer to as I explain the theoretical framework are inspired by my data.

4.2. *Habitus*, cultural capital and field

This thesis draws upon Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of *habitus*, capital and field because they provide a useful theoretical tool towards understanding reading practices. They are argued to be the most meaningful endeavour to make sense of the social world and fathom the relationship between the objective social structures of society (e.g., institutions, discourses, fields, ideologies) and individual practices (Carrington and Luke, 1997; Webb *et al.*, 2002; Grenfell, 2014). Bourdieu proposes the concepts of *habitus*, capital and field as a way of looking beyond the subjectivist-objectivist divide (Webb *et al.*, 2002) or, as suggested by Maton (2014), as a way of "transcending dichotomies" (p. 52). The first denotes the idea that social agents are individuals who are entirely able to create their own realities, failing to capture the effect of more objective institutions (e.g., government, religious groups, family…) on their

practices. The second refers to looking at social agents as mere recipients of government ideologies (Webb *et al.*, 2002, pp. 32-33). Trying to reconcile both traditions, he introduced his theory of practice. The latter, developed through his early ethnographic work in Algeria among the Kabyle Berbers, was first and foremost an attempt to make sense of the social world (Wacquant, 2002). Bourdieu (1986) similarly acknowledges the influence of the broader social context in shaping individual practices. As argued by Cherland (1994), researching literacy practices in their particular settings is a "worthwhile enterprise", as it "deepens and broadens one's knowledge of what reading can signify" (p. 6), and therefore, provides an understanding of these practices in relation to the social structures in which they are embedded. This is in line with viewing literacy as a social practice (Street and Lefstein, 2007). Recognising reading as a social practice entails acknowledging that agents' experiences are influenced by their immediate and broader social contexts (Scholes, 2015). That said, his concepts of *habitus*, capital and field provide a useful lens to understand the findings of this research. I discuss each of these concepts below.

4.2.1 *Habitus*

At the heart of Bourdieu's work is the notion of *habitus* (Reay, 2004). *Habitus* is defined as a "set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways... [which] are acquired through a gradual process of *inculcation* in which childhood experiences are particularly important" (Thompson, 1991, p. 12, emphasis in original). Taking the example of reading, a person growing up in a family within which the practice of reading is valued is more likely to develop a liking for reading at an early age, as the family's reading *habitus* is transmitted to their children. The significant role played by family in triggering reading among children at an early age was clearly shown in section 3.4.1. Kamhieh's (2012) first stage of readers' reading journey, for instance, resonates with this in that early reading experiences are internalised unconsciously without children being able to explain their reasons for reading. It could be the practice of reading itself, their reading tastes as well as the languages in which they read. Bourdieu (1977) defines *habitus* as a "system of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (p. 72, emphasis in original). Following up on the previous example, readers' *habitus* could be said to be 'structured structures' in that they were inculcated by their homes. As long as these structures make them pursue their habits of these practices, as argued by Crossley (2001), they become 'structuring

structures', thereby contributing to the generation of practice. This shows a circular relation between dispositions and social structures in that they both shape and depend on each other.

Dispositions are embodied in people's ways of perceiving the world around them and acting upon it. Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), stresses the unconscious attribute of the *habitus*, in that it is so embodied within agents that the social world around them becomes 'common-sense', and so do the rules that govern it. He argues that when the *habitus* and the social world meet, it is like "fish in water: it does not feel the weight of the water" in the sense that the world around them becomes "self-evident" and taken for granted (pp. 127-128). Thus, reading becomes the 'norm' for those who grow up surrounded by books, and whose parents hold positive attitudes towards reading. Hence, their social environments – family in this case – contribute to "normalising" the reading practice (Swift, 2016, p. 106). Therefore, the *habitus* provides agents with the "*sens pratique*", or the "feel for the game" (Thompson, 1991, p 13), that would ensure "'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). It is equally true for those whose family members have no engagement with reading.

This, however, does not mean that *habitus* is not apt to change. Although Bourdieu's (1990) definition of *habitus* conveys a sense of the heavy presence of past experiences – a "product of history", and objective social structures –, he also acknowledges the potential of *habitus* to change as agents accumulate different experiences and, therefore, constantly reshape their dispositions and ways of viewing the world around them (p. 54). Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), argues that *habitus* is subjected to people's experiences that either strengthen or alter it. Readers whose reading interests change, or those who form a reading *habitus* as they interact with peers provide a good illustration of altering their initial *habitus*. Crossley (2001) argues that these dispositions are shaped by objective social structures and are embodied in the form of both "an inclination and a *modus operandi*" (Crossley, 2001, p. 83). That is, individuals develop an interest in such practices and acquire their own methods of doing them. These methods might be different to those gained in their homes, and might be a result of their interactions with other social groups, such as friends. The role of peers, for instance, in shaping readers' reading *habitus* was highlighted in section 3.4.3.2.

4.2.2 Cultural capital

Capital could be said to be anything, within a particular field, that is accorded value and that serves as a trigger for action, or as a "good" to be desired and accumulated (Crossley, 2001, p. 87). Bourdieu (1986) writes about the main species of capital, namely, cultural capital (e.g., cultural artefacts, skills, credentials), social capital (e.g., social relations and networks), economic capital (e.g., material assets, money) and symbolic capital (e.g., status). He sees that capital is the principle which "makes the games of society... something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). In this sense, capital comprises a set of assets, material or immaterial, that individuals possess, and which determine the amount of power and status they have within certain fields (discussed below). The amount of capital they have determines how much power they have, and being in a position of power enables groups of people or individuals to determine what is "authentic" capital (Webb et al., 2002, p. 23).

Of particular relevance to the present research, however, is his concept of cultural capital, which can be found in three states: embodied, objectified and institutionalised (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital in its embodied form refers to that which is deeply ingrained in the person, such as: culture, taste, good manners, language and so on, that are "internalized during the socialization process" (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 156). The value attributed to reading and languages is a good example of this, as it could be internalised and embodied (*habitus*) within children through the inculcation and socialisation process that they go through at an early age. The objectified form of cultural capital refers to the cultural properties in the form of goods and material objects such as writings, paintings, books, and so on. For instance, if households are inclined towards other practices rather than reading, there might be little appreciation for books and reading as such among children. The third and last form of cultural capital is the institutionalised one. The latter refers to academic credentials and diplomas, which some individuals pursue to accumulate status. What counts as capital is determined by the rules that govern social spaces referred to as cultural fields.

4.2.3 Field

Field (*champ* in French) refers to the different social contexts within which agents interact, and a capital is valued. These fields include a wide range of institutions, discourses, rules, rituals,

conventions and regulations, all of which constitute objective structures (Webb *et al.*, 2002). Bourdieu also uses terms such as "market" and "game" to refer to field (Thompson, 1991, p. 14). Thus, fields constitute the social environment within which individuals interact, and which affect their perceptions and practices. Grenfell (2014) asserts that if *habitus* and field were to be examined separately, only theoretically, field would constitute the objective part of practice, representing a set of structures characterising a social context, while *habitus* would be the subjective part. As argued earlier, no individual practice happens in a vacuum and, therefore, it is necessary to examine the 'fields' within which practices take place. As argued by Bourdieu, practices should be perceived as products of both the *habitus* and the cultural fields within which they occur (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Bourdieu also argues that considering the social space within which practices take place is necessary to understand the essence of practice, rather than merely submitting to the "'given' as it presents itself" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 148). This proposition is highly relevant to this study, in that it scrutinises readers' social environments to understand their practices. According to Carrington and Luke (1997), "[f]amily and community structures, corporations and businesses, government departments and agencies… all constitute fields through which individuals may pass as they play out individual life trajectories" (p. 100). Furthermore, the body of literature reviewed in chapter 03 demonstrates the importance of scrutinising readers' social environments in understanding their reading practices (e.g., Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Kamhieh, 2012; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). Therefore, family, peers and other wider settings within which readers interact could be said to be among the fields that are worth scrutinising to fathom readers' reading practices in the present research.

Central to Bourdieu's concept of field is the fact that individuals are in constant struggle and competition over accumulating 'capital', 'profit' or currencies (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), which makes them sites of struggle. Agents might play for different reasons, in that some of them might do so to preserve their current social situations, while for others it might be the desire to improve the same (Thompson, 1991; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). All participants in a game need to be aware of its rules, as well as the profits to be gained; otherwise, what is at stake might not make sense to them. In this sense, the "admission fee" of "eligibility" for participation in these fields varies from one field to another (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 107).). While some fields might value the practice of reading, it might not be the case in others. This is evident in the case of Sellers' (2019) participants, who positioned

themselves in relation to the prevailing social norms, or 'rules', and the perceived value ascribed to reading within certain peer groups. In the case of two categories that she named "resistant readers" and "social readers", both groups conformed: either through hiding the fact that they were readers, or through exhibiting reading identities as a way of participating in the cultures of their peer groups respectively (p. 942). In a Bourdieusian sense, they understood the 'logic' of the field, and the fact that what was at stake was their inclusion in, or exclusion from, the group. Because of desiring full participation within the peer groups, they conformed.

The imposition of a certain cultural capital within particular fields and the adherence of agents to these rules is what Bourdieu refers to as "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu and Passeron, according to Jenkins (1992), constructed this concept to explain the order in which societies are structured by "indirect, cultural mechanisms" rather than by "direct, coercive social control" (p. 65). This resonates with Bartlett's (2007) participants who have undergone "literacy shaming" (p. 59). That is, they have been ridiculed for not being able to speak correctly, read and write. Bartlett (2007) argues that this is a "debilitating" form of symbolic violence in that it denigrated these people from their "bases for claiming social value" and respect (p. 59). Bourdieu defines it as the violence "*which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 167, emphasis in original). Therefore, agents' complicity refers to their contribution to reproducing the same social structures by adhering to the impositions enforced on them. Bourdieu refers to this as "misrecognition", and defines it as "the fact of recognizing a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 168). That is, misrecognition is failing to recognise and perceive violence for what it really is and, therefore, seeing it as a legitimate experience to undergo or, as Webb and her colleagues (2002) put it, as "the natural order of things" (p. 25). In this sense, this legitimacy renders the violent imposition of systems of meaning invisible, and contributes to its success and the systematic reproduction of social structures (Jenkins, 1992).

Significantly, the rules that govern different fields are not carved in stone. In fact, Bourdieu sees cultural fields as fluid and dynamic (Webb *et al*., 2002), and apt to change (Thomson, 2014), despite his critics constantly arguing that his work is deterministically focused on reproduction (e.g., Jenkins, 1992). Bourdieu acknowledges the possibility for change within cultural fields (Thomson, 2014). In this regard, he asserts that individuals can play in an attempt to preserve their capital or accumulate more through conforming to the rules

and reproducing the same structures, or they can participate in an attempt to "transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 99). Similarly, what Webb and her colleagues (2002) assert also implies that fields are not as static as portrayed in the literature: that they "are made up not simply of institutions and rules, but of the interactions between institutions, rules and practices", which conflict over determining what constitutes a cultural capital within a field (p. 22). That said, Bourdieu's three main critiques are discussed in the next sub-section.

4.2.4 Critiques: Ambiguity, determinism and lack of localism

Despite Bourdieu's very useful theoretical concepts, his work is not without its critiques. Three main critiques of his work are: ambiguity (Jenkins, 1992; Reay, 2004); determinism (Jenkins, 1992; Holland *et al.*, 1998); lack of localism (Holland *et al.*, 1998; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Choudry and Williams, 2017). As for the first, Bourdieu has often been critiqued for his ambiguous and complex language and sentence structures (Power, 1999). His concepts have equally been repeatedly referred to as contested (Crossley, 2001; Reay, 2004), "enigmatic" (Maton, 2014, p. 48) and, thus, misused in the literature (Reay, 2004). My encounter with Bourdieu's concepts was similarly characterised by an impression of his unwillingness or hesitation to offer more explicit and unambiguous definitions. It is, therefore, no wonder that his work was reproached by many critiques in this regard. Jenkins (1992) argues that Bourdieu's writings are characterised by an "elevated style", which is evident in the complexity of his language and the length of the sentences he uses (p. 107). He gives the example of a sentence that extends to sixteen lines, which Jenkins (1992) describes as an "unnecessary monstrosity" (p. 107). In his defence, Bourdieu argues that the complex nature of social reality should not be expected to be understood effortlessly (Power, 1999) and, thus, he contends, as suggested by Jenkins (1992), that the social world requires a "complex discourse to do it justice" (p. 111). This explains the large number of scholars who attempted to simplify Bourdieu's concepts through their 'introductions' to his work (e.g., Harker *et al.*, 1990; Jenkins, 1992; Webb *et al.*, 2002; Grenfell, 2007).

The second and very common critique of his concept of *habitus* is that it is determinist, in the sense that it enslaves agents to their pasts by characterising it as the driver of future actions and positions. It, in this sense, focuses on the "reproduction aspects of the fields", instead of their change (Thomson, 2014, p. 77). Jenkins (1992) argues that it fails to account

for social change and does not give room for individual agency. Furthermore, he is among the critics who see that "habitus reinforces determinism under the appearance of relaxing it" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 132). This seems at odds given what I have asserted at the outset of the section, regarding the fact that Bourdieu's (1986) work came to reconcile the objective-subjective split and make a balance between the influence of objective social structures and human agency. In similar veins, Reay (2004) argues that it is ironic for him to be reproached for being determinist, given that he introduced his concept of *habitus* to transcend dualisms such as "agency-structure" (p. 432). Addressing these critiques, Bourdieu in a discussion with Wacquant argues that *habitus* "is not the fate that some people read into it", and goes further claiming that it is "an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" and that *habitus* is "durable but not eternal!" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 133, emphasis in original). By his statement, Bourdieu argues for a degree of agency on the part of agents. Therefore, I see no reason to overemphasise the points made by his critics in this regard, and overclaim the 'determinist' accusations. It could, nonetheless, be argued that what Bourdieu's concepts miss is a micro level illustration of how change happens and how agents enact their agencies through everyday interactions, which leads to the third critique.

Another criticism of Bourdieu is that he does not scrutinise local interactions and capitalise on day-to-day practices (Holland *et al.*, 1998), thereby leading to a lack of "localism" (Choudry and Williams, 2017, p. 250). Holland and her colleagues (1998) believe that Bourdieu's work does not attend to the details of day-to-day interactions and uses of artefacts – and their role in producing change – and focuses more on social structures, currencies and the status attached to different positions within fields. To illustrate their point, they give the example of his book *Homo Academicus*, stating that he "directed his field of analysis less to these day-to-day aspects of cultural figuring than to social relations among the most powerful and influential players" (p. 59). They argue that his work teaches us less about "the day-to-day content of activity" and much more about "the interrelation of scholars and institutions... according to their relative prestige and influence" (p. 59). They suggest that if Bourdieu were to view his work through the lens of "figured world" rather than "field", he would have provided more details about, for instance, the different figures in Academia (professors, students, secretaries...) and their various tasks (giving tutorials, hiring, teaching responsibilities...) within their institutions (p. 59). Holland *et al.* (1998) make a valid point; one

that the present research agrees with. Therefore, their concepts are deemed useful for this study, because they explain how identity and agency play out in figured worlds and provide ways for improvisations by agents, through the day-to-day use of artefacts. This is something that Bourdieu's (1986; 1990) *habitus* does not focus on. The point to retain here is that Bourdieu's (1986; 1990) work does not appear to have been attentive to small details – usages of artefacts – while Holland *et al.*'s (1998) theoretical tools do.

4.3 Identity in practice, figured worlds and cultural artefacts

Building upon what has been discussed earlier, regarding the influence of the social environment on reading practices and on how readers view themselves, it stands to reason to adopt a sociocultural perspective on identity. Thus, akin to Urrieta (2007a), I intentionally step away from the psychological Eriksonian views of identity development stages, mainly for overlooking the "dynamic, fluid, and flexible nature of cultural production and individual self-making" (p. 119). I, instead, draw heavily upon Holland and colleagues' (1998) theory of identity for two main reasons. The first is that their work focuses on the notion of "identity in practice", which stresses the idea of identities being constructed through engaging in social practices – reading, in this case – and using cultural artefacts (e.g., books or other materials, languages for reading and speaking about texts).

The second reason for drawing upon Holland *et al.*'s (1998) theory of identity is their focus on agency and improvisation on the part of agents. As argued earlier, Bourdieu's (1986; 1990) theory of practice tends not to attend to the day-to-day practices of readers and, therefore, using Holland and her colleagues' (1998) theory alongside Bourdieu's (1986; 1990) allows the depiction of a macro as well as a micro level of their reading practices. Furthermore, as argued earlier, Bourdieu mentions the possibility of change but does not appear to focus on the details of how this change happens. Thus, I argue that adding Holland *et al.*'s (1998) work to Bourdieu's (1986; 1990) helps fathom the whole picture of reading practices in this study. This is also a response to the appeal made by Bartlett and Holland (2002) and Bartlett (2007) for the use of Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts in exploring literacy practices, and their critique of Bourdieu's (1986; 1990) work for undermining the potential of using cultural artefacts in changing people's *habitus* and, thus, their identities. Bartlett (2007), for instance, contends that

there is a lot to learn from "considering who uses what types of artifacts, to what ends, and with what success" (p. 65). I discuss each of their concepts below.

4.3.1 Identity in practice

Holland *et al*. (1998) view people's identities as constantly evolving and produced through engaging in cultural activities and interacting with others around them, thus locating their concept of identity in practice. The latter was introduced in Holland and her colleagues' (1998) seminal work, entitled *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. They draw mainly upon works by Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Bourdieu. They perceive identities in constant action or, as posited by Urrieta (2007), in a "constant flux" and, therefore, identity for them is about "becoming" rather than "being" (p. 119). The constantly evolving nature of identity could be exemplified through Holland *et al*.'s (1998) assertion that identities "never arrive in persons or in their immediate social milieux already formed", and that they "happen in social practice" (p. vii). Similarly, on literate identities, for instance, Bartlett (2007) employs "becoming" rather than "being" literate, with the view that it is a continuous process of constructing a sense of self as literate (p. 53). The production of identities while engaging in social practices involves negotiating various voices that are, more often than not, in conflict (Holland *et al.*, 1998). In so believing, Holland *et al*. (1998) acknowledge the plurality and intricacy of identity and its production. As argued by Barron (2013), they perceive identity as "complex and multi-layered" (p. 5). This is reminiscent of Mishler's (1999) view of identity as "a chorus of voices, not just as the tenor or soprano soloist", and that these sub-identities might align or conflict with one another (p. 8). As a result, the voices of the chorus could either be in harmony or in chaos (Mishler, 1999).

Holland *et al*. (1998) argue that one of the dimensions of identity is that of "positionality", which entails people's sense of positions vis-a-vis others. McCarthey and Moje (2002) elucidate that identities are "situated in relationships" and that "power plays a role in how identities are enacted and how people get positions" (p. 231). Similarly, Urrieta (2007) argues that identity and self are not only related to the labels that people attribute to themselves and others – e.g., 'reader', 'non-reader', 'cultured', 'smart' – but rather, he argues, identity is also about "how people come to understand themselves, how they come to 'figure' who they are, through the 'worlds' that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside these worlds" (p. 107). Viewing identities as such entails an examination of readers'

reading practices and the ways in which their identities are constantly being constructed and reconstructed through their engagement in reading, as well as their interactions with their social environment. Holland *et al.* (1998) situate their identity in practice within figured worlds.

4.3.2 Figured worlds

Figured worlds are spaces of interpretation and meaning-making that are shaped by and shape the agents who populate them. They refer to a "socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 52). These "as if" worlds are, according to Holland *et al.* (1998), "sociohistorical, contrived interpretations or imaginations that mediate behaviour" (p. 52). Figured worlds are populated by agents who participate in a restricted number of meaningful activities (Holland *et al*., 1998), within which people produce new identities (Urrieta, 2007, p. 108). They shape agents' behaviours and understandings of themselves and the world around them, being the means by which identities are produced through acts and interactions using the cultural resources available to them (Holland *et al.*, 1998; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Urrieta, 2007). Holland *et al.* (1998) go further illustrating with examples such as "what if there were a world called academia, where books were so significant that people would sit for hours on end, away from friends and family, writing them?" (p. 49).

Further illustrations of the use of 'figured worlds' are found across the literature. Holland and her colleagues (1998), for instance, provide examples of ethnographic works including the figured worlds of romance, mental health care, alcoholics and gender relations. For instance, they report on the ethnographic study of Holland and Eisenhart (1990) regarding the figured world of romance in two American universities. Women, according to them, spent large amounts of time and energy beautifying their appearances to please men. They argue that women's motivations for engaging in these day-to-day practices were "expressed via the discourse of romance" (p. 56). That is, they explain, a woman's prestige within this figured world depends on a man's treatment of her, which depends on her appearance. In Bartlett and Holland's (2002) study and that of Bartlett (2007), a figured world of literacy, they contend, might encompass "functional illiterates", "good readers" and "illiterates" who strive to become literate (p. 12).

Considering the figured world of reading, it could be said that it is populated by a set of agents – e.g., those who self-identify as readers or non-readers, those who strive to be readers, and those who 'hide' their reading identities. They engage in practices using artefacts, such as reading different types of texts, reading in different languages, speaking about reading or performing reading. According to Holland *et al.* (1998), figured worlds "take shape within and grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances and artefacts" (p. 51). Thus, figured worlds is ideally appropriate for the practice of reading, as it allows opportunities to constantly produce identities, and, thus, offers spaces of improvisation upon the *habitus* (Pahl, 2005). As such, figured worlds help fathom the contrast between agency and social structures by positioning "humans as social producers and as social products" (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 42). Urrieta (2007b) states that although Holland *et al*. (1998) mention that these worlds can be called "as if" realms, they are in fact "more and more substantial than fantasy" (p. 109). While the studies mentioned above address real characters, others, like Pahl's (2005), explore a figured world of fantasy – a virtual world.

Closer to the 'fantasy' side of the 'as if' worlds is Pahl's (2005) study. Although her work is a small-scale ethnographic study that solely focuses on three six-year-old boys, her findings support the idea that figured worlds provide spaces for improvisation and identity modification. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and Holland *et al.*'s concept of identity in practice, Pahl's (2005) main argument is that console games offer children a space for an exploration of multiple identities. That is, these worlds offer various alternative ways of "being and enacting" and, thus, modifying their family's *habitus* (p. 128). She also argues that virtual worlds provide "an opportunity for children to 'play' with different identities, and to re-fashion identities in relation to those worlds" (p. 128). This could be said to be true for reading, as the evidence put forward by myriad studies, some of which are reviewed in section 3.5.2.2, confirms reading to be a space for escapism, exploration, understanding of one's self and one's social world (e.g., Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011), as well as a space for exploring one's various possibilities and agency (e.g., Cherland, 1994).

For instance, Richardson and Eccles (2007) demonstrate how making sense of one's (future) self is achieved through reading. By engaging in reading, they argue, readers are able to "try on and contemplate future selves" in different areas, such as beliefs and values, occupations, romance, adventures, taking risks, dealing with discrimination and navigating relationships (p. 5). Other good illustrations of this point are some of Cherland's (1994)

schoolgirls who tended to prefer characters in their fiction stories who were rebellious and questioned social structures. In this sense, they used their reading of fiction as a means for exploring the possibilities that were available to them to position themselves in the world. They "as part of this process of exploration imagined themselves in *conflict* with the roles that their families suggested for them", and most importantly, showed this in their behaviours too through negotiating their status quo (p. 166, emphasis in original). This shows the potential that artefacts – reading fiction – have on mediating agency and new identities for readers in these studies. Thus, I argue that Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts are useful to demonstrate how readers use artefacts – reading – to explore their agencies, 'try on' different possible selves and construct new identities.

4.3.3 Cultural artefacts

Cultural artefacts are important tools for identity construction. They, according to Holland *et al*. (1998), are the means by which "worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful" (p. 61). If we recall Bartlett and Holland's (2002) critique of Bourdieu's work, the day-to-day use of artefacts is central to their argument. They assert that Bourdieu's work overlooks the potential of using artefacts in producing change within agents' cultural worlds and, hence, their *habitus* and identities. These could take a material form – e.g., a book – as well as a conceptual form – e.g., labels, such as 'reader' and 'non-reader' – and are all attributed a collective meaning (Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007). That is, they have a "developmental history" resulting from the activities of which they have long been part and still are (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 61). Bartlett (2007) provides examples of artefacts including the "crucifix", "high heels" and "Doc Martins", as well as labels such as "slow readers" and "gifted and talented" (p. 55). She also asserts that even persons could be collectively constructed as artefacts in that some agents are perceived as emblems of a quality, such as beauty, elegance or culture. People engage in constant activity within figured worlds, using and also producing artefacts, all of which mediate the production of new identities and the refiguring of new worlds (Holland *et al.*, 1998; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007; Urrieta, 2007a).

Holland *et al.* (1998) pinpoint the central role of artefacts in the process of improvisation. These improvisations could be said to form channels through which change

occurs. Bartlett's (2007) study is a good illustration of using artefacts to improvise upon one's identity. Through her two-year ethnographic work in two Brazilian cities, she argues that people use cultural resources or artefacts to "seem" and "feel" literate (p. 51). The latter refers to their views of themselves as literates, while the former refers to others' views of them as such. Her study focuses on adolescent and adult literacy learners. She interviewed a total of forty-one students enrolled in different basic literacy programmes. Her findings indicate that in order for her participants to develop a sense of themselves – and also seem to others – as literates, they use artefacts – pencil cases, printed materials, bookmarks, blackboard – related to reading and writing. These artefacts equally serve as means to deal with the threat of being perceived as "illiterates", and the "literacy shaming" this involves, which I mentioned earlier. Bartlett's (2007) findings show that her participants could challenge their social positioning and assert themselves as literates by using artefacts. These include wearing a school t-shirt outside and carrying a plastic folder to 'seem' literate to others, which was the case of two of Bartlett's (2007) participants. Delva, another participant, kept a blackboard in her kitchen, on which the theme of her literacy class was written, to 'feel' literate. She explains that it helps her feel "less stupid" (p. 60). This appears to be their way of refashioning their identities and moving from being, feeling and seeming illiterates to literates.

Sellers' (2019) study, reviewed in section 3.4.1, also provides a good example and could be seen in this light. The group that she identifies as "social readers" also use an artefact – the act of reading – to position themselves as members of their peers' groups of readers. They refashion their identities to move from self-identifying as 'non-readers' to 'readers'. This shows the potential of artefacts to help agents refigure their senses of themselves. In Bartlett's (2007) words, they use "images, narratives, labels, memoires of past events, and material objects to challenge socially prescribed, positioned aspects of identities" and to "do" reading (p. 64). Both these studies, among many others, add weight to the idea that cultural artefacts play a pivotal role in literacy practices and identity construction. Although Bartlett's (2007) work focuses on those who are illiterates, in the traditional sense of the term, and although she asserts that these artefacts might be particularly important for participants lacking formal education, Sellers's (2019) study shows that cultural artefacts can equally be important for 'literate' and 'educated' people who use them to 'feel' and 'seem' as readers, or as readers of certain types of texts or in certain languages.

4.4 Reader-as-XYZ and sub-type principle

Kamhieh's (2012) 'reader as-XYZ' concept and Gee's (2017) 'sub-type principle' offer a fruitful combination to attend to details and nuances of readers' reading identities. Kamhieh's (2012) concept emerged from her two-year qualitative study of reading habits within a group of female university students in the United Arab Emirates, as reviewed more fully in section 3.4.1. She argues that readers have multiple identities that shape their reading choices and help them sustain their interest in reading. Among these "elements of identity", as she refers to them, she mentions "Reader-as-Muslim" to speak about a participant who read a book about Ramadan, "Reader-as-Muslim" and "as-Arab" for reading the *Quran*, and "Reader-as-Emirati" for reading local news. Other examples include "Reader-as-future graduate" for reading about future carrier goals, "Reader-as-bilingual student" for reading in Arabic and English, among others. She further argues that how readers sustain their reading identities can be revealed by looking at the texts they choose to read, reinforcing the importance of investigating their reading practices. This said, the reader-as-XYZ helps explain readers' reading choices of the texts they read.

This concept shows that readers are driven by various reasons to read and that their choices are influenced by various sub-identities, rendering their reading identities diverse. Kamhieh (2012), however, does not attend to diversity nor is it something to which she draws attention in her work. Gee's (2017) sub-type principle fills this gap in that he stresses the importance of looking at the sub-levels – and sub-sub-levels – below identities to see diversity. The importance of doing so, he notes, is to step away from making generalisations and totalising statements. He refers to it as the sub-type principle, and argues that "[r]eal diversity exists one or more levels down below any general label" (p. 83). That is, instead of subsuming all readers under the 'reader' label, delving into what lies beneath it helps realise how diverse reading identities can be, and thereby expanding the scope of what reading means by legitimising all reading practices instead of imposing particular ways of reading. That said, this theoretical grouping offers a lens through which readers' reading choices can be understood, and the variety of their reading identities is acknowledged.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the theoretical framework developed in this study to better explain the research findings. It includes Bourdieu's (1986) *habitus,* cultural capital and field, and Holland *et al.*'s (1998) identity in practice, figured worlds and cultural artefacts. Drawing upon some of Bourdieu's critiques, I have argued that his theoretical toolkit does not account for the details of day-to-day interactions, and for the potential of Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts to do so. I have, thus, accentuated the point that using a combination of both, Bourdieu's (1986) and Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts, has an explanatory potential that helps us understand the intricacy of reading practices, and how these practices are shaped by the social environments within which they take place and their meanings are imbedded. In addition to these conceptual tools, a combination of Kamhieh's (2012) concept of reader-as-XYZ and Gee's (2017) sub-type principle offer a tool that explains readers' reading choices and the diversity inherent in their reading identities. As a result, these theoretical concepts coalesce together to form a fruitful analytic tool through which reading practices can be articulated and understood.

Considering the in-depth details and the nuances of reading practices that this research seeks to unveil, a qualitative research approach is deemed useful.

CHAPTER 05: METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach that influenced this study: a qualitative research inspired by phenomenography. I start by sketching my journey towards endorsing a qualitative research approach and highlight the role played by phenomenography in shaping my understanding of it. A brief account of phenomenography and its theoretical underpinnings is also presented. I examine the ethical considerations related to this study, and move on to discuss and justify my data collection and analysis choices, to end the chapter with a discussion on research rigour and limitations. To remind the reader, this inquiry has been guided by the following research questions:

- How do participants' social environments influence their reading practices?
- How do participants' social environments influence the construction of their 'reader' identity?
- To what extent do participants' reading practices impact on their social environments?
- How do the texts participants read impact on their identities?

5.2 From numbers to stories

Coming from an educational and research background where only numbers count, I found it challenging to adjust the lens through which I perceived the world by exploring the merits of qualitative research approach. It meant attempting a distinct way of "knowing" and "understanding" and "unhook[ing]" from ingrained assumptions (Cherry, 2005, p. 62). At the start of my research project, I associated it with numbers, hypotheses and experiments. I went on and designed and administered a questionnaire to fifty people, enquiring about their reading interests and 'how many' people read. Although I was interested in people's reading experiences, I believed that my research would mean 'something' if it provided numbers, especially that – as explained in chapter 02 – 'Algerians do not read' is a common claim in my research setting. In this sense, I realised that striving to 'prove' that people read in Algeria was

my strongest impetus for employing a survey. This coincided with my second supervisor recommending that I read a thesis on reading, and with a presentation that I attended on the use of phenomenography to investigate experiences, both of which were qualitative research studies. The nuances and the richness of stories that characterised both caught my interest and I started reading about qualitative phenomenographic research.

5.3 Qualitative research

My research, as pinpointed in chapter 01, seeks to investigate reading practices within a group of graduates. Entering participants' worlds and collecting in-depth data that would portray their nuanced experiences and perceptions requires an approach that allows for an open exploration. Qualitative research is concerned with unveiling the meanings people attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), it is distinguished by four characteristics: (a) meaning and understanding are of a paramount importance; (b) the researcher is the medium of data collection and analysis; (c) it is conducted inductively starting by data collection and arriving at concepts and theories afterwards; (d) it is highly descriptive. Furthermore, qualitative research had been successfully and widely used throughout the reading literature reviewed in chapter 03, which yielded reach in-depth data.

My research seeks to investigate reading practices among adult graduates and, therefore, requires the collection of rich data. There is a methodological implication to the shift in literacy, and reading, research (see end of section 3.2) that stresses the usefulness of in-depth data in understanding practices. That is, viewing literacy, and reading, as a social practice was similarly marked by a shift in ways of approaching literacy, using observations, interviews and any other sources of rich in-depth data (e.g., Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007). Scribner and Cole (1978) pinpoint the gains brought about by anthropology to other disciplines in challenging generalisations. They further argue against establishing causal relationships between different aspects without considering the "totality of social practice" in which they are embedded (p. 19). Qualitative data tools, thus, offer the potential to retrieve in-depth data about people's literacy experiences, by scrutinising them within their social contexts. Taking the example of Heath's (1983) anthropological research, Barton (2007) argues that it was significant because it drew people's attention to "actual

instances where people use reading and writing in their day-to-day lives" (p. 26). Her research is reported as one of the most influential works in understanding literacy within New Literacy Studies (Barton, 2007; Street and Lefstein, 2007).

Investigating reading practices among adult graduates is slightly different from investigating reading – or literacy – practices within basic literacy programmes (Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007), schools, homes or other community areas (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Cherland, 1994), which enabled the use of ethnographic methods. That is, my participants are not enrolled in any literacy or reading programmes where their practices could be observed. With the significant success witnessed by Heath's (1983) seminal ethnographic work within the field of New Literacy Studies, she urges her readers to not regard it as a model for further works. She explains that it was suitable for that particular time and place and might not be for others (p. 18). Following Heath's (1983) advice, the present research retains the idea of collecting in-depth data through a qualitative research design, yet without being bound to ethnography. As the interest of this research was centred around the perceptions of readers regarding their reading experiences, a qualitative research inspired by phenomenography was adapted.

5.4 Phenomenography

Phenomenography is an interpretivist approach that investigates human experiences (Cossham, 2017). It is a relatively new approach in the field of educational research (Akerlind, 2012). The term 'phenomenography' was coined in Sweden in 1979 and was first used in print in 1981 by Ference Marton (Marton, 1986). Marton (1986) defines it as a "research approach to investigate different understandings of reality" (p. 28). Marton and Booth (1997) use the terms 'experience', 'conception', 'perception', 'understanding' or 'comprehension' of phenomenon interchangeably. It explores the different ways in which people experience the world around them – reading in the present research – in that it focuses on the descriptions that people create of what appears to them. Marton (1986) further asserts that "[*m*]*an-world relations are the subject matter of phenomenography*" (p. 31, emphasis in original).

Marton (1986) distinguishes four characteristics of phenomenographic research: (1) it seeks to capture variation; (2) it focuses on individuals' conceptions of phenomena; (3)

categories of description are created based on these conceptions; (4) an outcome space is generated from the logical relationships drawn between categories of description (Wright *et al*., 2007). First, variation, or difference in perceptions, is key in phenomenographic research. It holds that individuals can understand the same phenomenon differently (Stokes, 2011). Marton and Booth (1997) contend that the unit of phenomenographic research is *a* "*way of experiencing something*" while its object is the "*variation*" in ways of experiencing phenomena (p. 111, emphasis in original). Furthermore, Marton (1986) argues that focus on variation is what differentiates phenomenography from other approaches focusing on perceptions. That is, while perceptions have long been of interest to researchers in different disciplines (e.g., developmental psychology, anthropology…), variation was not a focal point (Marton, 1986). Thus, phenomenography acknowledges the diversity of experiences and the fact that readers experience and perceive reading differently.

Second, it focuses on perceptions rather than on the phenomenon itself or the processes involved in it. In drawing upon the difference between phenomenographers and psychologists, Marton (1986) contends that the latter focus on the act and process of perceptions, while the former focus on the content of perceptions. Regarding the two last characteristics, phenomenographic research seeks to map the qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon in the form of categories of description, or themes (Marton, 1986; Marton and Booth, 1997; Akerlind, 2012). These constitute the primary outcome of phenomenography, or the "collective anatomy of awareness" (Marton and Booth, 1997, p. 136). When logical relationships between these categories of description are established, an outcome space is constituted (Marton and Booth, 1997). The outcome space is an "elucidation of relations between different ways of experiencing the one phenomenon" (Akerlind, 2012, p. 116).

The theoretical tenets of phenomenography are cognate with those of New Literacy Studies. They agree on three main points. They: (1) acknowledge the influence of the social environment on practices or experiences; (2) require detailed accounts of experiences; (3) recognise difference and claim no generalisations. First, at the heart of investigating reading (literacy more broadly) as a social practice is taking into consideration the influence of the social environment within which these practices are embedded. Similarly, phenomenography assumes that individuals' experiences and perceptions are shaped by their social worlds (Marton, 1986; Akerlind, 2012). Phenomenography, in this sense, assumes a relational view of the world in that the separation between "the internal (thinking) and the external (the world out

there)" is refuted (Säljö, 1997, p. 173). Second, attending to everyday experiences and interactions is pivotal in explaining literacy practices and, therefore, requires the collection of in-depth data. For example, Bartlett (2007) would not have known that her participants used artefacts – blackboard and paper folders – as means to practice their agencies and project identities as literates, had she not used interview discussions. In a similar fashion, phenomenographic research seeks to gain thorough insights into the experiences of a particular phenomenon. Third, difference is acknowledged in the sense that various people use distinct literacy practices and attribute different meanings to them (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). As far as phenomenography is concerned, it assumes that there are different ways of conceiving and experiencing phenomena, because they are shaped by people's social worlds, making them diverse (Marton, 1986; Akerlind, 2012). Phenomenography is based on the belief that there are qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon and, therefore, no generalisations can be made (Marton, 1986).

5.5 Ethical considerations

The aim of this section is to provide an engaging discussion on ethical procedures and ethics-related issues arising throughout the research process, rather than striving to demonstrate how ethically-informed this research was, or what Macfarlane (2010) refers to as a "scripted communication" (p. 22). The latter is important to ensure that measures regarding participants' protection have been contemplated before embarking on this research journey, for researchers have a moral obligation towards themselves, other researchers, participants and audiences to confine to ethical norms (Blaxter *et al.*, 2010). It can, however, become misleading if it projects an idea of an ideal and linear research process rather than a 'messy' one with lots of improvisations. Thus, I concur with Macfarlane (2010) when he stresses the importance of developing a personal understanding of virtue via-a-vis research, rather than longing to be "politically correct" by adopting ethical principles that are based on the assumption that ethical issues are easily foreseen and, therefore, relatively easy to manage (p. 26). Thus, a combination of the researcher's 'common sense' of personal virtues, and the various ethical principles highlighted by the Belmont Report (1979) and BERA (2018) framed the ethical approach of this research.

I start by highlighting the ethical procedures and principles considered in this research and move to argue that some of these principles are not adequate for all research settings, taking my own as an example. I similarly discuss some of the issues related to consent forms and obtaining permission of access, after which I argue that research ethics are 'socially-constructed' and should be viewed as such.

5.5.1 Ethics procedures and principles

Filling out forms was not part of my research trajectory prior to starting my PhD. Thus, the concept of research ethics was novel to me. After using my university's ethics checklist and confirming that my research project required approval from the ethics' committee members (Walliman, 2011), I submitted my ethics application. I had been notified that it had been approved with amendments requiring permissions of access to the Algerian university in which I planned to conduct my focus groups and interviews. Unfortunately, the university did not facilitate my access, and I had to change the setting of my research – to a library – and the participants – from university students and graduates to the latter only.

'Respect for people' and 'beneficence' are among the ethical principles that ensure participants' welfare is not put in jeopardy. In line with 'respect for people', I ensued dealing with participants as autonomous individuals, allowing them the choice of participation after making sure they understood what their participation entailed, as well as their freedom of withdrawing at any point of the research (The Belmont Report, 1979; BERA, 2018). Adherence to 'respect for people' entails obtaining informed consent from participants (BERA, 2018), and preserving their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Farrimond, 2013). Thus, I provided my participants with the information sheet and consent forms before undertaking data collection to guarantee that their approval was based on their awareness of what was expected from them (Blaxter *et al.*, 2006; Walliman, 2011; Flick, 2015). To guarantee clarity, these documents were provided in Arabic and English. I also made sure any enquiries were answered before they agreed to participate.

Researchers have a moral obligation to respect other participants' choices, as indicated by research ethics' guidelines. This, however, does not mean abstaining from using common-sense whenever needed. As a researcher, I found myself attempting to maintain a balance between my desire to collect rich data and, at the same time, respecting my participants'

choices. In few instances, some participants requested me to cease recording or refrain from using some of the data. Endorsing the view that research is about negotiating a practical way between various interests (Blaxter *et al.*, 2006), I allowed myself to enquire about the reasons of their requests. This happened after we established relationships of trust. It became apparent that it was only because they reckoned that those particular stories were irrelevant to my research. They added that I was welcome to use them if I thought otherwise.

Power relations can also be viewed in light of respect for others, whether they are 'vertical' (interviewer-interviewee) or 'horizontal' (amongst interviewees in focus groups). Starting with the former, it is commonly known that a "power asymmetry" exists between the researcher and the researched (Kvale, 2007, p. 14). Bowden (2005) argues that the powerful position that researchers have over their interviewees can manifest during interviews where participants feel inclined to answer in ways that they see favourable for the researchers. This happened during some of my interviews. For instance, Jim enquired many times during our interviews: "Do you like my answers?"; "are they helpful for your research?"; "if you want me to change anything in my answers, you just tell me". Another example is that of Djahan: "Am I answering your questions as you want?" Doula, after providing answers related to the Algerian setting, asked: "You know this, right?" They all seemed to seek validation when answering my questions. I tried my best to convince my participants that all their answers were valid and of a paramount importance, and that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' responses. Furthermore, the use of visuals and giving participants ownership over their stories, by asking them to provide images that represented their experiences, helped minimise the interviewer-interviewee power imbalance. Regarding power relations amongst interviewees, one of the challenges I faced was having a dominant voice in the group. I made sure to constantly remind the respondents that all voices matter, and tried to ensure all participants had equal chances of participation (Currie and Kelly, 2012).

Central to 'beneficence' is that benefits should outweigh potential harms (Murphy and Dingwall, 2011). Hence, I considered: (1) avoiding any harm; (2) maximising benefits (The Belmont Report, 1979; Murphy and Dingwall, 2011; Farrimond, 2013; Bryman, 2016). Harm can be physical or emotional such as: self-esteem and stress (Bryman, 2016). Accordingly, I conducted most of my focus groups and interviews in a safe place – a library – when the university setting was not easily accessed. All the meetings took place during the day, as part of ensuring participants could travel safely during daylight. Furthermore, I strived to be tactful when faced with situations that required avoiding being patronising, and at the same time

taking action. For instance, it was challenging to manage my focus group interviews' time. My focus group participants were not acquaintances before starting the research (they only saw each other on campus, as they went to the same university). As our meetings reoccurred, they became too excited to share stories that I found it hard to either start the focus group discussions or end them. One of my participants once asserted: "Okay, I will just finish this story and we can start". As a researcher, I was pleased because they became comfortable sharing personal stories, but I also saw it as an inconvenience. Thus, I attempted each time to smoothly bring them back to the discussion.

Regarding the benefits, as data collection progressed, it became apparent that some of my participants benefited from their participation. Gains of research should not only be limited to the wider research field, but also to participants (Walliman, 2011). Three of my participants explained that their participation allowed them to reflect upon and make sense of their experiences. They further asserted that this helped them find answers to their own questions. Doula, for instance, declared:

> Doula: …things happen to you without even you noticing them until somebody comes and points them to you, like now you. I wasn't thinking about this before and when you asked this question actually things and images started to come to my mind (Doula#I2).

While this helped Doula think about his experience, Jim took it further and avowed: "you made me want to go back to reading" (Jim#I1).

Some participants expressed their enjoyment of being interviewed, and showed their willingness to help. Their impetus differed. Jim, for example, expressed feeling 'important' and 'heard'. He jokingly said: "It is good that someone is interested in me. Do you know the story of Narcisse? It is me now" (Jim#I1). Similarly, Doula expressed his satisfaction for being asked to share his reading experience. At the end of an interview, he contended: "Don't you see how happy I am? Can't you see that I am grinning from ear to ear?" (Doula#I2). Furthermore, he perceived it as an opportunity to practice his English – as he was studying English at the time. He contended: "It's been a long time since I chatted in English, so I am very grateful", and that it has been "a breath of fresh air" (Doula#I1). He described the overall

experience as a “pleasure”, and added that it was “equal to the pleasure of reading a book” (Doula#I3). The focus group discussions, especially, were perceived by respondents as an opportunity to meet other readers and discuss reading interests. When I informed my participants that the third focus group session was the last, they all suggested: “Why don’t we have more sessions, please? Think. You might need another session” (#FG3). Similar requests resonated throughout all my interviews. This facilitated the process of carrying out follow-up interviews with some of them.

5.5.2 Ethical issues

Some of the issues faced in this research were related to the rigid nature of ethics’ systems, instead of perceiving ethics as ‘socially-situated’. That is, the challenges encountered were mainly related to informed consent and participants’ recruitment, due to the strict rules that ethics’ committees inflict upon researchers regardless of their research settings. As mentioned earlier, the process of obtaining ethics’ approval was novel to me. Coming from a setting where it is widely known that the oral word is a sign of consent, and where requesting signatures might be perceived as an offence, I suspected that the process will be challenging. Thus, I found it onerous to balance adhering to ethical rules, and following the ‘local codes’ of my research setting. I use ‘local codes’ to refer to ways of operating within a certain setting that are not necessarily bound by the written word, signatures or formal permissions, and where uttering ‘*kelma*’ (‘a word’ in Arabic) is more valued. In that setting ‘a word’ means a promise or an agreement has been made.

Obtaining informed consent was complicated, and put at risk my participants’ recruitment. As soon as I received my ethics approval, I contacted potential participants while still in the UK. I managed to reach a number of participants, all of whom declined as soon as I asked for written consent. One of them said that she was happy to help under the condition of not signing anything. This became apparent during the phase of the survey – that I had carried out and discarded afterwards – where over 50% of the participants returned the surveys with no signatures. This is echoed in other studies (e.g., Clyne, 2001; Harold, 2005; Kamhieh, 2012). For instance, Clyne’s (2001) research within a Muslim community in Australia, whose culture she describes as one that values trust relationships more than formal documents, demonstrates that consent forms can be perceived as an offense. Clearly, those studies represent examples

and generalisations cannot be made. Nonetheless, I thought that requesting signatures at the beginning, before even establishing trust relationships, was complicating my participants' recruitment. Thus, I took a slightly different approach later on, under the premise that there is no one right way of doing research (Denscombe, 2010).

Following more of a 'common-sense' approach that goes with the 'local codes' of my research setting, I attempted to find other participants while in the fieldwork. I provided them with the information sheet, explained my research orally, and mentioned the need for their consent. I, however, only obtained it orally and suggested that they could sign the consent forms whenever they felt ready to do so – after researcher-participant trust has been established. I similarly explained that it was a formality that is required by UK universities to maintain respondents' welfare, and that their 'word' was valued by the researcher. Three participants provided written consent at the beginning, and the remaining six did at the end.

Another aspect that amplified the difficulty of reaching many students and graduates as I anticipated at the beginning of this research was the permissions for access required by ethics committees. I intended to conduct my research at university in Algeria because chances of recruiting students from different disciplines and at various stages of their university studies were higher. Nonetheless, because obtaining ethical approval from my UK university was a requirement for starting data collection, and after waiting for two months without obtaining access to an Algerian university, I opted for conducting my research in a small library. Permission of access was easily provided. This diminished the potential of recruiting a large number of participants significantly, with students' busy schedules and not being able to travel to the library in their break hours at university. Being familiar with my research setting, matters are better navigated face-to-face without requiring written permissions. I was confident that I would have been easily able to informally be granted an oral authorisation to access university if a written one was not required by the research ethics' committee in the UK.

As could be depicted in what has been discussed above, the rigid nature of research ethics' regulations engenders predicaments that could have been avoided with some flexibility. This is tandem with other researchers' assertions. Clyne's (2001) notes that ethics committees are "mono-cultural" and seem to refute the fact that different ways work for distinct places (p. 10). She concludes her papers asserting that these committees are "stranded on a mono-cultural island, which does not see diversity of opinion or research methods as a positive development" (p. 11). In a similar fashion, Kamhieh (2012), researching reading in the UAE, enquires: "can

one-size ethics uniform fit all contexts and should we insist that it does?" (p. 69). While many researchers and ethics' committees perceive informed consent as part of the 'respect for people' principle, for Mead (1969) respect is the very reason why there should not be any informed consent to sign. Thus, a serious consideration of the fact that various research settings function differently and that ethics are 'socially-constructed' is needed to facilitate the research process.

In this section, I hoped for the discussion to provide insights into my perceptions of ethics as a 'newcomer' to research ethics, as well as someone who encountered issues in the fieldwork related to ethical rules. Predicaments related to informed consent and permissions of access were also discussed. A combination of ethical principles, such as: 'respect for others' and 'beneficence' were considered throughout the research process, with 'common-sense' and adherence to my settings' 'local codes'. I believe a combination of ethical principles and personal virtues is crucial and helps ensure the research is ethical and well-managed. After going through ethics-related matters, the next section discusses data collection.

5.6 Data collection

As was explained in chapter 01, the aim of this research was to obtain insights into reading practices within a group of readers. The intricacies and contradictions involved in lived experiences impose the use of data collection methods that allow revelation of these complexities via reaching a depth of data. This research utilises various data collection methods to yield insights into leisure reading experiences within a group of readers. I start by providing information about my participants, and move on to discuss the use of focus groups, interviews, visuals, and informal conversations as the main data collection tools. This section similarly argues for the adequacy and significance of deploying focus groups and visual methods in reading research.

5.6.1 Participants

Participants in this research were selected purposefully, following the qualitative nature of this study (Patton, 2002; Bryman, 2016; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Accordingly, selecting my respondents was preceded by identifying some selection criteria (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Information-rich cases, as Patton (2002, p. 45) refers to them, in this research were deemed to

be individuals who: (1) self-identify as readers; (2) are graduates of various disciplines. There were nine participants, three of whom took part in three focus groups and seven – including one of the aforementioned – were my individual interviewees.

With the complex nature of reading claimed throughout this thesis, this selection has its complexities. As noted in section 5.5.2, participants' recruitment was challenging due to ethical issues that put at risk people's willingness to participate. Therefore, the few participants who have agreed to be part of the study managed to contact other people they judged corresponded to these characteristics. The risk of doing so, however, is recruiting people who do not see themselves as readers. This happened with one of the participants who, at the beginning of the interview, said that he was the wrong person to interview, for he did not identify as a reader. The table below summarises the biographic information of the participants. The names below represent nicknames that they have chosen for themselves to protect their real identities.

Participants	Gender	Age	Disciplines
Djahan	F	30	Translation
Djosour	F	26	Language sciences (English)
Clara	F	33	Language sciences (English)
Doula	M	35	English and American literature and civilisation / Law studies
Malik	M	27	Medical sciences
Lucy	F	24	Intercultural studies
Misha	F	26	English and American literature and civilisation
Amir	M	28	Economic sciences / Health management and administration
Jim	M	24	Physics

Table 5.1 Participants' information

5.6.2 Data collection methods

Focus groups, individual semi-structured interviews, visuals and informal conversations have been used as the main data collection methods in this study, over a period of three months of fieldwork. Focus groups played a vital role in directing the research focus on aspects that were

not expected and allowed for their exploration. Patton (2002) argues that there is no recipe in deciding upon research methods. It is rather a matter of "horses for courses", as posited by Denscombe (2010, p. 153). Thus, although interviews are known to be the primary data collection tool in phenomenographic research (Marton, 1986; Svensson, 1997; Bowden, 2005), this research deployed a variety of data collection tools to investigate experiences and tap into more nuance and depth. I discuss data collection methods and procedures below, and argue for the significance of using focus groups and visuals in reading research.

5.6.2.1 Focus groups

A focus group is a focused discussion around a topic of interest, with the intention of evoking interaction and, therefore, eliciting information among a small number of people (Patton, 2002; Gray, 2014). Barbour (2007), writing about focus groups, asserts that they are given various names and definitions, some of which are said to vary in meaning, such as group interviews (Currie and Kelly, 2012). Barbour (2007), nonetheless, warns from being swamped with this and uses a more holistic definition suggested by Kitzinger and Barbour (1999): any group discussion where group interaction is stimulated by the researcher. In a similar fashion, Krueger and Casey (2015) identify five components of a focus group: "(1) a small group of people, who (2) possess certain characteristics, (3) provide qualitative data (4) in a focused discussion (5) to help understand the topic of interest" (p. 6). This is a view that this research endorses.

I deployed focus groups for a couple of reasons. First, focus groups are used for their adequate use at an exploratory stage of the research (Krueger, 1988; Currie and Kelly, 2012; Gray, 2014). As noted in chapter 02, qualitative research exploring reading in Algeria is scarce, and with the little that is known about it, focus groups are a good place to start. Second, they have the potential for creating an interactive social space where readers could share their reading stories and generate insights that might remain untold (Robinson, 2012), as well as their potential for capturing feelings, thoughts and experiences (Gray, 2014; Krueger and Casey, 2015). This helps take the discussion to novel and profound levels (Krueger and Casey, 2015), due to the "synergistic" formation and extension of ideas (Gray, 2014, p. 469). Individuals are likely to open up when they are within a group of people that share common characteristics, or when attitudes towards a phenomenon are shared, for they feel validated (Krueger and Casey, 2015, p. 470). Thus, the dynamics inherent in bringing individuals who

self-identify as readers were significant, especially in light of my findings regarding the lack of spaces for readers to enjoy their reading-related activities and the alienation they experience.

After developing my focus group plan and questions, I conducted a pilot before undertaking the main study, the aim of which was to try out my focus group questions and management (Gray, 2014). The questions were translated into Arabic, and both versions were sent to the participants, after they have been checked for clarity and accuracy by a colleague who shares the same characteristics as my participants. With the difficulty of recruiting many participants, I called upon a number of cousins who also resembled my potential participants (Gray, 2014), to assay my focus group interviews. Modifications were introduced based on this, especially that some of the questions appeared to be complex, difficult to answer and redundant. Krueger and Casey (2015) pinpoint three hints to know that a question does not work. These include participants: looking confused; confessing their lack of understanding of the questions; speaking without answering them. All three happened with some of the questions and, therefore, they were modified. Furthermore, experimenting with my focus group plan and questions was beneficial, for it helped ease the anxiety and increased my confidence to start data collection.

I conducted three focus group sessions with three participants. My aim was to recruit more participants, but after spending a long time pursuing this, I had to start and work with what was available at the time. My participants were not acquaintances, but went to the same university. I aimed for the group to be homogeneous – all three participants asserted identifying as readers –, for the aim was to get in-depth insights into reading experiences (Robinson, 2012). The information sheet and questions were sent to the participants beforehand in English and Arabic. They were allowed the choice of language that they wanted to use during the focus groups. Accordingly, a mixture of Algerian dialect, Standard Arabic, French, English and few words in Spanish were used. All sessions took place in a small library. I ensured that the place was easy to travel to, and that the time was at their convenience. I also ensured to leave a period of time between each session and the following to do some analysis, review and modify the interview schedule, as well as reflect upon my management of the sessions (Krueger and Casey, 2015). The ground rules of the session, such as ‘all views are valid’, ‘all information is useful to the research’, ‘you can withdraw at any time’, ‘you are free to abstain from answering any questions’, ‘anonymity and privacy are key’, ‘everything will be audio-recorded unless you request otherwise’ – were explained and agreed upon (Gray, 2014). Overall, a funnel approach to questions was adopted (Gray, 2014). The discussions were audio-recorded using a recorder

and a phone as a backup device. Each session lasted for roughly an hour and fifteen to nineteen minutes. The recordings were moved to my computer and an external drive, both of which were password-protected.

It is not always easy, if not impossible, to anticipate what might happen during focus group discussions. My role was to "orchestrate" them and keep the discussion focused on the topic of interest (Gray, 2014, p. 474). At the same time, I made sure I was open to what emerged from the data and followed my respondents' lines of thoughts. I also allowed myself to follow the unexpected when it happened. For instance, a discussion that revolved around a book that I had bought on my way to the library took place at the beginning of the first session. It was on the table with my other belongings and one of my participants saw it. The conversation revealed one of the most important findings in this research: 'reading narcissism' discussed in section 7.4.1. Another example is that I ended up using a poster that was hanging on the wall of our meeting room. While waiting for my participants to arrive, I noticed a poster entitled *Les Droits du Lecteur* ('*The Rights of the Reader*') (see Appendix A). A discussion around these rights started when one of my participants entered the room, and found me staring at it. I asked her to choose the ones she could relate to the most, as part of our informal conversation. She chose 'the right to read everywhere', bringing up a story that happened to her when reading on the bus (section 7.2.1.1). What followed was an intriguing discussion, after I invited the two other participants to choose their 'rights'. This revealed interesting data that became major parts of my data chapters, and on which I focused in subsequent individual interviews. Thus, the significance of focus groups lies in the fact that interaction leads to participants building upon each other's stories – agreeing or disagreeing – and results in unexpected discussions, foci and findings.

5.6.2.2 Individual interviews

Building upon the data collected from focus groups, individual semi-structured interviews have been used in this study because of their potential to access readers' feelings and interpretations of their worlds and past events (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). They are argued to be the most commonly-used tools in qualitative research (Forsey, 2012), especially when what is investigated cannot be directly observed (Patton, 2002), and when stories are central to the research enquiry (Seidman, 2013). They are similarly appropriate for investigating the

intricacies of social life and the meanings of phenomena for people (Forsey, 2012). This gives insights into their adequacy for investigating people's experiences, and attaining the aim of the present research – obtaining rich accounts of readers' reading practices. Following the qualitative nature of this research that is inspired by phenomenography, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were deemed suitable.

Conducting individual interviews was as challenging as focus groups were – time and effort consuming. I took time to read about other people's interviewing research (Forsey, 2012), as part of my preparation. Practice is vital for asking good questions, for the latter is the kernel of collecting good data (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, the interview schedule was piloted with few colleagues before starting my main interviews. These were recorded and listened to afterwards for reflection. Discussions followed some of the interviews, the aim of which was to get feedback on the whole process, as my colleagues were Algerian and were also conducting qualitative interviews. I also practised my interview questions with a couple of academics at my UK university who provided valuable feedback. Modifications were made afterwards — some questions were restated, others were added or removed. The questions were translated into Arabic and both version – including the English one – were sent to them a couple of days before the interviews took place. The study and ethics were explained at the recruitment stage and repeated at the beginning of the interview sessions.

The interviews took place in different places: five of them occurred in the library where focus groups happened; two at my family's place because my participants found it more convenient in terms of distance; six others on Skype. I ended up with a total of thirteen interviews. Each interview lasted roughly between thirty minutes to one hour and forty-six minutes. Due to my participants' busy schedules, several interviews were cancelled and rescheduled many times. Most participants were interviewed individually more than once. One of the participants – who opted for an interview at my place – chose to bring a female friend with him, because he asserted her presence made him feel more comfortable. A few follow-up interviews took place when I came back to the UK via Skype or phone calls. This was part of adapting to various circumstances, following the availability and choices of my participants and taking any opportunity to collect rich data.

Arguably, despite the effectiveness of interviews, they work best with other data collection methods. The prefix 'semi' in semi-structured interviews, although indicates a level of flexibility, remains controlled by the researcher (Bates *et al.*, 2017). In a similar fashion,

Walford (2007) stresses the idea that research interviews are settings that suspend the natural course of discussions, in that interviewers lead the interview while interviewees follow and answer, without taking turns in asking questions (Walford, 2007). Regarding the interviewees' side, he contends that they only disclose what they want to reveal about their understandings of reality, in addition to the possibility of not being able to recollect all relevant memories (Walford, 2007). Thus, he critiques researchers for their tendency to over-rely upon interviews, based on which concepts are developed, and suggests that they should be deployed with other tools. Thus, in addition to utilising focus groups, as discussed earlier, visual representations were also used in this research.

5.6.2.3 Visual methods

I utilised visual methods to elicit discussion and access richer data. That is, the images have not been used as data, but rather as a means to trigger discussion. Image, or photo, elicitation is commonly used for this purpose (Allen, 2012), and it refers to the use of images during interviews (Harper, 2002). Although photographs are the most commonly-used tool amongst visual methods (Rose, 2014), a variety of other means can similarly be deployed: paintings, cartoons, graffiti, among others (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2014). This is believed to be an innovative method in research methodology (Bates *et al*., 2017), especially with complex research phenomena.

The nuanced nature of reading practices requires the use of means that would facilitate access to what otherwise would remain untold – hence, the use of images. As argued by Henwood *et al.* (2018), constituents of everyday practices are not commonly available to our consciousness and, therefore, necessitate alternative ways of bringing them to light. Furthermore, the difficulty of articulating aspects of readers' experiences became evident from the pilot of the focus groups where respondents found it challenging to define reading and speak about what it meant to them. Based on this, the idea of asking participants to provide images or photographs, online or offline, as symbolic representations of their reading experiences occurred to me. This was following questions such as: "Find or create an image that depicts what reading means to you". As such, this was requested at the end of the first focus group session to be discussed during the second one. Following the richness of the data gained from this, it was further applied to the individual interviews (Appendix E).

Rose (2014) highlights three benefits proclaimed by advocates of using visual research methods. They are said to: (1) be adequate for yielding data that other research methods cannot; (2) unveil what lies behind the taken-for-granted and implicit beliefs of people's experiences; (3) be naturally collaborative. Concerning the first and second aspects, the difference between words-only interviews and those involving images is that people respond differently to these two forms of symbolisations (Harper, 2002), in that images are believed to attain deeper levels of consciousness than words (Bated *et al.*, 2017). The poster of *The Ten Rights of the Reader* can, perhaps, be taken as a testament to the effectiveness of image elicitation, for it proved to have triggered discussions over emotional experiences that readers shared during the focus group sessions. Regarding the third aspect, participants are more engaged in the research process where they negotiate the making and meaning of images that best represent their experiences, as well as become the experts that choose, attribute meaning and explain it to the researcher, which results in empowering them (Rose, 2014).

Power relations are often an issue in qualitative research. The tension between researcher authority and participant voice is at the heart of using image elicitation in interviews (Bates *et al*., 2017). In my research, requesting participants to provide pictures rather than choose from a pre-selected set of images was a conscious decision that was based on the premise that they should be allowed agency and ownership over the stories they wanted to tell (Allen, 2012). For instance, Henwood *et al.* (2018) looked into people's understandings of everyday energy-use, using a longitudinal qualitative research and deploying a photo-elicitation exercise, based on which interviews were formed. They contend that this enabled their participants to be the "experts" leading the course of discussion (Henwood *et al*., 2018, p. 7). Similarly, Bates *et al.* (2017), exploring university students' experiences and satisfaction, deployed photo-elicitation. They asked their participants to bring photos that best represented their experiences, without imposing any characteristics. Doing so entails attempting to understand people's experiences according to their understandings of them, instead of imposing the researcher's perceptions (Bates *et al.*, 2017). This is particularly significant for people whose experiences and voices have been marginalised (Bates *et al*., 2017), as seems to be the case for my participants whose reading practices have remained in the shadows. Therefore, I argue that using images is particularly significant in reading research for their potential to penetrate readers' reading worlds and the richness and depth that they provide.

5.6.2.4 Informal conversations

In addition to my planned focus group and interview discussions, some informal conversations with my participants took place haphazardly. When these instances happened, I requested permission to use them as data and participants agreed and were happy to elaborate. This was particularly useful because, during these instances, it was a friendly two-way discussion rather than the usual one-way questioning of the researcher. This is important, for the sort of control that is often researcher-led is eased. I wrote notes of all the stories that my participants allowed me to use on my researcher diary – phone or notebook – at the first opportunity I could find. Some of them were also recorded using a small audio-recorder that I carried most of the time, and where I summarised the informal discussions that took place. All these were later on transferred to my computer as entries in a word document. After explaining the procedures involved in data collection, the next section provides a discussion on data analysis.

5.7 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

The analysis and interpretation of data were ongoing and progressive processes. For the sake of clarity and to avoid redundancy, however, they are outlined in four phases: (1) familiarising myself with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for, reviewing, defining and naming themes; (4) writing the report. Thematic analysis is deemed a suitable analytic approach for my qualitative data because it provides a “rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" by means of codes and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78), which goes in line with the aim of the present research: understanding readers’ complex practices by accessing their nuanced and multi-layered accounts. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that there is no ‘right’ way of analysing qualitative data and although the guidelines that this approach offers appear linear, I moved back and forth across these four steps which are not entirely separate, with a continuous immersion in the data and a discovery of interesting aspects of my participants’ stories. All the collected data was analysed thematically, including the descriptions of visuals. As stated earlier in section 5.6.2.3, the images chosen by my participants were only used to elicit discussion. Therefore, their comments were analysed as part of the interviews and focus group discussions. What follows is a description of these phases.

5.7.1 Phase 01: Familiarising myself with the data

Having collected my data, I immersed myself in it (Marshall and Rossman, 2016), as part of the 'familiarisation with the data' phase. I did so by constantly listening to my audio recordings, transcribing them, (re)reading through the transcripts (Clarke and Braun, 2013), and organising my datasets. This helped me build an intimate and engaging relationship with my data (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). The process is discussed more fully in this section.

5.7.1.1 Transcription

All my focus group and interview discussions were transcribed verbatim (Clarke and Braun, 2013), after every session. Transcription is, as argued by Kvale (2007), an artificial representation of interview discussions, due to the abstraction of voice, tone and other nonverbal features. Thus, I attempted to preserve the nature of the spoken language by keeping the grammatical mistakes and informal language (Clarke and Braun, 2013), as well as non-verbal features such as: pauses, laughter, sarcasm and facial expressions (Bird, 2005), to make what happens in the interview, more or less, accessible to the reader.

The transcription process is an essential and an inseparable part of data analysis and interpretation (Bird, 2005). It is a process of construction rather than a mere mechanical operation of putting into writing what was articulated in conversations (Hammersley, 2012; Clarke and Braun, 2013). The researcher becomes the "channel" that represents the exchange of spoken words, and transcription becomes an "interpretive act" (Bird, 2005, p. 228). Far from being an unconcerned onlooker, the researcher is engaged in the process of reflecting upon the data, how it should be written, organised, structured and the themes that start forming. Analysis and interpretation, therefore, go concurrently with transcription. Because transcripts are the means through which data is analysed, rather than the audio recordings themselves, it is important for them to be accurate and for their quality to be ensured (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

I strived to ensure that my data was correctly transcribed, easily read and safely guarded. I played the audio recordings several times while reading through the transcripts to check for accuracy. Furthermore, to ensure the readability of my transcripts (Hammersley, 2012), I

constructed my own transcription notation system to allow for clarity and consistency throughout my transcripts (Clarke and Braun, 2013), and to make the spoken language readable while translated into the written form. The notation key is provided at the end of this section (Clarke and Braun, 2013). I tried my best to use the punctuation as I understood it. Finally, I made sure that my transcripts were safely guarded through anonymising them using the nicknames my participants have chosen. All transcripts were saved in my password-protected computer and hard drive. I ended up with several pages of transcripts in a mixture of languages – Algerian dialect, Standard Arabic, French, English and Spanish – in which case translation was needed.

Transcription Symbols
… part of the speech has been deleted
— unfinished sentences or conversation overlap
“ ” use of reported speech
( ) nonverbal behaviour like pause, laughter, facial expression, hand gesture, etc.
(?) unclarity
[ ] explaining a point, replacing names for anonymity reasons, or translating passages
Bold emphasis on a word, utterance or sentence
Italics names of places and titles

Table 5.2 Transcription notation key

5.7.1.2 Translation

Decisions regarding translation were not straightforward. Only three interviews were mainly in English while the majority were in Algerian dialect. All participants used words or sentences in other languages: Algerian dialect, Standard Arabic, French and/or Spanish. Attempting to capture as much as I could of the meanings conveyed by participants was exhausting and demanding. I have experimented with different ways in that I started by translating the discussions as I was transcribing them. Many of the expressions used during the interviews did not have exact equivalents in English and, therefore, I decided to keep them. I changed my approach after working on one interview, and shifted to transcribing all the discussions in their

original languages, analysing the data and then translating the segments that were needed as supportive evidence in my data chapters. All the codes and themes were retrieved in English.

To increase the reliability of my translations, I followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) strategy of "back translation" (p. 299). As such, I handed my English translations to two of my Algerian multilingual colleagues and asked them to translate them back to the original language of the interview. Furthermore, I used one of my acquaintances' expertise – being a professional translator – to check the accuracy of some of the translations that were challenging. To ensure that I stayed true to my participants' stories, I referred back to them after translating their data segments to see whether they wanted to suggest different words and to check that their intended meanings were still represented.

5.7.1.3 Data organisation

Data organisation was necessary to facilitate data analysis. This process started as soon as the audio recordings were transferred to my personal computer. As the table below indicates, datasets were stored in four documents. They were named after the dataset's initials: FGs for focus groups, Is for interviews, VRs for visual representations, RJ for research journal (in which I kept notes of informal conversations). The recordings inside the FGs' and Is' files were named using their initials with the session number and date (e.g., FG2 31.10.17). Moreover, each interview recording was stored inside a file that goes by the interviewee's name (e.g., MishaI1 29.12.17). The figures below illustrate these examples.

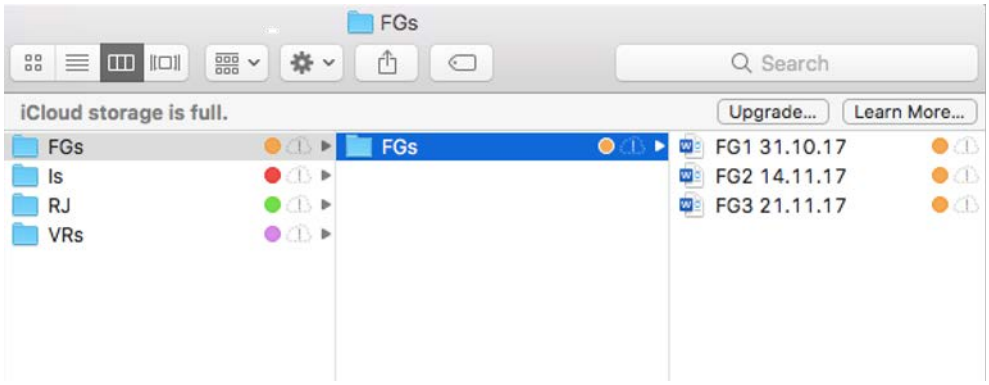


Figure 5.1 Focus group data

Figure 5.2 Interview data

I kept almost the same approach with the transcripts: a segment of data taken from the interview recording mentioned above would be referenced as (Misha#I1). That is, the segment has been taken from the first interview session with Misha. Similarly, (Djosour#FG3) refers to a segment taken from the third focus group session, and asserted by Djosour. Organising my data as such facilitated working on codes and themes.

5.7.2 Phase 02: Generating initial codes

I engaged in a broad thematic coding in an attempt to identify core concepts based upon my interpretations of the initial data, which provided directions as to which further data to collect (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). For instance, the data emerging from my focus groups provided insights into the challenges faced by readers in this study when reading outside their homes, and that this was an area to be explored more deeply in subsequent interviews. Because analysis is about making sense of the data (Holliday, 2016), it happened simultaneously with data collection. “Too much and too late!” is Kvale’s (2007) response to researchers who inquire about how to analyse the myriads of transcript pages (p. 102). As such, I had already been taking notes of the ideas that were ‘floating’. After every focus group or interview discussion, I wrote notes on the ideas that were either discussed at length or were not expected. Moreover, I used a small recorder that I often carried with me to reflect upon my data and analysis. Using coloured sticky notes was immensely helpful. This is presented in the picture below, where I

began working with the first emerging ideas (such as: language complexity in relation to reading; reading is intimate; isolation; wide and tight horizons; empathy).

Figure 5.3 Working with initial codes

Once transcripts were organised, I experimented with various approaches. I started working on printed transcripts and coloured pens, writing the codes on the margins and using the same colours for related ones. Afterwards, I shifted to using the 'comments' option on Microsoft Word documents for coding, and carried on with this approach. Transcripts were coded inductively – or data-driven – rather than deductively – or theory-driven (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It was more of a process of discovering the various patterns arising from participants' data (Patton, 2015).

I used "complete coding", in that I identified "anything and everything of interest or relevance" throughout all my datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 207). This is particularly useful when research questions are initially broad, in which case there are no particular instances to focus on (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The importance of doing so lies in the fact that the researcher has to consider each aspect of what the transcripts contain. This is useful in the sense that many of the parts I initially coded and later thought might not be relevant to the focus of my study helped to either strengthen my arguments or show the importance of my findings. For instance, I coded the extracts reporting on issues related to the lack of accessibility to books due to their unavailability and expensive prices. While trying to establish links between the different codes and deciding upon the themes, I could not figure out where they

should go at first. While writing my data chapters, however, I realised that these codes could be used to strengthen my arguments regarding the importance of book provision by family members in triggering reading (section 6.2.1.2) and that of book sharing among peers (section 6.2.2.3) respectively. As argued by Braun and Clarks (2013), "it is much easier to discard codes than go back to the data and recode it all later" (p. 211). In this sense, rather than being directly related to a particular theme, they played a role in reinforcing other themes.

As I delved deeper into coding and breaking of the data into manageable bits (Corbin and Strauss, 2015), more codes were emerging - some were conceptually similar to those coded earlier and, therefore, were attributed similar names, while others were given different ones. At this stage, a lot of questioning happened: I asked myself questions about the data and the reasons my participants made particular statements, and whether there was any difference between their statements – even those that looked similar. In this sense, attention was drawn to nuances, and comparisons were made between the various incidents that looked similar to bring more dimensions into light (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). I attempted to show these nuances through my codes. For example, two of the codes read: 'book provision – children's literature' and 'book provision – academic books' to signal the difference, and that although some participants were provided with children's books and others with academic books, they both reported that their reading was triggered as children. Thus, I concluded that the presence of books within the home environment was crucial in triggering reading, regardless of the content.

This "theoretical sensitivity", as referred to by Corbin and Strauss (2015), or the ability to be "in tune to the meanings of data" developed progressively by dint of being completely immersed in the transcripts (p. 262). At the same time, my research questions were being reformulated and narrowed down. Thus, a decision had to be made to discard some of the codes that were deemed irrelevant to answering my research questions. The focus became on the codes related to the research questions – readers' reading practices, their influences and the role that reading played in their lives. I found a certain regularity of utterances on which I also decided to focus, in addition to those that surprised me and that, I believed, were important dimensions to write about. They were constantly reviewed, and changes were introduced whenever necessary, after which every code was collated with the relevant data segments throughout the datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I was continuously looking at the codes and trying to identify the similarities and the differences between then, with the aim of capturing features that could unite them (Braun and Clarke, 2013). As the analysis reached more depth, the emerging codes were brought together to form themes.

5.7.3 Phase 03: Searching for, reviewing, defining and naming themes

This phase involved combining the codes that shared similar features together to construct potential themes and sub-themes, testing the soundness of these themes, and delineating the particular features of each theme. A theme is broader than a code in the sense that a number of codes are collated to form themes. Additionally, it should illustrate something significant about the data to answer the research questions: it would typically have a "central organising concept", as referred to by Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 224). At an initial stage of this phase, I attempted to bring a number of codes together on the basis of a shared feature. I cross-examined data from focus groups, interviews, informal conversations and comments on the visual representations.

I then reviewed the themes and tested the congruence that existed between a theme, the various codes that formed it, and the data extracts collated with these codes. For example, one of the themes developed is 'peers as reinforcers' (figure 5.4). It had various aspects – that shared a common feature that is captured in the name of the theme itself – such as 'enhancing reading choices through other readers' choices', 'support from other readers', 'participating in reading events'. Questions regarding the accurate and faithful representation of data extracts, as well as the relationship between the suggested codes and themes, were considered to make sure I was staying faithful to the data, while I was at the same time telling an interesting and a coherent story (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Arguably, the process of interpreting data involved lots of questions about the data, reflections and comparisons across the data sets (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). The themes that did not seem to portray accurately the codes and data extracts were modified and replaced by themes that were more creative and that captured the essence of the most salient concepts across the data. Additionally, broader themes were created to include more codes, while others were broken down into smaller themes. This is not to say that there were no contradictions (see section 5.8, point 5) or "negative cases", as referred to by Corbin and Strauss (2015). They define negative cases as those that do not go in line with the main theme of the research. These are important to look for to provide a more complete story (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p. 117).

In defining and naming themes, I focused on the criteria distinguishing each theme and on being able to define them with their particular features and sub-themes. For example, 'rebellious readers' were defined in this study as 'readers who resist or subvert the predominant

culture or social norms within some of the fields surrounding them' (7.3.1). Their sub-themes included 'the act of reading', 'the content of what is read' and 'the language of what is read'. This helped understand, explain this theme and clarify how it relates to other themes. The emerging themes formed the titles and subtitles of my data chapters (chapters 06, 07 and 08). Below are few examples of how I moved from extracts to codes and then to themes:

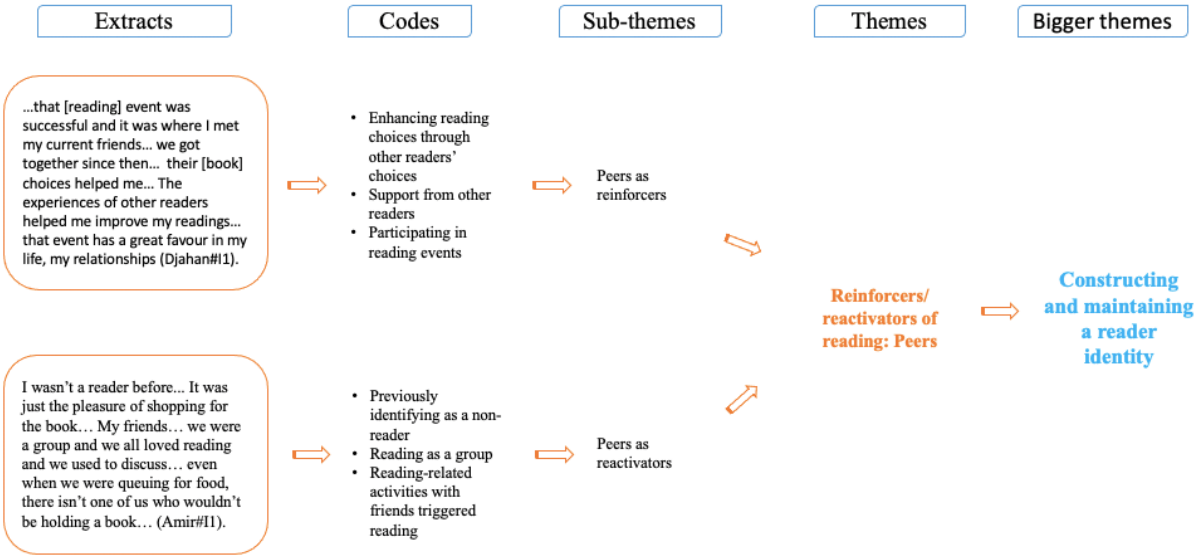


Figure 5.4 From extracts to themes (example 01)

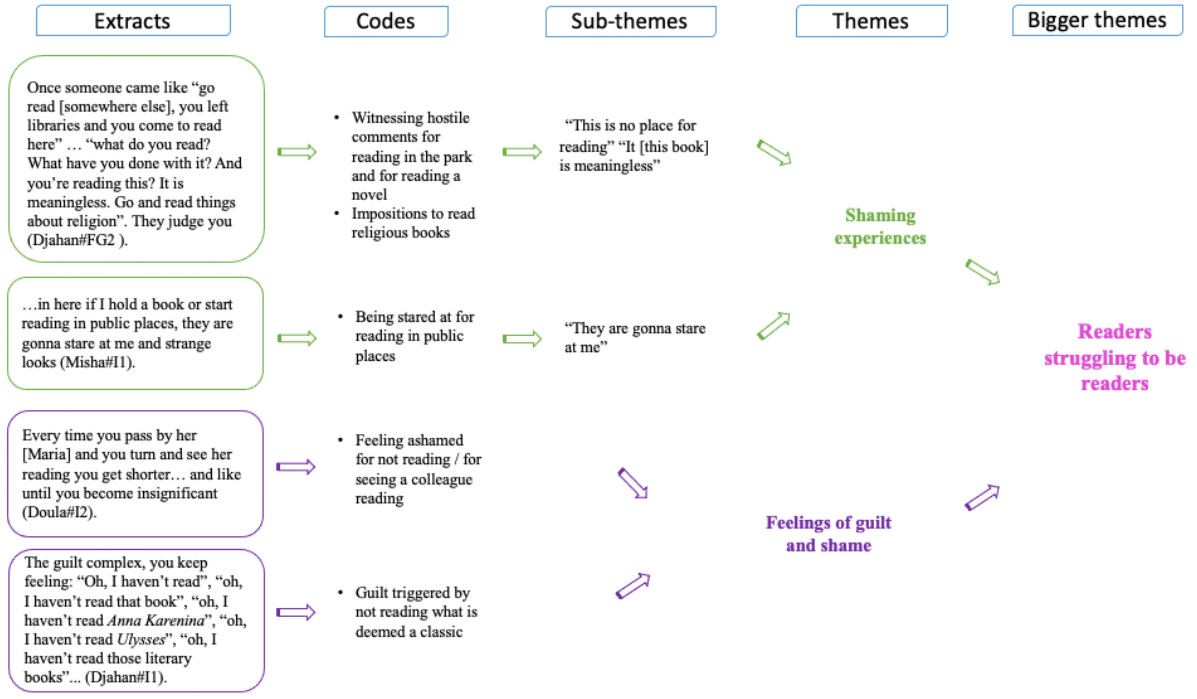


Figure 5.5 From extracts to themes (example 02)

5.7.4 Phase 04: Writing the report

The analysis and interpretation of the data involves writing an account of the research findings. This is not a mere process of writing, but also includes reflecting, making comparisons with other works in the field, and generating a theory about reading practices and their influences. This phase similarly involves introducing changes and reorganising the themes so they make sense and the accounts flow coherently. The end product is the formation of data chapters – chapters 06, 07 and 08 – and a discussion chapter – chapter 09 – where theory, relevant literature and interpretation of the data are brought together and where clear links are made between the research questions and the findings.

After explaining data analysis procedure, the next section highlights the guidelines followed to ensure trustworthiness of the research findings and rigour throughout the research process.

5.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness implies that the research process has been rigorous as much as possible (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Rallis and Rossman (2009) define trustworthiness in relation to two questions: (1) “does the study meet general guidelines in the field for acceptable and competent practice?”; (2) “does it demonstrate sensitivity to ethical issues?” (p. 265). Two of the most commonly-used terms to imply trustworthiness are validity and reliability, despite their contended nature in qualitative research, and their strong association with quantitative research. Creswell and Creswell (2018), for instance, use qualitative validity and reliability instead of trustworthiness. Validity is used to refer to the accuracy of findings from the researcher’s, participant’s or reader’s perspective, while reliability is said to imply consistency across the study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) see them in terms of conducting research in an ethical manner. Although these definitions slightly differ, they revolve around conducting a research that is ethically-sound, accurate, consistent and that follows some general guidelines for good qualitative research.

Although there are no exact criteria of good qualitative research, good- and poor-quality research can be distinguished (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Thus, various scholars offered a number of guidelines to judge the quality and ensure research trustworthiness. For instance, Rallis and Rossman (2009) offer five strategies: "being there" (or "prolonged engagement"); "triangulation"; "participant validation"; "using a critical friend" and "using [one's] community of practice" (p. 269). Creswell and Creswell (2018) provide twelve criteria – only ten are mentioned for their relevance to this research – to ensure that qualitative validity and reliability are present throughout the research project: triangulation; member checking; thick description; reflexivity; reference to contradictory evidence; prolonged fieldwork time; peer debriefing; external auditor; transcript checking; consistency of codes and themes. Braun and Clarke (2013) present a fifteen-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis across five themes: "transcription"; "coding"; "analysis"; "overall"; "written report" (p. 287). All these guidelines overlap, and provide a useful framework to ascertain research quality as much as possible. I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) strategies to ensure my research is rigorously-conducted, for they encompass all other guidelines:

(1) Triangulation: I collected data using different data sources, including focus groups, individual semi-structured interviews, visuals and informal conversations to obtain in-depth insights into readers' experiences. It is argued that studies that only deploy one method are more likely to contain errors due to the limitations of that particular method (Patton, 2015). It can, therefore, be claimed that using a variety of tools increases research quality.

(2) Member checking: As part of checking for accuracy, I sent transcripts and my translations to most of the participants. As for the findings, segments of analysis at an early stage of analysis were discussed with and commented on by two of my participants – the only two who were available to do so.

(3) Thick description: I attempted to provide as many details about the contexts as convenient throughout the data chapters, as well as various possible interpretations whenever necessary. This was also done at times by using some of my own research diary entries, such as the example of advertising for books and promoting reading in England in comparison to Algeria (section 6.2.1.2). Thick description helped me show the various and intricate sides of readers' experiences, by referring to aspects of the social and cultural environments within which they happen (Holliday, 2016), and within which their meanings are constructed.

(4) Reflexivity: I understand that, as a researcher, I carried with me my own *habitus* – history, assumptions, values – throughout the research process. It is important to acknowledge one's subjectivity and be reflexive about it (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Reflexivity is about acknowledging the researcher's role in producing knowledge and shaping the research process and outcomes (Braun and Clarke, 2013), rather than resisting subjectivity and pretending researchers are "robots" (p. 36). Thus, away from being that 'robot' or a "disinterested bystander", I was involved in the research dynamics and, therefore, affected the outcome of this research (Gray, 2018, p. 689). This became apparent right from the outset of this study: the choice of the research topic. I presented in chapter 01 my story with reading to explain my personal impetus for undertaking this research. Furthermore, the way I undertook this research project at the beginning is another indication of the strong influence of my background: I designed a questionnaire to quantify reading. The latter was based on my prior research experience that valued numbers over people's stories, and also the prevailing narrative within which I have been brought up – 'Algerians do not read! – and naively wanted to 'disprove'.

I was an insider at times, and an outsider at others (Braun and Clarke, 2013), which either helped or hindered data collection. Starting with being an outsider, being enrolled at a university from abroad and asking people to sign consent forms reinforced the idea of the outsider. This clearly made participants' recruitment challenging. Moving to being an insider, I felt that my participants perceived me as an insider in that I am an Algerian, multilingual, graduate who self-identifies as a reader. This facilitated rapport-building and trust amongst my participants and enabled in-depth and rich data gathering. My respondents opened up and allowed me into their reading worlds. Furthermore, being able to speak many languages facilitated communication and allowed participants to code-switch and express their thoughts in the language they thought better conveyed their ideas. However, this had a reverse outcome in that because of my familiarity with the context, some participants abstained from giving details assuming I already knew everything. This necessitated loads of prompting and reminding them that any details they provide are highly valued and needed.

Some of these sub-identities, nonetheless, involved certain complexities. Being Algerian and multilingual, it meant that I knew about some of the prevailing narratives regarding languages and their status. This was my reason for leaving language choice to my participants. French, as my data suggests in sections 7.3.1.3 and 7.3.2.3, appears to be

perceived as a capital within some settings, and an attribute of the 'cultured'. This might have influenced some participants to use French during our discussions. It was particularly interesting with one of my respondents who appeared to be struggling with finding words and, sometimes, misusing them. This hindered my understanding of his intended meanings at many instances. Even though I attempted to prompt his responses, I obtained the same somewhat confusing answers. Another instance that I felt was hindering was one of my participants' assertion when speaking about her dislike for French. In the middle of this, she said: "no offence to you". To provide some context, it can be said to be relatively easy to know whether someone speaks French, even when they use Algerian dialect, for it contains French words. There is a tendency of either using them as they are or arabise them. This is not an absolute case, but it mostly yields insights into people's preferences. Thus, perhaps her understanding that I am fine with French prevented her from expressing her views about it more openly. All these instances demonstrate that research is too complex to be viewed objectively.

(5) Reference to contradictory evidence: I tried to discuss contradictions whenever they arose in my data, as this is believed to add to the credibility and validity of researchers' accounts (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Of the few contradictions that became apparent in relation to some of the emerging themes was Jim's self-identification as a non-reader at the outset of the interview, and as a reader afterwards. Another one was readers' definition of a 'reading culture' that goes in line with being able to read outside and seeing many people do so, while most of them had a preference for reading inside their homes. This appeared to reinforce their idea that there is no 'reading culture' in Algeria, not acknowledging that many readers might prefer to read behind closed doors. This insinuates that there might be a reading culture that is different from the one perceived in other countries, like England, for instance, where reading is seen explicitly while using public transport or where new book releases are advertised almost everywhere. Another contradiction is that of readers holding beliefs that they should have the right to read anything, anywhere, at any time and in any language, while judgments of other people's choices were apparent throughout the focus groups and interviews – referred to as 'reading narcissism' (section 7.4.1). Pointing out to these discrepancies helped show how multi-layered readers' experiences could be.

(6) Prolonged fieldwork time: I have spent a period of three months in the fieldwork collecting data. There were limitations vis-à-vis recruiting participants and making arrangements for the focus group and interview participants to meet at times that were convenient to them, much of

which could have been used to collect more data and recruit more people. I, however, tried my best to use this period as wisely as I could. During the times I was not interviewing people, I was going through the audios and trying to work out the stories my participants told me while taking notes of my reflections and questions to ask. Otherwise, I was touring some of the bookshops or the small book fair that was taking place at the time to check books prices and availability.

(7) Peer debriefing: Constant discussions took place with my colleagues – critical friends – to check the accuracy of my research story. This similarly involved sending written work and receiving comments, or sharing quotes to see their interpretations.

(8) External auditor: I presented my work in various conferences and seminars, and discussed my study with academics who are not familiar with my research project. This allowed me to consider questions and angles that were not considered before and provoked more thoughts and analysis.

(9) Transcript checking: Transcripts were checked and were made sure to contain no mistakes, by listening to the audios and reading from the transcripts many times. They were also checked to ensure the transcription was appropriate and the necessary details were included (Braun and Clarke, 2013), such as: punctuations and non-verbal reactions.

(10) Consistency of codes and themes: A long time had been spent working on the emerging codes and themes. Definition of themes and modifications happened several times to guarantee that the final themes are coherent and represent the ideas they claim to do. Data extracts were also verified to ensure the right segments of data are allocated to the right themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

5.9 Limitations

I highlight in this section some methodological decisions or elements that I believe have limited this research.

This research included nine participants, which can be argued to be a small number. Clearly, the advantage of conducting qualitative research is the ability to attend to details and provide fine-grained descriptions of phenomena as they happen within their particular contexts (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This was made possible with a small number of respondents, because it permitted delving into their stories. I, however, would have wished to have access to more people. Participants' recruitment, as was explained earlier, was challenging and has been affected by circumstances that only allowed me to recruit a smaller and less diverse group of people than I anticipated at the beginning of the research. This would have offered a variety of other experiences and more richness in terms of data.

Another limitation is related to the use of visual representations. I have used a variety of methods that successfully provided abundant and interesting data. One of them was image elicitation to trigger discussion. In this regard, it was not possible to reach all participants for follow-up interviews regarding their choice of images. I intended to interview one of them in particular in this regard. At the end of the interview, he briefly elaborated on his chosen picture. It did not occur to me to prompt his comments further at the time because he said he was in a hurry. I could not reach him after that, as medical doctors – himself included – went on strike. This made it hard for him to find any time to be interviewed again. I attempted to get in touch using social media but it did not work either. Furthermore, the images were used as tools rather than as data to be analysed. There is clearly so much to say about the pictures chosen by my participants, and it would perhaps be useful for future research to consider analysing the images using other data analysis tools. This, nonetheless, is not to say that this impoverished data in any way. The data collected using various methods, put together, provided depth and richness.

A final limitation is related to poor recording quality with online interviews. It was sometimes difficult to recognise parts of the discussions. A recorder was used to record the interviews, as well as a phone as a backup. The recording quality with online interviews was not as good as it was with face-to-face ones. What slightly helped was that I transcribed the online interviews shortly after I conducted them, while still fresh in my memory and that of my participants. I referred back to them and asked when I still failed to recognise the words. Most of the time I or they remembered after a number of times playing the segments of interviews. There were times, however, where nobody remembered the words and they were left unsolved.

5.10 Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring readers' reading practices. With their complex nature, and their connection with readers' social environments, this necessitated a methodological approach that would provide rich and in-depth accounts, to get to the core of these complexities. This goes in line with what was discussed in chapter 03 regarding viewing reading as a social practice and, therefore, scrutinising it in relation to the context within which it occurs. In this chapter, therefore, I have highlighted how a qualitative research inspired by phenomenographic principles was adequate to investigate reading within a group of readers, using a variety of tools for data gathering.

The chapter began with my journey towards encountering qualitative research and the role that phenomenography played in shifting my previous positivist mindset. I, thus, drew upon phenomenographic research and briefly highlighted its theoretical underpinnings that framed the methodological approach used in this study – a qualitative research inspired by phenomenography.

The ethical procedures and issues that arose throughout the research process have also been discussed. In this regard, I argued for the need to approach ethics in a more flexible manner and view them as socially-situated instead of assuming that the ethical principles and rules established in one context apply to all other settings. As far as this research is concerned, obtaining informed consent and permissions of access were the two main issues encountered, due to these rigid research ethics. First, soliciting potential participants to provide signatures as signs of their approval of participation was rejected by many and put at risk my participant recruitment. This is because it is commonly known within the setting of my research that the spoken word is more valued, and requesting signatures might be interpreted as a lack of trust. Second, providing a written proof of access to my university in Algeria was a requirement by the ethics' committee at my UK university. As a result, I had to change the setting of my research, which diminished my chances of recruiting a larger number and a more diverse group of participants.

Data collection and analysis procedures were also examined. Using a variety of data collection tools was highly significant in unveiling the complexities inherent in readers' reading experiences. Focus groups, individual interviews and informal conversations provided

rich data and allowed for an exploration of various aspects of readers' reading practices. Focus groups, especially, allowed for interaction and triggered discussions and ideas that were not anticipated. They also allowed for being creative and using whatever was available (e.g., the *Ten Rights of the Reader* poster) to yielding deeper insights. Image elicitation, similarly, added variety and richness to the data obtained. Using visual representations to express their thoughts on reading allowed respondents to articulate complex or taken-for-granted thoughts that they were unable to express using questioning solely. Using image elicitation also served to diminish the researcher-participant power imbalance and allowed readers ownership over their stories. All the data gathered was analysed using thematic analysis due to its potential for uncovering complex phenomena and providing rich accounts, following some guidelines: familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

A framework for insuring trustworthiness and rigour throughout this research process was considered, after which I highlighted some of the limitations of this methodology. With respect to trustworthiness, I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) ten guidelines and discussed each in relation to my study. After examining all methodology-related matters, the following three chapters report the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 06: CONSTRUCTING 'MOSAIC' READING IDENTITIES

6.1 Introduction

As most practices, reading does not happen in a vacuum. Perceiving reading as a social practice entails that it cannot be perceived independently of the social context in which it occurs and its meaning is embedded. With this in mind, throughout the following three data chapters, I attempt to make sense of the interplay that exists between readers' reading practices, their social environments and their identities.

This chapter is presented in two main sections. The first section reports how readers construct reading identities. It includes two sub-sections: activators of reading and reinforcers/reactivators of reading. Activators of reading refer to what first triggered reading. They include, as my findings suggest, external activators, such as the family environment, or internal activators, such as functional reasons that include learning a language or succeeding at school. Reinforcers/reactivators of reading refer to what helped maintain or reconnect with reading after temporarily quitting it. These two roles, my data indicates, are played by peer groups. Significantly, these findings shed light on the importance of the human factor in triggering and maintaining reading and, thus, validating reading identities by making reading an 'ordinary' and a 'welcome' practice within readers' immediate environments.

The second section discusses how reading identities are informed by readers' other sub-identities, including their religious, linguistic and occupation-related identities, and how the intersection of all these identities results in diverse reading identities, or what I refer to as 'mosaic reader identities'. I use this term to depict the diversity inherent in reading identities, which is flavoured by their various other identities, resulting in a whole that, although might share commonalities with other readers, comes with different shapes. This similarly explains readers' choices of reading particular texts and in certain languages rather than others. Pondering upon these sub-levels of identities helps fathom how diverse a reading identity can be. This realisation is significant because it adds weight to the argument that reading should not be viewed as a simple and homogeneous concept that can be defined within rigid boundaries, leading to the inclusion of certain types of readers and the exclusion of others.

6.2 Constructing and maintaining a reader identity

Constructing a view of oneself as a reader, my data suggests, results from what I refer to as 'activators' and 'reinforcers/reactivators' of reading. Activators of reading refer to the first triggers that influenced readers in this study to embark on a reading journey. These activators include external activators, such as the home environment, and internal activators, such as functional reasons. These functional reasons include learning languages or succeeding at school. Reinforcers/activators of reading refer to what helped readers maintain or reconnect with reading. These include peer groups.

6.2.1 Activators of reading

My data suggests that there exist two types of activators of reading: external activators that include readers' home environments, and internal activators that comprise the functional reasons behind which they engage in reading, such as language learning and success at school.

6.2.1.1 External activators: Home environment

The home environment was the gateway to reading at an early age for the majority of my participants. Two thirds of them asserted growing up in families where reading was encouraged, and where books were present during their beginnings as readers. I refer to them as 'natural readers' in that they grew up in an environment that was encouraging of reading and where reading was made to feel a 'natural' and 'normal' practice. During a focus group discussion, Djahan spoke about her passion for reading being the reason for which she would take a book and read it. When I prompted her response, she further explained:

> Djahan: I don't know. I just found myself, since I was a child, I like to read stories. I think, uh, my cousin brought me the first story *Snow White* and to my sister *Cinderella*… I consider that my relationship with reading started like that… My uncle also used to bring us a lot of stories that I used to like reading (Djahan#FG1).

Clara joined the discussion and also recounted reading the stories mentioned by Djahan as a child. She asserted that they had a library at home that contained a hundred books, and added:

> Clara: My father *ymout 'ala laqraya* ['is fond of reading']… They all used to buy us children's stories… The family, my aunts, my parents… We found ourselves at a very young age reading… They planted the love of reading in us since childhood (Clara#FG1).

Djahan and Clara seem to have been stimulated by their family members who provided them with children's stories. Clara used a strong expression in Arabic which literally translates to 'dies for reading' to express her father's feelings towards reading. Lucy and Malik had a similar experience with book provision, but mostly with school books instead of children's books, especially in Malik's case:

> Malik: Reading, uh, for me it was from childhood. So, first it was… like academic books… my father used to bring me academic books… I used to read them all before the year starts (Malik#I1).

> Lucy: … we have books and school books and stories… I got into school I started to read in Arabic and I used to read the, basically, the textbooks… (Lucy#I1).

This is interesting because it suggests that regardless of the content of books – textbooks in this case –, their presence in their homes led to an early contact with reading. This, nonetheless, is not to claim that this is all what they read. That is, some participants also indicated having read religious books provided by their parents as children. The extracts above, however, depict their very initial reading experiences. Malik further explained that when his parents saw his evident interest in reading, they brought him more books.

In addition to books' provision, Djahan and Clara reported being read to as children by their parents and cousins respectively, while Jim mentioned growing up seeing his parents read to his brother:

> Clara: They [parents] used to read for us before we sleep, like short stories… It became something that was part of our lives (Clara#FG1).

Jim mentioned that he was constantly reminded to read by his parents and how this pushed him to do so:

> Jim: …they would not stop saying that reading, uh, a book… it is better than watching television, it is better than many other things. Because they repeated it a lot, I said to myself "let me try it!" (laughter) (Jim#I1).

This is significant because although most of these participants were too young to be able to read, their family members provided them with books. Most of them were merely flipping through the pages and contemplating the pictures contained in their books. In a way, they played with these books as if they were toys until they learned how to read, and moved to reading the words, as put by Jim and Lucy:

> Jim: At first, I used to take books and look at the pictures. Then when I got bored of them, I said "Oh! There are words! Why not read them?" (laughter) (Jim#I1).

> Lucy: My mother she does not know how to read but she always… just put them [books] in front of me, and then I just start flipping the pages even though I don't know how to read… at that time I only could make sense of the pictures not the writings… (Lucy#I1).

Djosour, emulating her eldest sister whom she saw reading, was not able to understand much of the words too. This is what she described as the beginning of her reading journey: "[s]o it is since childhood" (Djosour#FG3). These extracts seem to suggest that those readers grew up in homes that encouraged reading. This encouragement took a number of forms: providing books (Djahan, Djosour, Clara, Jim, Malik); reading stories to children (Clara, Djahan, Jim); showing positive attitudes towards reading (Clara, Jim).

The findings discussed in this sub-section are important because they shed light on the crucial role that the home environment plays in encouraging reading. This is in line with other studies in the field that looked at the role of the home environment in fostering reading within children (e.g., Cherland, 1994; Michaudon, 2001; Baker and Scher, 2002; Compton-Lilly, 2003; Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Allington *et al*., 2010; Clark and Hawkins, 2010; Evans *et al.*, 2010; Kamhieh, 2012; Yeo *et al.*, 2014; Alateeq, 2016; Swift, 2016; Merga and Roni,

2018). For instance, Yeo *et al*. (2014) in Singapore found that the active involvement of parents in their children's reading practices, such as showing positive attitudes towards reading, reading to them and having reading discussion with them, triggers an interest in reading among children at an early age. Thus, family is generally the primary environment within which readers start to interact with their social environments, and where reading can become a 'common' practice. This is when their initial *habitus* starts taking shape, through their families' *habitus* being transmitted to them.

Ideally, this would mean that for the parents to be able to transmit the reading *habitus* to their offspring, they themselves need to possess one. Significantly, not all the parents or family members were readers, or even (functionally) literate. Malik, as mentioned earlier, asserted that although his parents did not read, his father bought him books. He also avowed that his mother supported his passion for reading by keeping him informed about any reading-related events that she saw on television. Lucy's case was particularly interesting because her parents were both illiterate. Her mother, nonetheless, encouraged her to read. That is, although the parents did not grow up reading, they utilised cultural artefacts to change the family's *habitus*, and create a new artefact in the sense that reading became part of their families' practices (Holland *et al.*, 1998). The mere presence of books in the home environment was crucial in creating this change, even with no active parental engagement in children's reading practices. Although Evans *et al*. (2010) argue that providing a "scholarly culture", referring to a home environment where books are "numerous, esteemed, read, and enjoyed", could be more important in fostering their reading than other factors such as the parents' education, occupation and class, in the present research and in the case of Malik and Lucy, the books did not need to be numerous or read by other family members. Rather, their presence was significant regardless of their parents' interest in reading or literacy level. That said, having an early contact with books appears important in making reading an 'ordinary' practice among readers since their childhood, even when the parents cannot or do not read, or when the children are not yet able to do so.

This finding is particularly crucial because it demonstrates the role of cultural artefacts in improvising upon and change of *habitus*, on which Bourdieu (1986) does not focus (see section 4.2.4). Despite the contribution that Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *habitus* offers in explaining individual practices, his work is critiqued for being determinist, in that it focuses on reproduction and limits people's agency (Jenkins, 1992). He, nonetheless, mentions the

possibility of change. In a discussion with Wacquant, addressing these critiques, he argues that *habitus* is "an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences" and, therefore, "constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 133, emphasis in original). My findings, hence, confirm his statement. What seems to be missing in his concept of *habitus* is how this change happens. Holland *et al.* (1998) and Bartlett and Holland (2002) argue that his work does not attend to day-to-day practices, and thereby how agents enact their agencies through everyday interactions and using cultural artefacts to improvise upon their *habitus* and (re)construct identities.

While six out of nine participants asserted being encouraged to read by their families, the three remaining respondents did not: their activators were internal.

6.2.1.2 Internal activators: Functional reasons

A third of my participants reported growing up within families who were rather indifferent vis-à-vis reading. They avowed that they neither encouraged them to read nor showed an interest in reading, with the exception of Amir who asserted being the source of encouragement for his younger sister. I refer to them as 'anomalous readers' in that they were the first, or the only members of their families, to engage in reading. Compared to the six other natural readers, Amir, Doula and Misha's reading was triggered by functional reasons. The latter include reading as means to attain certain objectives, such as learning a language or succeeding at school. For instance, Amir reported that he started reading books as a response to a period of anxiety and depression that he experienced in middle school, as he was forced to study a subject he did not choose. He started reading Ibrahim al-Fiqi's (1999) *Ten Keys to Ultimate Success*, hoping to regain his self-confidence and, eventually, succeed at school. To provide some context, in the Algerian educational system, when pupils reach their final year in middle school, they are required to fill out a wish form. This entails choosing which subject area they wish to study in high school, such as: foreign languages, mathematics, management and economics, natural sciences or philosophy. Amir's failure to obtain his choice led him to Ibrahim al-Fiqi's book.

Misha's and Doula's engagement in reading was closely related to their studies. Doula, for instance, asserted that he only started reading to learn French. He explained his reasons in the following extract:

Doula: …way before [the time of the interview] I used to read in French… Because, mainly… it's obvious. We are Algerians so second language is French. You know, you go out in the street, if you—you know… French is the fancy side of our society (Doula#I2).

Doula only began reading to learn French due to its high status within his school, and to avoid the bullying he witnessed there due to his lack of mastery of the language. Speaking about how his reading started, he asserted:

Doula: …what happened to me traumatised me, so, and pushed me eventually to — I had no choice in the matter unless I learn French… I was a bullied child because I did not learn. I decided to learn it… Every time I remember the reason why I started learning French, this pops out. Yep, and it is a trauma, trust me… I would have liked to learn it in better conditions, like without this competition, without that bullying… I was laughed at "hahaha" [acting the way they laughed at him]… (Doula#I2).

What Doula is insinuating in these extracts can be understood by looking at Algeria's history. The country has a colonial past that is characterised by a conflicting linguistic situation where there was a constant 'tug-of-war' over which languages had more status, including Arabic and French, being the most relevant to this discussion. This is more fully discussed in sections 1.3 and 7.2.1.1.

What is common amongst them, as stated earlier, is that they had not been encouraged to read by their family members, whom they characterised as having no interest in reading. Doula, for example, described his family as "not much of a reading family" (Doula#I3). Amir asserted that none of his family members read apart from his youngest sister, whom he encouraged to read. Misha, similarly, said that nobody in her family read anything apart from the *Quran*. Thus, the family environment can be said to have no apparent contribution to the activation of their reading practices. This similarly suggests that there has been a change in their *habitus*, as they left their homes. The argument made earlier about Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *habitus* also applies here. These readers' agency came through their engagement in reading as a way of dealing with their predicaments – succeeding at school or learning French to avoid bullying. This is important because it shows that although the family environment is

an important factor in triggering reading at an early age, it may not the only one. Reading could be triggered at any other stage of readers' lives for reasons of their own, even when reading is only used as a means to attain other goals.

Interestingly, although these participants described the incidents mentioned earlier as the starting points of their reading experiences, they perceived them as "nothing that could count as a reading", as best put by Doula (Doula#I3). They appear to clearly separate the reading in which they engaged later on, or at the time of the interviews, from that of their beginnings. Misha and Amir stopped reading after these initial experiences and went through a phase that I refer to as a 'hibernation'. This entails a period of time in which these 'anomalous readers' temporarily ceased reading after their goals – succeeding at school – were attained. Unlike Misha and Amir who affirmed that they have stopped reading early on, Doula kept reading for longer to maintain his mastery of French for its symbolic value. In this sense, his goal was not attained yet. This being said, the 'hibernation' stage similarly applies to Doula because although he did not cease to read, he did not consider it to be a form of reading. This further reinforces the complexity of reading and that its meaning varies from one person to another.

The findings reported in this section are significant because they stress the importance of providing an encouraging reading environment and its role in "normalising" reading (Swift, 2016), especially the presence of books within the home and its role in fostering an early engagement in reading and shaping readers' attitudes, irrespective of parent involvement in their reading practices. Furthermore, the section demonstrates the effectiveness of using reading as a means to attain various goals. All these findings are particularly important in relation to the challenges that my participants faced. Significantly, three of them shared concerns about the expensive prices of books (Amir, Djahan, Lucy), the unavailability of books in general (Amir, Djahan, Lucy, Malik, Misha), and children's literature in particular (Djahan). Their concerns can be detected in the following extracts:

> Lucy: …yeah most of my books are online books because it is expensive and you can't find English books in Algeria that much… novels are very expensive and hard to find… (Lucy#I1).

Amir: …in general, we don't buy the [paperback] book… because the books I like are very expensive and they are not available. So, we turn towards hacking them from internet (Amir#I1).

Malik: …you don't find books… this is the challenge… a book that is written in 2017 reaches you in 2019 translated in French or Arabic… the translation omits a lot from the book… you can't keep up with advancement… when a book is a bestseller, the author wins a Nobel Prize. It only reaches us when the book becomes outdated… (Malik#I1).

One might argue that the availability of books depends on the place. That is, I have explained in my literature review (section 2.3.3) that there are only few libraries in Algeria, most of which are situated in big cities, such as Algiers, Constantine and Mostaganem. I have equally reported that the annual international book fair takes place in the capital city of Algiers. This would mean that only those living in Algiers or those who can travel have access to a wider range of books. Malik and Amir, however, asserted visiting the book fair and not finding books of interest. Malik added to the extract used above:

Malik: I went to the international book fair looking for Edward Said's book and couldn't find it. I looked everywhere in the fair and couldn't' find it, while in the East or in the West, Edward Said is sacred (Malik#I1).

What these extracts seem to also suggest is that there is a wide interest in foreign materials. This is shown through Lucy's and Amir's assertions and could also be depicted in the table that contains all the authors and titles mentioned by my participants (Appendix D). Only four of the authors mentioned are Algerian. This certainly raises concerns about local production and the publishing industry in Algeria. Such a finding is reminiscent of Kamhieh's (2012) and Coban's (2018) among Emirati and Turkish readers respectively. Kamhieh (2012) attributes the attraction of her participants towards foreign novels to the "paucity of Arabic titles that are available" and also the interest of her participants in the "lives of people from other cultures"

(p. 163). In the current research, however, the reasons seem to go beyond the paucity of Algerian or Arab materials, and extends to the advertising of these materials.

In mulling over the assertions made by my participants, it becomes evident that advertising for reading is another issue, although the present research has no intention to generalise any of the findings. The absence of advertising within the book industry, nonetheless, is remarkably easy to notice. Extracts from Amir and Misha confirm this:

Amir: Well, here there are no apparent books. Uh, when you go into libraries, you don't find any offer. The books are not clearly shown. The arrangement of books is not good enough… when you go to the library, it is rare that you find someone who would recommend a book… they do not read the books they get… for example, if you release a book, you talk about your book and advertise for it on your own. Advertising for books is very weak in our country. These are challenges that prevent you from reading, they prevent you from hearing about the newly-released books (Amir#I1).

Misha: Uh, even libraries are not—there is no marketing for libraries or anything. There is marketing for food, for clothes but not for, uh, books or libraries… (Misha#I1).

This bears similarity to what I have written in my diary after taking London's underground for the first time years ago:

> I went to London today and took the underground to get to Trafalgar Square. Google revealed that it is one of the must-see attractions in London. What was more attractive to me before arriving, however, was the large number of ads displayed over the station platforms, escalators and everywhere they can be visible. I got closer to some of them, looking for what was being advertised… perhaps a lipstick somewhere on the poster, or a toothpaste or even a chocolate bar. It turned out that they were ads for newly-released books. Even then, I kept looking for a chocolate bar, perhaps, advertised on the book cover (#RJ, E20).

This was very noticeable because it was distinct. Thus, it is no wonder that my participants tended to be more inclined towards reading foreign martials that are widely advertised on internet, social media and that celebrities speak about, as asserted by Jim, rather than local authors and productions. Mathews' (2000) notion of the "cultural supermarket" is particularly relevant to this discussion. He uses the analogy of the "material supermarket" to explain how choices are not exactly free choices, but rather limited to what is available and well-advertised on the market (p. 16). He gives the example of Coca-Cola and products of its sort that are well-placed on the middle shelves to be easily noticed by consumers, in comparison to other products that are placed on the above shelves and, thus, are less noticeable. As far as the present research is concerned, reading in general, and Algerian productions in particular, seem to be put on the top shelves, above readers' heads, or at the very bottom, or perhaps, I would add, nowhere do they exist in the supermarket.

After discussing readers' activators of reading, comprising of external activators that include family members, and internal activators that encompass functional reasons, the next section discusses readers' reinforcers/reactivators of reading.

6.2.2 Reinforcers/reactivators of reading: Peers

My data suggests that peers in this study have played the roles of 'reinforcers' and 'reactivators' of reading. The former refers to helping natural readers, whose reading was initiated at an early age by their family members, maintain their interest in reading. The latter refers to helping anomalous readers, whose reading was triggered by functional reasons, reconnect with reading and identify as readers. I start by examining readers' peers' environments, and then move to discuss the two roles.

6.2.2.1 Peers

'Peers' refers to friends, classmates or members of the same reading club. Peers appear to be the most secondary influential environment, after readers leave their families. The majority of my participants described their friends as readers, and spoke about the role that they have played throughout their reading journeys. This includes both natural and anomalous readers. Furthermore, Djahan, Doula and Malik were members of a reading club. When I asked whether she has any friends who were interested in reading, Misha said:

Misha: Yeah. [Salma] does [read]. Uh, who else? Uh, [Sirine] does. Uh, yeah, all the people that I knew at university also. I was surrounded by the people who read. [Anas] used to read a lot also. [Wael] reads also from time to time (Misha#I1).

Many of them have equally expressed their awareness of the importance of having an encouraging network of friends:

Amir: The environment is what affects you. If you hang out with people who read, you are likely to become a reader (Amir#I1).

Doula: I make sure that I get in touch with people who read in order to evolve and not lose this passion (Doula#I3).

It is not clear whether anomalous readers, for instance, were attracted to their friends because they were readers, or whether they reconnected with reading because their friends read and, therefore, reading was a way of fully participating within the peer group. For Doula, however, it is evident that he made sure his friends were readers to reinforce his reading *habitus* and identity. Misha took reading further as a criterion for choosing her boyfriend and, therefore, maintain her reading lifestyle:

Misha: …that was one of the criteria that I chose him for, because he was holding a book in the first day (laughter) (Misha#I1).

The encouraging environment that prevailed within their peer groups was characterised by book exchanges, recommendations and encounters:

Doula: We get in touch, uh, about books. We do exchange books. We do, like, uh, suggest titles to each other… (Doula#I3).

Lucy: Um, sometimes it's my friends' recommendations like this one [the book she was reading at that time] it was a recommendation from a friend... (Lucy#I1).

These extracts are a clear indication of the role played by peers in encouraging and sustaining reading. This is particularly significant in relation to the 'unfamiliarity' of reading within wider settings, as my data suggests and as the reader shall see in chapter 07. This, as reported by all nine participants, was a challenge that prevented them from practicing reading as they wished. In some cases, and within certain settings – parks, public transport and other places – they felt obliged to conceal their reading identities, because reading did not appear to be perceived as a 'welcome' practice. Thus, the support that readers seem to receive from their peer groups is important in validating their reading identities and allowing them the freedom to practice reading within these groups. They appear, as an extension to the family milieux in some cases, to further make reading a 'common' practice rather than an 'uncommon' one in the fields mentioned earlier.

The importance of being surrounded by peers who read becomes clearer if Djahan's earlier experience is considered. While at the time of the interviews she explained that her friends were readers, this has not always been the case. She recounted her experience of being surrounded by a group of peers within which only her twin sister and herself were readers:

> Djahan: … My sister was the one who would ease the, uh, this feeling of alienation, see? When my sister and I are together we can overcome this — …if it was not for my sister, I would have felt more of the alienation and isolation (Djahan#I1).

This extract depicts her feelings of relief for not being the only reader in the group. Although her sister and herself had different reading interests in terms of what they liked to read, the mere presence of a reader sharing her interest was a relief – "most importantly", she said, "the love of reading is shared" (Djahan#I1, p. 49). In this sense, her social identity and the feeling of belonging were activated even if there was only one other person 'like her' in the group. This seems to suggest that readers need to feel validated through being supported in their reading journeys by other people 'like them'. In addition to easing the feelings of alienation, Doula's encounter with readers helped him overcome some shaming experiences, discussed more fully in section 7.2.1. He avowed that after meeting his friends, his perspective changed and he did not feel embarrassed anymore. This reinforces the importance of encouraging reading within peer groups.

As stated at the outset of the section, peers appear to play an important role in the reading journeys of both natural and anomalous readers. They can, therefore, be 'reinforcers' and 'reactivators' of reading.

6.2.2.2 Peers as reinforcers

My data suggests that for most natural readers, whose reading was initiated by their family members at an early age, and whose engagement in reading continued, peers reinforced their reader identities, and the thought that reading is a 'normal' and 'common' practice in which to engage. For these readers, peer groups served as a means through which they mainly expanded their reading repertoires. This was the case for Djahan, Djosour, Lucy, Malik and Clara. Djahan, for example, attested that her participation in reading events with other readers helped her make new friends who shared her passion to explore other reading choices:

> Djahan: …that [reading] event was successful and it was where I met my current friends… we got together since then… their [book] choices helped me… The experiences of other readers helped me improve my readings… that event has a great favour in my life, my relationships (Djahan#I1).

Her excerpt reveals more than just expanding her reading choices, but also improving them, thinking about reading in terms of a hierarchy. This is discussed more fully in section 4.7.4. Among the readers whose reading was initiated at an early age by their home environment, Jim made the exception. Comparing his case with the other participants in this category, he asserted that there were no exchanges or discussions around reading with his friends. This seems to partially explain the reasons behind which he did not self-identify as a reader, unlike all the other natural readers who did. His case is particularly interesting because it was until halfway through the interview that he asserted realising that he was as a reader. I discuss his case in more detail later on in this chapter.

6.2.2.3 Peers as reactivators

My data suggests that peers served as reactivators of reading for anomalous readers, whose reading was triggered by functional reasons and who ceased reading after attaining these functions. I use the term 'reactivators' to insinuate that their reading has been initially activated,

then ceased, then reactivated by their friends. Although Amir, Doula and Misha mentioned that their reading experiences began when they went to school, as was explained earlier, all three of them appear to have identified as readers after befriending other readers:

> Doula: Well, to be honest I wasn't that much of a reader when I was a child… Uh, it's, as I said before, lately when I joined university that I was introduced to reading (Doula#I3).

He described any reading that happened prior to university as "nothing that could count as a reading" (Doula#I3), because his initial engagement in reading was only due to his desire to learn French for its symbolic value, as mentioned earlier. It is worth mentioning that, controversially and although his readings included, as he stated, novels and articles at that time, he insisted that it did not count as reading claiming that reading was a "concept" that was "foreign" to him and "sort of strange" (Doula#I2). This was the case although while speaking about his later experience with reading, he described himself as a "novel person" and commented:

> Doula: Then came the period where I, um, I was introduced to [Maria] and [Maria] eventually helped widen… my perspective and my point of view about reading. It changed. She changed it like completely (Doula#I3).

The difference in Doula's talk about his early and late reading experiences is evident. While his initial reading experience was associated with the bullying he was subjected to in his school, and having to learn French to avoid it, his later experience appeared to be more enjoyable. Referring back to Maria and the fact that she was the one who introduced him to reading again, he said that he discovered "marvels" and a world that was "full of books, of thoughts, of brains, of enlightenment, of sun, of everything you want" (Doula#I2). He further described himself as "lucky", "thankful" for having met a person "who triggered this again in me" (Doula#I2). This change of perspective similarly shows through the way he spoke about reading in this extract:

> Doula: Because now it[reading] defines me. Before it didn't now it defines me (Doula#I2).

This suggests a change in the perception of reading and building a stronger link with it – seeing it as part of one's identity and sense of self. This shows the strong effect that meeting a reader had on Doula's perception of himself as a reader.

Misha similarly explained that she stopped reading and went back to it at university. This was due to a discussion that she had with one of her classmates. The latter mentioned a few books that she was reading and recommended them to Misha. Misha asserted thinking "I want them. I want to read them", and that "since then [she] could not stop" (Misha#I1). In the same vein, Amir maintained:

> Amir: I wasn't a reader before... It was just the pleasure of shopping for the book… My friends, when one of us buys a book and I buy a book then we exchange them because there was a shortage of money… we were a group and we all loved reading and we used to discuss… even when we were queuing for food, there isn't one of us who wouldn't be holding a book… (Amir#I1).

Amir's excerpt, along with Doula's and Misha's, seem to suggest that their encounters with readers reactivated their reading and made them identify as readers. In this sense, their reading went through a phase of 'revival' after the 'hibernation'. This phase refers to readers experiencing a reactivation of their reading through the interest and support of their peers. This was apparent through the fact that all three of them have spoken about their reading experiences as though they have only started at university, after meeting friends whom they identified as readers. They self-identified as readers only when their reading was supported and encouraged by other people – peers – around them. In their prior reading experiences, however, their reading was not supported or validated by other social groups, and further seemed as though it were forced rather than deliberate, especially in Doula's case, in that it was mainly due to bullying.

The findings discussed in this section shed light on the important role played by peers in reinforcing reading among readers at various stages of their lives. My findings are in line with those reported across a body of literature on the strong influence of peers on readers (e.g., Cherland, 1994; Hopper, 2005; Sterponi, 2007; Clark, Osborne and Dugdale, 2009; Kamhieh, 2012; Mansor *et al*., 2012; Mottram, 2014; Powell, 2014; Jones, 2015; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). Mansor *et al.* (2012), for instance, argue that reading-related practices with peers help readers sustain their reading. My findings are, however, in discord with

Merga's (2014) and Hughes-Hassell and Rodge's (2007) in that their studies report that the influence of peer groups is of a limited significance. My study, furthermore, adds to this body of literature that mostly scrutinised young or teenage readers, with the exception of Kamhieh (2012), leading to a very scant attention paid to adult readers. Thus, my findings show that even among adult readers, it is important to feel validated as readers.

In addition to the social support that readers received from their peer groups, there was a financial gain. Books' exchange among friends served as a financial support for readers. This is particularly important given the challenges faced by my participants in relation to books' prices. The majority of them explained not being able to afford them. Djahan's comment provides a good illustration of this point:

> Djahan: …although the book's value is beyond any price, its material value remains out of rich for many people. Like, for example, you buy a novel for 450, it is expensive (Djahan#I1).

Similarly, Amir's extract used above and those used earlier to speak about the unavailability of books reflect the issue of book prices (section 6.2.1.1). Chaib Draa Tani (2012) reports that the prices in Algeria vary between 200 DA to 350 DA, being the equivalent of around £1 to £2. The prices she provides, however, seem to be the minimum. That is, the observation I made when I was doing my fieldwork in Algeria, and vising a few bookshops, revealed that book prices, compared to the minimum wage accounting for 22,000 DA that is the equivalent of a little over £100, would constitute around 5% to 10% per book. Book exchange, therefore, seems to provide a partial solution for the financial predicaments, as students do not seem to have the luxury of affording many expenses, knowing that none of my participants was working at the time of their university studies. As such, publishing houses, book sellers and all the parties involved in the book industry might want to consider the costs of books if reading is to become part of the Algerian cultural landscape.

Now that all readers self-identified as readers, with some reservations on the part of Jim, the next section examines the intersection of reading identities and other sub-identities.

6.3 Readers' sub-identities intersecting

My data suggests that readers' reading choices were closely driven by their various sub-identities, including those related to their religious practices, the languages they speak, and their vocations. The notion of sub-identities emerged from the data, in that there seemed to be a strong identification amongst my respondents with those practices, and they repeatedly asserted statements such as: 'as a Muslim', 'as an Algerian' and so on. Their reading identities, therefore, appear to be coloured by these other sub-identities resulting in what I refer to as 'mosaic reader identities'. Like a mosaic, they are constructed by putting together various segments to form a whole that, although shares colours with other mosaics, its pebbles are of various shapes and are positioned differently. As such, these sub-identities explain their reading choices. The salience of their religious, linguistic and vocation-related identities is shown in this section.

6.3.1 "It [reading the *Quran*] is supposed to be one of the fundamentals of the day"

Readers' religious identities tended to be salient through their choices of reading religious books or articles, as well as the *Quran*, the Holy book in Islam, as part of their leisure reading. The majority of my participants reported reading or having read them throughout their reading trajectories. The following extract illustrates this:

> Lucy: Uh, I have a phase in my life where I used to like reading just articles and, um, religious articles and basically sections of books online that have, like, the connotation of them being religious books and so on. Um, or they coming from the vision of a Muslim writer like Al-Manfalouti, yeah, um, I think it was when I was eighteen or some—or seventeen that's so much that period of time when you don't know where you are (Lucy#I1).

This extract suggests that Lucy read religious books in this particular period of her life out of a feeling of loss, to which she responded by going somewhere familiar – a Muslim writer. She

further spoke about enjoying reading the story of Prophet Joseph in the *Quran* when she was younger.

Five of my participants referred to reading the *Quran*. Misha and Djosour are two examples of readers who asserted that reading the *Quran* was part of their leisure reading. This can be illustrated in the following extract:

> Misha: I've always believed that it [the *Quran*] should be read every day, as our bodies need food, our soul needs something spiritual which is in our case *Quran*… So, I read it only when I am free or when I am lost cause I know that this was the missing piece… (Misha#I2).

The metaphor of 'eating' denotes several meanings that might well be contradictory. The first could be the indispensable function of food in sustaining one's body and survival, which usually, but not exclusively, results from being hungry. Its necessity further shows through the importance of eating even when one lacks appetite. Furthermore, eating provides satisfaction and pleasure, especially when the food is of their choice and craving, and when its function is fulfilled. This being said, reading the *Quran* is perceived as a necessity for survival, and a response to a trigger resulting from an absence of something. In Misha's case, and Lucy's with books about religion, it was the feeling of loss they have experienced. The second interpretation, slightly less positive than the first, is that of food being so integrated in people's lives that it becomes banal and trivial. It is performed without being thought of as something important and worth pondering upon: more like an obligated ritual. This is especially the case for eating certain foods that are said to be 'good' for one's health, but are not necessarily desirable. Thus, Misha's use of the food metaphor in this case is open to myriad interpretations. Nonetheless, describing it as the "missing piece" when feeling lost, and her use of the term "fundamental" later on in the discussion, makes it appear that the first interpretation is the closest to Misha's assertion.

A feeling of discontent, and perhaps guilt, was projected by Djosour. When speaking about reading the *Quran*, she asserted:

Djosour: This is like putting your finger on the wound. But when I used to do so, yes, I consider it as a leisure reading.

R: Why is it like putting my finger on the wound?

Djosour: I have just seen the *Quran* this morning and I was like: "it's been a long time" [with a sad face] (#RJ, E9).

'Putting a finger on the wound' is an expression that is mostly used in the Algerian dialect to tell someone that they have reminded them of something that already hurts, or is a concern, by pointing out to it. It is similar to saying: "oh, please, do not remind me of this!" Once again, Djosour's use of the expression indicates her discontent for not having read the *Quran* in a long time. Although these participants asserted that they perceived reading the *Quran* as part of their leisure reading practices, an implicit sense of obligation towards doing so seems to exist. In this sense, their Muslim and Arab identities seem to be salient through this sense of apparent leisure but implicit obligation towards reading the *Quran*.

Another example that sheds more light on the importance of religion in the lives of most participants in this study is Jim's. Although he showed his strong dislike towards Arabic, stating that it was a "useless" language, and that he had no interest in learning or using it in reading, he acknowledged the fact that the only book he read in Arabic in his life was the *Quran* (Jim#I1). Section 7.3.1.3 provides more details about the language part. His unjustifiable, as far as the data collected is concerned, aggressive attitude towards Arabic did not appear to prevent him from reading the *Quran*. Furthermore, he excluded the religious function of the language – reading the *Quran* – at three instances during the interview:

Jim: Standard Arabic, yes, which serves at, according to me, nothing, apart from the religious side, I precise, in which only one book [the *Quran*] exists (Jim#I1).

This engagement in reading the *Quran* is not only important to readers themselves but also to their families. This is evident through Malik's case, mentioned previously, in that his parents incited him to read the *Quran* and religion-related texts by enrolling him in a religious school at his pre-school age:

Malik: …when we are children, we are more into something that is religious. The parents think "I will send him to the *masjid*". "In the *masjid*", uh, "he will only find good things". So in my childhood, all my readings were into something religious, so *al a'ima* [Islamic leaders who, in this case, are the instructors], and you read, uh, you read things related to the *deen* [religion]… not only was I reading about these religious things, I was rather only reading about them… (Malik#I1).

Misha also mentioned that none of her parents or family members read anything "except the *Quran*" (Misha#I1). This, once again, shows the strong influence of readers' social environments on their reading practices. The family, in this case, not only played a role in triggering reading but also in shaping what readers choose to read. It also shows the status of religious practices within the majority of my participants' families. According to Article two of the Algerian Constitution last amended in 2016, Islam is regarded as the state religion. It is believed to be a common practice to enrol children to learn Islamic education before they join primary schools (Tiliouine and Achoui, 2018). Furthermore, throughout the history of Algeria, Islam had long been considered a pivotal element of national identity (Achoui, 2006). During the French colonial period in Algeria that lasted for over a century, and as part of fighting against the French colonialism, they built Islamic schools and mosques to promote Islam and Arabic and regain national identity (Djité, 1992). It is also reported that reading the *Quran* has traditionally been attached a symbolic value in traditional societies of most Arab countries, in that the cultured and elites of the era, referred to as the "ulama", or 'scholars' who went to religious schools, were known to read a canon, including the *Quran* and *Quranic* exegesis (El Amrani, 2010). The point to retain is that reading the *Quran* and/or religion-related texts seem to be highly regarded by many participants in this study, and seems to occupy an important place in their lives.

These findings are reminiscent of Kamhieh's (2012). Her study among Emirati university students reveals that reading the *Quran* is a common practice among her participants: a kind of "obligated volition" (Kamhieh, 2012, p. 167). One of her participants averred: "If I don't have time, I will make time" to read the *Quran* (p. 168). Such findings are also echoed in Alateeq's (2016) study. The pupils in his study, for instance, reported that

religious practices were very present in their homes, such as having a radio tuned twenty-four hours on the *Quran*, and all their family members reading the *Quran*. His findings further suggest that the pupils' definitions of reading were exclusively related to reading the *Quran* and religious books. My participants, however, engaged in reading a variety of materials, with religion-related texts being among them (Appendix D). This goes further to show that, although my participants had a wide variety of reading choices, reading the *Quran* was still important to them.

6.3.2 "It is the language that is closest to my heart"

My data suggests that speaking various languages and attaching different meanings to them directed my participants' reading choices. Doula's statement illustrates this multilingual sub-identity:

> Doula: …I asked a friend of mine and [Fernando] *aussi* ['also' in French], *tambien* ['also' in Spanish]. *Me han consejado que tengo que leerlo* ['They have advised me to read it' in Spanish], *que hay una historia muy simpatica* ['that there is a very nice story' in Spanish], *muy simple* ['very simple' in Spanish], *que c'est une histoire* ['that it is a story' in French]… (Doula#I1).

I use this extract here not for what it says, but rather for its rich combination of different languages, including: English, Spanish and French. This extract shows the easiness with which Doula, and the majority of my participants, could switch between different languages within the same sentence. It also shows the complexity of mastering different languages and the conflict that might arise when it comes to the choice of language in regards to reading.

The languages that were mentioned by my participants in relation to reading include: Standard Arabic, French, English and Spanish. To provide some context, Algeria is known for its multilingual landscape, as pinpointed in section 1.3.3.4, because of its colonial history and the various invasions it witnessed, including Arabs and French. Algerian dialect is known to be the mother tongue in the region within which I collected my data. Books in Arabic, however, are mostly written in Standard Arabic, rather than in Algerian dialect. This, nonetheless, has witnessed a change in recent years and few books have been published in Algerian dialect.

Standard Arabic is the language of instruction in primary school, with a module of French as the first foreign language. As pupils move to middle school, they are introduced to English as the second foreign language. Both languages are taught as modules, along with Standard Arabic as the main language of instruction for all other modules, until students finish high school. Moving to university, they go towards different majors on which the language of instruction depends (section 6.3.3).

Some participants identified more with some languages and less with others. For the majority, their Arabic linguistic sub-identity was more prevalent:

> Lucy: …I think because I am, in the – I was – my first, like, version experiences with reading was in Arabic so I can't take that as apart from me… (Lucy#I1).

Her initial identity as a reader-in-Arabic was stronger in this sense, because of her initial reading *habitus*. As a result, this directed her choices towards more readings in Arabic. Similarly, Djahan described Arabic as "the language that is closest to [her] heart" (Djahan#I1). Strong feelings towards the mother tongue were also expressed during a focus group interview:

> Djahan: …I don't know, I feel, I feel even, for example, the metaphors, I feel them. I feel them more. It is more connected to our culture and all. The others [languages] are, like, different (Djahan#FG1).

Although Clara asserted having a preference for reading books in their original languages, and despite her mastery of French, English and Spanish, she similarly expressed her preference for Arabic. She stated that it is "very rich and you feel that it is deeper than other languages", and added that "[w]e read in the language that is closest to our hearts" (Clara#FG1). Misha explained that it was the richness of the language and the ability to better understand the meanings of texts, because she considered it as her mother tongue. For other participants, it is the mastery of the language that led them to Arabic. Amir explained that Arabic was the language he felt he mastered the most and, therefore, found it easier and quicker to read in it.

Unlike these participants for whom Arabic was the preferred language for as long as they could remember, Doula witnessed a shift in his preferences. After initially reading in French, as was discussed earlier in section 6.2.1.2, Arabic became his favourite language for

reading after meeting a reader who became his friend, and who recommended a few titles for him to read. He described his reading in Arabic as having been "hibernated" for a long time. He described his feelings of gratitude for being reunited with Arabic, explicating that the experience felt like he had been "defibrillated" and describing Arabic as "a unique pearl" (Doula#I1).

Jim's relationship with Arabic was more complex. He avowed that his preferred language was French. Although he acknowledged that Algerian dialect was his mother tongue, he explained that "[w]e are united by this language [French]" (Jim#I1), referring to his circle of friends and also the Algerian context more broadly. The reason for this, according to him, is that there are many dialects in Algeria, making it hard for everyone to understand each other, in which case French would make it easier to communicate. During an informal conversation, he pinpointed:

> Jim: I don't care about the 'origins' thing regarding the language. I consider myself Earthian, human, Algerian, Arab, Berber, but mostly human (#RJ, E12).

Significantly, his strong identification with French appears to come from an early age, as is the case for most of those identifying with Arabic in this study and whose reading was initiated at an early age by their family members (Clara, Djahan, Lucy, Malik). Their linguistic identities were initially constructed through their family's linguistic *habitus*. This indicates that, not only was reading activated by family members, as has been discussed earlier, but also the language chosen for reading.

These findings seem to suggest that, for different reasons, some linguistic sub- identities were more salient than others amongst readers. For the majority of them, the Arabic sub-identity was stronger than the others, while for Jim, it was his French sub-identity. Interestingly, however, some of these sub-identities can be exclusive to each other. For instance, being an Algerian and an Arab for Misha and Lucy, and knowing about the history of the country made them resist reading in French. Misha, for instance, asserted never reading in French (Misha#I1). Lucy explained never reading in French, despite being good at it. Doula, after renewing his ties with Arabic also showed resistance towards reading in French due French colonialism and how it affected Algeria's complex linguistic landscape (Doula#I2).

This is discussed more fully in the next chapter (section 7.3.1.3). Thus, it could be argued that for many readers, the choice of language is a reinforcement of their identities. Furthermore, the choice of language is no simple matter.

Some of these findings are echoed in previous research. McCarthey (2001) notes that readers enact their sub-identities through their reading choices. Her findings indicate that readers – and writers – affirm their identities through engaging in literacy practices, connecting their 'reader' selves with their 'Algerian' and 'Arabic-speaking' selves or 'French-speaking' selves in the case of the present research. Kamhieh (2012), similarly, argues that readers' reading choices are shaped by their various "elements of identity", one of which is the "Reader-as-bilingual student" for reading in Arabic and English (p. 69). Perhaps what would ideally happen is that readers who speak and master different languages would read in these languages. My findings, however, suggest that for some readers, the choice might not be that simple, adding another layer of complexity to reading practices among multilingual readers.

6.3.3 "I really enjoy it and it really serves my work"

Evidence from the data further suggests that my participants' occupation-related identities shaped their reading choices. These refer to the sub-identities that are related to their studies or professions. As Amir, for instance, undertook a new work position, it was important for him to be good at his job and, therefore, started reading massively about anything that was related to women and gynaecology. Although he was not a doctor, but was rather working in this section of the hospital, his view of himself as someone who mastered his job was crucial:

> Amir: Uh, because now, my current situation at work, I have to build my capacities at work. I have to understand it well and know well, especially at the beginning, until I master it. I will go back to reading as I used to [about philosophy] (Amir#I1).

Similarly, Jim's and Lucy's readings were mostly related to their disciplines: physics and intercultural studies respectively. Jim asserted reading anything that was related to physics, including biographies of his favourite physicists. They both expressed their fascination with the idea of enjoying what they were reading and the fact that it, at the same, served their occupations. Lucy, for instance, explained:

Lucy: …there is another book by Fatema Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West*. I really enjoy reading this one in particular cause it has a feminist side to it and it serves my work… I keep reading and rereading it because I really enjoy it and it really serves my work in the sense that it gives me themes and things to talk about... (Lucy#I1).

There further seems to be an intersection between readers' occupation-related sub-identities and their linguistic sub-identities. Clara, Djosour, Doula, Lucy and Misha, for example, all engaged in reading novels in English to improve their English because English studies were their majors at university. At the time of the interview, Clara, Djosour and Misha were teachers of English as a foreign language, Doula was still a student of English, and Lucy was pursuing a PhD degree in England. They all asserted that they were reading novels in English, with Misha, for instance, specifying that she was into "contemporary literature" (Misha#I1). That is, at the beginning it was a means to learn English, but it later on became part of their reading practices. When I asked Lucy about the time she started reading in English, she responded:

Lucy: …I think, I am not sure, but I think when I got into university and I chose English as a study. I think it was—at first I was trying to improve my language skills but it turned out to something, something incredible… (Lucy#I1).

Djosour: …I have no preference, but it depends on the objective. Sometimes, like I previously used to only read in English… to perfect my language… (Djosour#FG1).

Doula further read a novel in Spanish entitled *El Niño con el Pijama de Rayas* (‘*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*’) to improve his language, as he was also teaching Spanish at the time of the interview:

Doula: For leisure, I am reading Spanish because, you know, in order for me, in order to improve any new language, I have to read (Doula#I1).

Jim and Malik aspired to reading in English to access the newly-released publications in their fields of physics and medical sciences respectively. In most of these cases, reading in relation to occupation-related identities was a currency that readers used to accumulate capital within their respective studies or vocations, and an enjoyable practice.

In this section, I discussed how readers' various sub-identities, including those related to their religious practices, the languages they speak and their occupations shaped their reading choices, resulting in the construction of 'mosaic reader identities'. Kamhieh's (2012) notion of "*reader-as-XYZ*" is relevant here because it draws the attention to the fact that reading choices are driven by readers' various sub-identities, including for example, "reader-as-student", "reader-as-daughter", "reader-as-Muslim", "reader-as-Arab", "reader-as-Emirati" and so on (p. 96, emphasis in original). She, however, does not capitalise on the diversity inherent in reading identities, and its importance. The significance of scrutinising these sub-levels of identities lies in the fact that they allow to tap into the nuances and diversity inherent in reader identities. This, in turn, is important because it allows to see beyond the 'reader' label and, therefore, realise that reading means various things to different people, and that no restricted definition should be attributed to it.

A good illustration of this is the fact that many of my participants considered reading the *Quran* as an important part of their reading practices. This might not be the case for other readers who restrict reading to novels, for instance. Significantly, limiting reading to certain texts and languages leads to certain forms of reading being imposed on readers. This results in the exclusion of some reading experiences and the legitimisation of those that fall within rigid reading definitions. It also creates, as the reader shall see in the next chapter (section 7.2), struggles and conflicts amongst readers. Gee's (2017) "sub-type principle" is relevant to this discussion (p. 83). His argument revolves around the need to delve into sub-types – and sub-sub types – of identities to see diversity and abstain from making totalising statements: "[r]eal diversity exists one or more levels down below any general label" (p. 83). In this sense, instead of situating all readers under the 'reader' label, delving into the minutiae of their sub-identities shows how diverse they can be. The implication of this is that acknowledging this diversity is likely to be the start of legitimising all reading practices and 'reader' identities instead of imposing 'one way' of reading.

The importance of being validated as a reader becomes clear if Jim's case is considered. Among all the participants in this study, he was the only one who did not initially identify as a

reader. As soon as the interview started, Jim referred to himself as the "wrong person to be interviewed" (Jim#I1). He, unlike the other eight participants, described reading as "tiring" and that he would rather watch videos than read (Jim#I1). Near the end of the interview, and surprisingly, Jim acknowledged realising that he was a reader. He explained that he thought of himself as "someone who rarely reads" because, although he might be reading more than the average, he thought he should read more often. He also asserted that in his belief, readers are those who read "books" and are "well-informed about any newly-released books" (Jim#I1). As such, he excluded himself from the 'reader' category. This appears to suggest that it is the rigid definition of reading as 'reading a book' and 'reading a lot' that resulted in him not identifying as a reader. Intriguingly, Jim in a later informal discussion confessed: "You gave me the desire to read again" (#RJ, E5). It is not clear whether it is speaking about reading and making this realisation that led him to a desire to read, and while this evidence might seem rather remote, I found his reluctance to self-identify as a reader and then his excitement and identification as a reader significant and worthy of attention.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reported how readers construct reading identities, and how these identities become 'mosaic reader identities'. It has highlighted the importance of their social environments, especially their families and peers, in shaping those identities. The findings of this research indicate that reading can be triggered by external activators that refer to their family members, or internal activators that refer to functional reasons such as learning languages and succeeding in school.

Both activators have contributed to initially triggering reading. It has, however, been highlighted that the family's influence was stronger in that those whose reading was triggered by functional reasons, or anomalous readers, ceased reading after attaining their goals. Significantly, the home environment played a crucial role in initiating reading amongst natural readers by providing a reading-friendly environment. What is more interesting about the findings related to home environment, however, is that although some of the parents were described as illiterate or uninterested in reading, their provision of books was crucial in fostering reading among their offspring. That is, they improvised upon the family's *habitus* by using artefacts, such as books (Holland *et al.*,1998). Therefore, the importance of these findings

lies in the fact that change is possible and that encouraging reading among children, even if it is only by providing books, is crucial in their construction of reading identities.

Peers, similarly, played a crucial role in reinforcing reading among natural readers, and reactivating it among anomalous readers. Anomalous readers experienced a period of 'hibernation' in that they quit reading after reaching the purposes behind which they initially started reading. Their encounters with people whom they identified as readers, however, led them to reading again. Thus, engaging in reading practices within peer groups, such as exchanging and discussing reading materials, was crucial in maintaining readers' interest in reading, and validating their reading identities. Djahan, for instance, described her feelings of 'alienation' for being the only reader in the group, along with her sister. It similarly provided financial benefits through exchanging books. These findings are important because they show that being among readers helps 'normalise' reading and make it more of a 'common' practice in which to engage.

In view of these findings, I have also pinpointed the importance of providing a wide range of reading materials with affordable prices, which seemed to be missing within my participants' social environments. Most of the participants shared their concerns about the high prices and the unavailability of books of interest. I have also pinpointed the lack of advertising that appeared to be prevalent, and that raises concerns vis-à-vis local productions and publishing industry. Thus, the parties involved in this might want to consider investing in the promotion of local production, and the publication of materials that are well-suited for their audience's preferences.

This chapter has also argued that readers' reading identities are shaped by their other sub-identities, including those related to their religious practices, the languages they speak and their occupations, resulting in 'mosaic reader identities'. In this sense, their reading identities are coloured by their other numerous sub-identities leading to a diversity that can only be depicted if those sub-levels are scrutinised. Significantly, capitalising on the sub-levels that lie beneath the 'reader' label is crucial in stressing the diversity inherent in 'reader' identities and, therefore, keeping the scope of what reading means wide to avoid any impositions that would lead to legitimising certain 'reader' identities and delegitimising others. This reinforces the idea that reading means different things to various people and that readers' interests are distinct because they are the products of a complex web of sub-identities, as was discussed earlier. Being attentive to this is crucial because it helps disrupt binary divides regarding what 'reading'

means and who a ‘reader’ is in comparison to a ‘non-reader’. Otherwise, those who fall short of meeting the criteria of being ‘readers’ are excluded and, therefore, their experiences are unvalidated.

While this chapter has discussed one aspect of the relationship between reading practices, identities, and social environments, focusing on readers’ construction of reading identities, the next chapter focuses on the struggles that readers encounter when they navigate their ways in other fields that do not necessarily view reading as a ‘common’ practice.

CHAPTER 07: READERS CAUGHT *EN FLAGRANT DELIT*

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the challenges that readers encounter within various fields. The latter include settings such as: the workplace; the university; parks; public transport; social media. For the most part, my participants perceived reading as challenging in these settings. The majority asserted, explicitly or implicitly, feeling that reading within these fields is almost similar to committing something 'unusual', 'strange' and almost 'forbidden' – thus, the title of the chapter, caught *en flagrant délit* ('in the act'). This expression denotes an attempt to hide ones' act and being caught in it – a feeling expressed by the majority.

The first main section of this chapter presents the challenges that readers go through as they navigate their ways within these 'fields of struggle'. The challenges take two forms: shaming experiences that tend to be more external, and feelings of guilt and shame that tend to be more internal. Both, as the section reveals, stem from certain impositions or rules that prevail within the fields mentioned earlier, and that lead to legitimisations of certain ways of being or not being a reader. Readers' responses to these struggles, in the forms of rebellion and/or compliance, are reported in the second section of the chapter.

The final section reveals two contradictory findings: readers contribute to reproducing the same rules and, at the same time, producing a new artefact. Paradoxically, while the majority of respondents claim to oppose the symbolic violence that was inflicted on them and the shaming experiences that they witnessed, they appear to reproduce the same rules through judging other readers for what they read, where they read and the languages in which they read. This is an important finding because readers seem to unconsciously and equally legitimise certain ways of reading and, thus, feed into the same hostility that they have experienced within certain fields. By so doing, they are, themselves, invalidating other people's reading experiences for not meeting their standards and what they think a 'reader' or 'reading' should be like. Contradicting the reproduction of the same rules or struggles, readers contribute to creating a new artefact – reading. The many attempts of some readers to promote reading within the fields mentioned earlier appear to be giving rise to more acceptance of reading.

7.2 Readers struggling to be readers

There seems to be a sense of struggle among the majority of my participants to be the readers they aspire to be. This is evident through most of my participants' agreement, implicitly or explicitly, that reading ought to be perceived as a right that should not be questioned by other individuals surrounding them. In this sense, the majority proclaimed the right to read anything, anywhere, anytime, anyhow, and in any language: it seemed obvious to them that engaging in reading should be a personal choice and that readers experience reading differently, have different reading choices and, thus, no form of reading – or non-reading – should be imposed on them. This is further illustrated through some readers' choices among *The Rights of the Reader*. My focus group interviews took place in a library, where a poster was hanging on the room's wall, as was explained in section 5.7.2. The poster is entitled *Les Droits du Lecteur* (*'The Rights of the Reader'*) by the French author Daniel Pennac and illustrated by the English illustrator Quentin Blake (see Appendix A; section 3.2). It, as the name indicates, revolves around the rights of readers. The poster led to an informal conversation between Djosour and myself, during which I suggested that she choose the three, or more, rights that resonated with her. The two other participants arrived and joined the discussion. Their choices fell on the right to: "read anything" (Clara, Djahan); "read it again" (Clara); "not finish a book" (Clara, Djahan); "be quiet" (Djahan); "read anywhere" (Clara, Djosour). My interview data equally mirrors readers' desires to enjoy their reading experiences without any impositions and restrictions from their surrounding environments. Readers' struggles appear to come in two forms: shaming experiences and feelings of guilt and shame.

7.2.1 Shaming experiences

Eight out of nine respondents recounted situations where they were shamed and treated with hostility for being readers or certain types of reader – reading certain types of texts, in particular places, in specific languages and so on. These shaming experiences were as explicit as witnessing hostile comments and behaviours, or as implicit as being stared at. This is discussed in the following two sub-sections.

7.2.1.1 “This is no place for reading” “It [this book] is meaningless”

My data reveals that most of the readers in this study have experienced incidents where other people have been explicitly hostile to them and criticised them for being readers or for being certain types of readers. This can be shown through an entry that I have written in my diary, about my informal conversation with Djosour regarding Daniel Pennac’s poster:

> When Djosour stepped into the room today, I was looking at Pennac’s poster. I was so absorbed by *The Rights of the Reader* that I did not notice her presence. She joined the contemplation of the poster. I asked her to choose the rights to which she could relate the most. Her first choice was number seven “*le droit de lire n’importe où*” (‘the right to read anywhere’). When I asked about the reason for her choice, she recounted the story of an incident that she experienced when she once held a book on a bus. Two men, as she stated, were hostile to her. Staring at her, they were whispering and uttering statements like “go to your house and read” and “this is no place for reading”. Since then, Djosour confessed, her reading on the bus ceased (#RJ, E1).

This is cognate with the statement made by Malik during an interview:

> Malik: …sometimes I witness comments as well, not about me, but someone sitting by my side is reading and they are like “look, look, he is reading”, “look, look at what he is reading”, “look, look at what Arabs read!” They criticise either the title, or the person, or, or, or, or… (Malik#I1).

These shaming experiences appear to stem from readers revealing their reader identities in fields where reading does not seem to be perceived as a welcome practice. “Aggression” is how Malik described these incidents when they happened on public transport and in public spaces (Malik#I1). A focus group discussion revealed the same. Djahan described her experience during a reading event that took place in a park:

> Djahan: Once someone came like “go read [somewhere else], you left libraries and you come to read here” … “what do you read? What have you done with it? And you’re reading this? It is meaningless. Go and read things about religion”. They judge you (Djahan#FG2).

More than being judged for being a reader, Djahan was judged for being a certain type of reader – reading a novel and not a religious book.

This feeling of being judged was also expressed by Lucy. In her case, these judgments extended beyond the offline settings to include online settings. Lucy mentioned taking pictures of her favourite passages from books and sharing them on her Facebook wall, but explained that she stopped doing so due to the judgments to which she felt she was subjected:

> Lucy: I don't want to share it online it's because I don't want people to see it so they will start telling me "why you did post this?" "Why you didn't post this" "Ha! you're reading that writer! Oh!" They start judging your taste and which is something I don't appreciate from all people that start judging my taste (Lucy#I1).

As shown in these extracts, readers appear to be explicitly judged and shamed either for being readers or for the content of what they read. Impositions, such as asking them to read certain texts and not others, as was the case for Djahan, as well as requesting them to read in their homes or in libraries, characterised their experiences in these fields. So far, this has been the case in public transport and parks. One might argue that the hostility only happened in these fields, and among people who might not have been to school, who might not have finished their schooling, or whom Malik characterised as "common people", because they might not believe that reading is important (Malik#I1).

These experiences seem to extend to other fields such as the workplace. Malik and Djosour asserted feeling uncomfortable about reading in their workplaces. Being a medical doctor, Malik maintained that his colleagues, also medical doctors, made comments about him reading. These consisted of saying that reading was a waste of his time amid the exams' period. Malik referred to reactions of the sort as an "allergy" when they happened among people holding higher education degrees (Malik#I1). He speaks about his colleagues' reaction in the following excerpt. I kept the original statement, as it is stronger in meaning than the translation:

> Malik: They tell you: "*amshi, amshi, wash ga'ad tatmaskhar*" ['go, go, are you kidding?'] (Malik#I1).

Djosour, previously working at a travel agency, explained:

Djosour: I think our society hinders reading. They treat you as if you are coming I don't know from where. I used to work at the travel agency in winter, where we do not have much work. We would just be sitting there. My colleagues, during that time, would go on Facebook. But if I take a book, they tell me "we are working. It is not time to read during work" (Djosour#FG3).

All the participants who went through such experiences asserted being disturbed by the hostile behaviours to which they were subjected for being readers, or certain types of readers, and for displaying these identities. Although some of the respondents laughed at these experiences during interviews or, like Doula, began with: "I am gonna tell you a funny story", it was clear that these experiences were painful and not only limited the joy of reading in these fields of struggle, but also led many of them to abstain from doing so (Doula#I2).

While these experiences include explicit discontent on behalf of the people surrounding readers in these fields, some of the shaming experiences are less explicit such as being stared at. Most readers in this study were as disturbed by the explicit comments as they were by the staring they experienced while reading outside their homes.

7.2.1.2 "They are gonna stare at me"

Staring is another recurrent theme across the data, and one that appears to prevail in almost all the fields previously mentioned. Six respondents out of nine mentioned situations that involved people staring at them for reading in public places. This is evident in the following extracts:

Misha: …in here if I hold a book or start reading in public places, they are gonna stare at me and strange looks (Misha#I1).

Doula: …the staring if you are reading…that would intrigue some strange staring (Doula#I3).

Focus group data goes in line with this. Djahan narrated a story of an incident when she was reading on the bus and, by doing so, triggered staring on the part of the other passengers. Furthermore, a person who was, according to her, mentally unstable sat next to her and seemed very puzzled by the fact that she was reading a book, and also reading it in French. She

explained that he kept asking her questions on whether she has really read the book, with evident surprise. Clara joined the discussion and commented on this occurrence:

> Clara: …wisdom comes out of the mouth of the insane. That person said what everybody on that bus wanted to tell you but did not… Tell yourself that everybody else that minute was thinking about the same thing. Algeria is like that (Clara#FG2).

"Xenophobia" is the name that Malik attributed to the staring that prevails within these fields. All the respondents who reported being started at while reading seem to perceive it, whether explicitly said or implicitly hinted at, as something "disturbing" (Malik#I1), "bothersome" (Doula#I2), as well as an indicator of a "non-reading culture" (Misha#I1). They conceived of it from a negative angle: "maybe they think that I am foolish" (Misha#I1); "the Algerian is not reconciled with the book…not reconciled with his elites" (Malik#I1); "…as if you are committing something unusual" (Doula#I3), to cite a few examples. In this sense, they all seem to have more of an unfavourable conception vis-a-vis the staring. This becomes understandable considering the past experiences they reported having of staring accompanied by some unfriendly comments. This, however, might not be all there is to the staring.

The staring, minus the hostility and the unfriendly comments discussed earlier, can be interpreted differently. My participants' perceptions of it are called into question if we consider Doula's story with his colleague Maria. While he described the staring as bothersome, he was on the other side of the fence with Maria (Doula#I2). That is, the extract cited below in section 7.2.2 best illustrates the fact that there was a great deal of staring at a reader on his part, as well as that of his colleagues. Although he did not explicitly refer to looking at Maria while she was reading as staring, the level of description he provided while speaking about her is difficult to attain without doing so. In this sense, his staring at Maria was more of an 'aspirational' staring, in that it came from aspiring to be akin to the person stared at – a reader in this case, and further referred to her reading as a "majestic image" (Doula#I2). He also avowed:

> Doula: [Maria], she altered my vision about reading because [Maria] represents something I did not think it was existing in our community… (Doula#I1).

Doula's quote similarly indicates the unfamiliarity of seeing a reader. This unfamiliarity or the apparent novelty of reading might explain the staring within the various fields mentioned

earlier. This seems to be what primarily triggered Doula's staring, as he described his surprise at seeing Maria read and not previously thinking that this "phenomenon", as he referred to it, existed (Doula#I1). Whether or not this is an exaggeration on Doula's part, the point is that novelty triggered staring that was not 'xenophobic' but rather 'aspirational' and based on the desire to be like Maria. This unfamiliarity of reading is cognate with what other participants observed. A common feature across the fields of struggle, according to them, is the perception of reading as a 'strange', 'unfamiliar', 'unusual' and 'novel' practice. This can be further depicted through the following excerpts:

> Misha: …it's occasionally that you see somebody reading, alright? Even if you are sitting in the park or in the bus or in the metro station (Misha#I1).

> Djahan: They [people on the bus] are not acquainted with seeing someone read… (Djahan#FG2).

The prevalence of this unfamiliarity within these fields makes it sound as though whoever reads outside, for example, is going against the 'norm' or committing a social transgression. This is evident in Doula's quote when he says:

> Doula: …it [reading outside] is as if you are committing something unusual. I will not dare to say something, like, forbidden but something unusual… (Doula#I3).

His use of the word 'forbidden', in this sense, appears to indicate something between prohibited and unusual. The hostility discussed earlier is cognate with this, in the sense that people were explicitly commanding readers to study in a particular place and read a particular book, making it feel as though what they were doing was wrong. A cursory glance at the literature on staring reveals that it is mostly studied in relation to people with disabilities or mental health issues – people perceived as different from the norm (e.g., Langer *et al.*, 1976).

Interestingly, however, my data seems to further suggest that the unfamiliarity of reading goes beyond public transport and parks to include academic institutions, such as universities. In a focus group discussion, Djahan recalled that one of her teachers at university, while speaking to his students about the importance of reading for translators during a translation class, challenged their readership:

Djahan: …he told us: “I challenge you if anyone of you… has got a book in their bags” (Djahan#FG2).

As Djahan had a book in her bag, she challenged him. His reply, according to her, was: “you make the exception” (Djahan#FG2). This is consistent with assertions by Doula and Malik of finding it challenging to read in places packed with university students, such as students’ buses or spaces within the university. These feelings of discomfort seem to come from the lack of manifest reading in these fields, and is reflected in what Clara, a teacher, said regarding the absence of reading among university students:

Doula: I felt the staring the whole staring even though they were all students. Can you get the point? All students but I felt the staring in the boys’ line and in the girls’ line (Doula#I2).

Clara: The majority of my students do not read. The last thing they have read is the thing on Facebook, or an article they take ten minutes to finish, or books they have been requested to read by their teacher… (Clara#FG1).

Although Clara’s statement seems to suggest that, for her, reading articles or Facebook posts is not a form of reading, this raises questions regarding the place of reading within academic institutions, from primary school to university. It is unfathomable to learn that reading is perceived as, using Djahan’s words, an “anomalous phenomenon” (Djahan#FG2), while it is one of the fundamental pillars upon which educational attainment relies (Sullivan, 2001; National Endowment of the Arts, 2007).

It is beyond the scope of this research to investigate the place of reading in the Algerian educational system. It is, nonetheless, important to pinpoint the apparent lack of emphasis on out-of-school reading. This is evident through what has been discussed in section 2.3.2 regarding the scarcity of research on reading in Algeria generally, and within the educational system more specifically. Djahan and Clara, in a focus group discussion, agreed upon the lack of attention to reading in primary schools. Djahan asserted that the reading session in her primary school years felt more like a “punishment” because “the teacher himself”, according to her, “lacked the passion for reading”. She argued: “whoever lacks something cannot give it”, and added: “if the teacher does not read, how can he convince you to read? They themselves

do not read" (Djahan#FG2). Before finishing my interview with Djahan, I inquired whether there was anything else that she wanted to add. She said, with excitement, that she wanted to talk about the reading club that she founded for middle school pupils.

The gist of her story was that, unfortunately, not enough support was provided by the school. The lack of means was one of the challenges that Djahan faced and her request, that the school print books for the children, was not supported. Furthermore, although her reading club participated in the Arab Reading Challenge that I discussed in section 2.2, and although it successfully passed the first round, it has not been called upon to continue in the competition, due to the lack of support from the school:

> Djahan: … the director of the school was not really interested. It was only the prestige of her having a reading club (Djahan#I1).

The lack of support from educational institutions is apparent in the stories told by Djahan and Clara. It is noteworthy that the stories my participants recounted, about their reading experiences in primary school, date back to the 90s and, therefore, cannot be deemed to mirror the current status of reading within the Algerian educational system. Djahan's book club story, however, is fairly recent. The lack of school libraries, reported by Bouanaka (2015), speaks volumes about the status of reading in schools. She claims that 93% of Algerian schools do not possess a library, and that very few are spread across some big cities. Furthermore, as noted in section 2.3.2, it was not until June 2018 that an official document was issued and published in January 2019 on the Algerian Ministry of Education's website, urging schools to integrate reading activities in their curriculum and to create reading clubs. As good as this initiative sounds, it is clear that much more needs to be done regarding the promotion of reading. This said, it is no wonder that people still see reading as a strange phenomenon. If, at the early stages of their lives, no reading *habitus* is transmitted to people by their parents or teachers in schools, where it should be made 'common' as a practice, it would not be surprising for them to perceive it as 'uncommon'.

While these experiences were external, my data suggests that another more internal form of struggle exists – feelings of guilt and shame.

7.2.2 Feelings of guilt and shame

In addition to the external struggles, my data suggests that readers undergo internal struggles. The latter include feelings of guilt and shame for not reading, or for not reading certain texts. Doula described his feelings of shame for not reading:

> Doula: Every time you pass by her [Maria] and you turn and see her reading you get shorter… and like until you become insignificant (Doula#I2).

> Doula: You know, you are chatting… you are wasting your time while she [Maria] is doing something fruitful, something profitable… the first image you get… like her on a desk on her chair like bending on the book, absorbed [not] knowing what's going on around her… all of us, and we said "*hadak l3ayb*!" ['shame on us!'], you know, "shame on us!" (Doula#I2).

Doula's use of terms such as "get shorter" that he repeated four times, "insignificant" and "shame" seem to suggest that there is a pressure leading him, and his colleagues, to think that they should be reading too instead of "wasting" their time (Doula#I2). Doula did not describe the predominant culture of the school to be in favour of reading. Expressing feelings of shame as though he was doing something wrong for not reading, however, gives the impression that there was an implicit pressure causing him to feel this way. This also shows through another assertion that he later made during the interview, when asked about his reasons for reading:

> Doula: …if I don't read I hate myself and I remember the scene — remember the scene of the school? Being useless… "you are gonna become useless. Read, read, read, go read, go read, waste your — if you wanna waste your time, waste it on reading. At least it's a good waste" (Doula#I2).

The strength of the term "hate" indicates the amount of pressure he experienced to read, an activity that is usually defined in relation to enjoyment and pleasure, as discussed in section 3.2, rather than its association with negative feelings, as in this case here. A possible interpretation of the feelings of embarrassment and shame could be the status attributed to reading in certain fields. According to Keltner and Buswell (1997), from the field of

psychology, "[e]mbarrassment occurs when individuals fail to behave in accordance with socially defined scripts and roles" (p. 261). Applying their statement to Doula's case would imply that not following the rules within a certain field would cause embarrassment.

In line with this, Djahan at the time of the interview was reading Pierre Bayard's (2007) book entitled *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read.* She explained:

> Djahan: The title is attractive. I mean, in a time when all people are saying we should read and so on, he says: "how to talk about books you haven't read", and he says that, uh, "it is not necessary for you to read everything" (Djahan#I1).

Of course, reading every book that has ever been written is an unrealistic goal for any reader to achieve. Although Djahan seems to have understood this, the fact of her being attracted to this book appears to suggest that she found relief in Bayard's words amid the pressure that some readers feel regarding reading. She further asserted:

> Djahan: Because the idea that you read, that you live to read, read, read, read is impossible to reach. I mean, the books that you haven't read will always outnumber the books that you have read. So, this shouldn't make you feel *'oqdat ad-danb* ['the guilt complex']…The guilt complex, you keep feeling: "Oh, I haven't read", "oh, I haven't read that book", "oh, I haven't read *Anna Karenina*", "oh, I haven't read *Ulysses*", "oh, I haven't read those literary books"... (Djahan#I1).

Through his book, Bayard (2007), attempts to offer a guilt-free and shame-free attitude to his readers for not having read the books that they might think they should have read (Mathis, 2008; Motte, 2008; Vogrincic, 2010). Bayard (2007) aims to provide a solution and "undertake a medication on this forbidden subject"– that of non-readers' experiences (p. xvi), and to diminish the pressure of, as put by Vogrincic (2010), "too many books – too little time" (p. 65). The feelings of shame and guilt for not reading all the books that can possibly exist, especially those perceived as canonical, is what Bayard appears to want to help readers avoid, while at the same time allowing them the possibility of speaking about these books, and therefore, appearing well-read and cultured when they are invited to discuss them (Bayard, 2007). Bayard (2007) further argues that the obligation to read reminds us that:

> We still live in a society... where reading remains the object of a kind of worship. This worship applies particularly to a number of canonical texts – the list varies according to the circles you move in – which it is practically forbidden not to have read if you want to be taken seriously (p. xvi).

This pressure – whether explicit or implicit – seems to result in shaming experiences similar to those discussed earlier, that impose and legitimise certain ways of reading – or not reading – and particular texts.

To sum up, this section reported the types of struggles – external and internal – that the majority of readers in this study encountered within various fields such as the workplace, public transport, parks, educational institutions and social media. The external struggles denote shaming experiences, including hostile comments and behaviours, as well as staring. The internal struggles entail feelings of shame and guilt amongst readers. Significantly, what is common between these two types of struggles is that they stem from the impositions that seem to prevail within the fields surrounding them. These findings are important because they shed light on the effects of these impositions on restricting people's freedom to read anything, anywhere or, even, choose not to read. These impositions are either vis-à-vis being a reader in settings where reading is not valued, being a non-reader where reading is valued, or being a reader of certain texts where some are more valued than others. This, consequently, serves to validate certain reading experiences that meet the standards within a specific field, such as reading religious books, abstaining from reading outside, reading at home or in a library, reading the texts deemed canonical, and so on. It further delegitimises the experiences of any other readers who transgress these 'norms', and contributes to narrowing the scope of what 'reading' and being a 'reader' mean. The imposition of a certain cultural capital or currency – reading or the lack thereof – within particular fields and the adherence of agents to these impositions is what Bourdieu refers to as "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As a result, more symbolic violence is reproduced within these fields.

These rules and cultural messages regarding the perceptions of reading within these fields influenced reading practices and the forging of reading identities – rebellious and compliant readers.

7.3 Responses to struggles: Rebellious readers and compliant readers

My data suggests that respondents dealt with the – implicit or explicit – prevailing cultural messages or rules within the fields of struggle through rebellion or compliance. That is, through their interactions within different fields and the use of artefacts – the act of reading, books, phones, speaking about reading, languages and so on – they constructed rebellious reader identities and compliant reader identities. This is illustrated in these extracts:

> Malik: …you develop a mute button of *c'est bon!* ['it's over!'] (Malik#I1).

> Djosour: I haven't read on the bus ever again after that (#RJ, E1).

My data also suggests that rebellion or compliance show through what readers read, where they read and the language they choose for reading. Interestingly, some of these readers appear to swing between rebellious and compliant identities depending on the dominant cultural capital within each of these fields, and on readers' interest in accumulating it. This is discussed below.

7.3.1 Rebellious readers

Rebellious readers in this study refer to readers who resist or subvert the predominant culture or social norms within some of the fields surrounding them. My data suggests that these readers' rebellious identities show through one or all three means: the act of reading, the content of what is read and the language chosen for reading.

7.3.1.1 The act of reading

The act of holding a paperback book in some public places is reported to be an unfamiliar, and sometimes a disliked practice within many fields, as seen in sections 7.2.1.1 and 7.2.1.2. If we consider that the prevailing culture within these settings dictates that the 'right' place for reading is either university libraries or homes, it could be argued that reading outside is a social transgression. This, however, did not seem to prevent some readers in this study to read within some of these fields. Thus, they rebelled against the prevailing social rules by engaging in

reading in public spaces and public transport. Some readers in this study showed an 'I don't care' attitude towards the staring. Respondents referred to it differently: a "mute" button in Malik's case (Malik#I2), or a "tick!" in Clara's case (Clara#FG2). This indicates their neglect of the discouraging atmosphere that prevails in the fields surrounding them. Doula, expressed the same attitude towards the staring, but also the lack of support for reading within his immediate milieux, including his family:

> Doula: I don't care whatsoever. It doesn't matter to me. What matters is the joy [of reading] (Doula#I3).

Doula's quote seems to suggest that his 'I don't care' attitude comes from the joy that he reported experiencing while reading. In this sense, it was stronger than any negativity emanating from the milieux surrounding him, and also the lack of support within his family for his reading practice. Malik and Clara seem to have a slightly different impetus for reading outside. Malik, like most of my participants, engaged in reading outside due to time constraints imposed by his busy schedule; he explained that he found it suitable to read while riding the bus to his workplace. Clara, however, saw reading as a sudden urge that needed to be fulfilled whenever it happened, wherever the reader happened to be:

> Clara: …reading is kind of like an art. The desire comes to take, uh, just like you desire playing the lute, the same way the desire comes to take a book and read in the metro, the park… at university, in your room, in the terrace, everywhere… (Clara#FG2).

This sense of resistance is also cognate with the picture that Malik chose to express what reading represented for him. When asked about his choice, Malik said:

> Malik: …*lire c'est ne plus être le modèle béni de la foule* ['reading is about no longer being the blessed model of the crowd'] (Malik#I1).

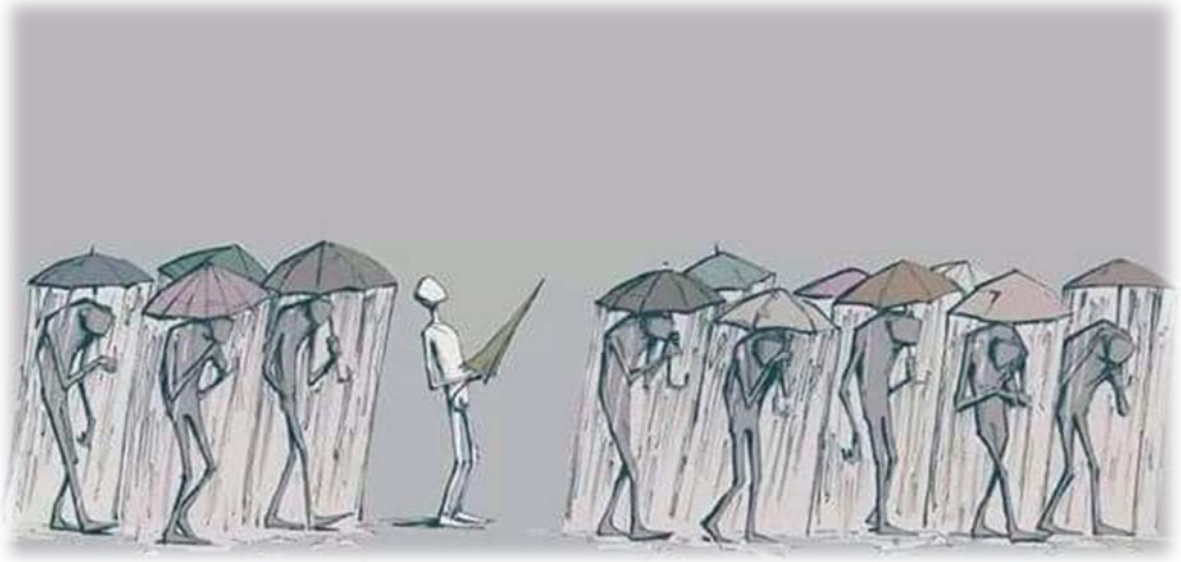


Figure 7.1 Malik's perception of reading

I was unable to approach Malik for a follow-up interview to clarify his response because, at the time of my data collection, medical doctors were going through strikes. His statement and the picture chosen, however, seem to suggest that reading for Malik is an act of being different, not following the crowd and stepping away from rules and standards established and followed by the majority. The picture can clearly be interpreted differently, but what can be discerned at first sight is that one person is not like the others. This is evident through the way he is standing: while everyone else is bending towards the front and staring at the floor, he is almost bending back and looking at, presumably, the sky. They are all holding umbrellas wide open while his is closed. It can be inferred that only when he got rid of the umbrella did his vision widen and could he see something other than the floor. The world became open to him. The apparent rain looks as though it is coming from inside the umbrellas rather than from the sky, but this cannot be realised until the umbrella is removed. As stated earlier, this can be interpreted in many ways, and one way of perceiving it is that the umbrella and the rain, in light of this picture and the data discussed in earlier sections, could symbolise the effect of shaming experiences and staring, or the symbolic violence that readers were subjected to for revealing their reader identities. Thus, this person seems to be the exception, through resisting the act of submission to the predominant cultural messages, while other people's misrecognition of this kind of violence leads the crowd to reproduce the same social structures and rules, and to it becoming the norm (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Constructing a rebellious reader identity was in many cases the result of interactions with other people. Doula, who previously described the staring as bothersome and as preventative to reading outside, further explained that after meeting other readers, it became less of an issue for him. Similarly, because Amir was among a group of readers all holding paperback books, he could read on the bus. Djahan, who asserted not reading outside due to the staring, recounted reading in the park with a group of readers as part of a reading event. The role of peers is discussed in greater detail in section 6.2.2. The point to be retained, however, is that their reader identities were validated by other readers and, thus, their rebellious identities were strengthened by the support of others around them.

7.3.1.2 The content of what is read

In addition to the act of reading itself, my data appears to suggest that resistance shows through reading or refusing to read certain texts. Some participants recounted instances where they have been requested to read certain texts but refused to do so. Djahan's quote discussed earlier, concerning the person who approached her in the park and asked her to read about religion, provides a good example, because she ignored his comments and carried on reading her novels. Similarly, Malik resisted reading religious books. As reported in section 6.3.1, he explained that, as a child, all his readings were exclusively about religion, due to his enrolment in the *masjid*, or Islamic school, to study religion. This seems to suggest that, as a child, he did not choose to read religious texts, he was rather made to do so by his parents whom, he explained, thought this would be beneficial for him. His family's religious *habitus* was transmitted to him, in this sense. As an adult, however, it seems that he took more ownership of his reading practice and decided to improvise upon his initial *habitus* and subvert it:

> Malik: …But later, when you become a university student… you find yourself little by little, you analyse things, like, a lot. So you get away from, especially from, like, we don't say — It [religion] is and it always remains sacred but, well, you become, uh, you adapt a scientific mentality. It becomes things founded on science so you get away, especially, from religion (Malik#I1).

Clara was also made to feel the obligation of reading a particular text but rebelled against it. As a teacher of English, she resisted reading Shakespeare because it did not fall within her

reading tastes and, therefore, rebelled against the prevailing thought that students and teachers of English should read his works. She contended that it is, instead, important to read "whatever one desires" (Clara#FG3). This imposition and her resistance towards it show in this extract:

> Clara: I still haven't read Shakespeare… It is true that I did English and I have to read Shakespeare, but I didn't feel like reading it. I was criticised for this. Once one of the teachers [told me]: "hey [Clara], why didn't you read Shakespeare?" (Clara#FG3).

Clara's statement appears to project a pressure that especially shows through her use of "I have to read…" and the teacher's enquiry, making it sound as though it is an obligation. Her resistance further shows through advising her students to not read him by obligation:

> Clara: … I always tell my students "not because everyone is reading Shakespeare that you have to read him too, even if you don't like him. No, read only one passage or two of Shakespeare. If you like it, carry on. If not, stop. Look for a title even if it is not well-known, even if the writer is not a well-known one and so on…" (Clara#FG1).

Unlike the previous examples, where impositions came from other individuals, Djosour's rebellious reading identity manifested itself when she encountered a book with 'should' in its title: *Why You Should Marry a Man who Reads* (see Appendix D). It seems to have provoked her to resist reading it because of the imposition that she felt on the part of the author, and that the book was explicitly leading. Clara, during the focus group discussion, tried to convince Djosour that it was an interesting book to read. Her response was the following:

> Djosour: I would say "no!" because I would say "who is she to tell me 'you should'" Why would I read it while she is telling me "you should" (Djosour#FG1).

While the above examples are expressions of rebellious reading identities through abstaining from reading texts that seem to be imposed by the predominant culture within certain fields or even the author, as the last example demonstrates, Djosour rebelled further through reading a book that she was prevented from reading. She mentioned that her elder sister forbade her from reading Ahlam Mosteghanemi's (1993) *Memory in the Flesh*, arguing that it was not appropriate for her age. She, however, rebelled against her sister and secretly read the book.

7.3.1.3 The language of what is read

Resistance towards reading in a certain language seems to be a means through which some readers rebelled against the – explicit or implicit – rules dictating which language is more prestigious within certain fields. My research indicates that resistance was mainly related to Arabic and French, due to Algeria's complex history of invasion by various groups. As these have included the Arabs and the French, it is not surprising to find that a "rivalry", as Benrabah (2014) names it, has existed between their two languages throughout the country's history (p. 38). Section 1.3.3.4 provides details on this. This resistance is evident in Misha's assertion, when speaking about her choice of language:

> Misha: French, no, I never read in French (laughter). Yeah, emphasise this with a cross (laughter) (Misha#I1).

When prompted, she explained:

> Misha: I don't like the language, and it is not dear to my heart at all. Uh, French no… (Misha#I1).

Misha's statements appear to project a strong dislike towards reading in French, especially through her use of the term "cross". Even after prompting, the reason for her dislike was still unclear, hence, as the discussion progressed, I inquired more about this. Her reaction and response both seem to confirm her resistance towards reading, or speaking, in French. Her facial expression projected almost disgust, and she said that she only uses French out of "obligation", rather than "pleasure", and only when there was "no escape". She added:

> Misha: So if there is no other way to communicate with people I can use French but as a language as a whole, not only in reading, I don't like it. Yeah. Probably for historical reasons, probably because people take it as, uh, as, uh… as a social class, you know. If people speak French too much then this means that they are upper class or something like that and I **hate** this attitude… I kind of got to not read in this language from this kind of people.

> So I don't like to read in it, I don't like any sophistication or any class, uh, social class or anything... (Misha#I1).

These extracts seem to suggest that reading or speaking in French is a currency that enables some people to accumulate cultural capital. Misha's way of resisting these social structures is via resisting reading in French, in which case reading becomes more of a tool for subversion. Doula, similarly, subverted the same social structures through ceasing to read in French. He appears to share Misha's view on the status of French in Algeria and how it might determine one's status in society. If we recall the beginnings of his experience with French, discussed in section 6.2.1.2, Doula learned it by obligation to avoid being bullied and ridiculed. Growing up, however, Doula showed resistance towards reading in French, and instead switched to Arabic, English and Spanish. He explained that French was fading away in the sense that it was mostly used among the older generation and that the new generations of young Algerians were more in favour of using English than French. His facial expressions indicated contentment regarding this:

R: Do you like that?

Doula: Yes I do. I do. Because it was—you know, France, the French did a lot of damages to our society to the point that it became a standard. Like, um, you would be judged according to your French. Whether you know French or not, you would be judged… So why?... why should I stick to French and like undergo the, if I dare say, the prejudices of the society? Why? Why? It has always bothered me this, this, this mentality, this way of thinking… (Doula#I2).

At this point, his interest in French faded, and he blamed it for his negligence towards Arabic, having looked down upon the latter as a result of considering French to be higher in status.

While resistance so far has been towards French, Jim showed resistance towards Standard Arabic. His dislike of it seems to be as strong as that of Misha for French. Jim disliked his Arabic class and resisted reading what they were requested to read. He asserted that Arabic "is not [his] thing" due to his lack of mastery of the language (Jim#I1). Regarding the choice of languages for reading, Jim avowed that he would choose French. In an informal

conversation, Jim told me stories about people mocking him for speaking French, and asking him to use Arabic instead. He further claimed that he did not care about their comments and kept reading and speaking in French.

This section discussed how readers construct rebellious reader identities through using artefacts – reading, books (paperback or electronic), language – as they navigate their ways within the various cultural fields. This is important because, as the data analysed in this section reveals, impositions give rise to struggles among readers: one of their sub-identities might be in conflict with and exclude the other. These impositions - reading religious books in the case of Malik and Misha, reading in French in the case of Doula and Djahan, or in Arabic in the case of Jim – resulted in many of the readers resisting them.

7.3.2 Compliant readers

Compliant readers refer to readers who conform to the predominant culture or social norms within some of the fields surrounding them. My data suggests that, as with rebellious readers, compliant reading identities show through one or all three means: the act of reading, the content of what is read, and the language chosen for reading.

7.3.2.1 The act of reading

Evidence from the data suggests that some readers tend to mask their reading interest due to being perceived as an 'unwelcome' practice. Some, as discussed in the previous sections, rebelled against the impositions that they experienced for reading a paperback book in fields where the dominant culture seemed discouraging of it. Some of these same readers, as well as others, showed a more conformist reader identity in other fields. As a result, they either read inside their homes or read outside using phones with pdf versions of their books. Although most of them asserted preferring paperback books, they compromised on their use. Malik, for instance, avowed:

> Malik: I can read a book on the bus, but I cannot do it in the public square. But in the public square, I use the phone. They would say "he is surfing on the net" or something and you're at ease and you can create your own [reading] atmosphere (Malik#I1).

Similarly, Jim and Misha asserted reading in public using their phones. They used “if” and “except” respectively to exclude engaging in any form of reading in some places if it is not from their phones. When I enquired about Misha’s usual time for reading, she responded:

> Misha: Mostly at night time or sometimes while going by bus, if I am reading from my phone (Misha#I1).

In my interview with Jim – which his female friend interrupted to share her experience of reading at the beach and the staring she encountered there – I asked if he had experienced a similar situation. His response was the following:

> Jim: No, I do not read in public, except on the phone (Jim#I1).

After prompting his response, he asserted that he disliked doing so because it would disturb his concentration. He gave the example of taking the TV and watching it outside the house, saying that reading outside is similar to this. The quote above, however, seems to suggest that he would still do it on his phone. The issue, therefore, might not be with the act of reading as much as the means used to read.

Malik, who in the previous section adopted a rebellious reader identity by reading on public transport, switched to a compliant reader identity at his workplace and masked his interest in reading. After an incident in which his colleagues made unfriendly comments about him reading, as mentioned in section 7.2.1.1, he ceased to read at his workplace. He asserted aspiring solely to being a ‘good’ doctor at his workplace:

> Malik: At work, I don’t say that I read books. At work, I need to be a good doctor, that’s it. In sports, I need to be a good athlete, that’s it. But outside [these] when I am with [Nora] and the others [readers], I should be updated in terms of reading. So, uh, I do not mix things (Malik#I1).

Malik’s example seems to suggest that his ‘doctor’ sub-identity and his ‘reader’ sub-identity excluded each other, in the sense that being a doctor at his workplace is not seen as compatible with being a reader, and attracted criticism from his colleagues. It also seems to suggest that, unlike when he was within the public transport field, it was important for him to be a ‘good’ doctor. This entails not being excluded by his colleagues, and this currency excludes being a

reader. Thus, belonging to the first entails abiding by the prevailing cultural messages within this cultural field, where reading does not appear to work as a cultural capital.

This is important because it shows the complexity inherent in reading practices as readers move within and between different cultural fields, and swinging between compliant and rebellious reading identities depending on their desire, or lack thereof, to accumulate cultural capital within them. Although both fields appear to be predominantly discouraging of reading, Malik adopted a rebellious reader identity in one of them – public transport – and a compliant reader identity in the other – workplace. Other readers, similarly, displayed both reading identities in parks. Djahan and Amir are two other examples who, as explained earlier, read outside when in groups. Both of them, in addition to Djosour, conformed and abstained from reading outside when they were alone.

7.3.2.2 The content of what is read

In addition to conforming through the act of reading, my data further suggests that readers conform through what they read. Malik, for instance, asserted reading self-help books because "there was a passing wave of self-help", in that they were trending at the time (Malik#I1). He referred to it as "*une mode*" (Malik#I1). Interestingly, the term '*la mode*', or '*la mode de la lecture*' in French ('the fashion' or 'the fashion of reading' respectively), has been mentioned by four participants to characterise the phenomenon of performing the act of reading without 'truly' being a reader. They have mentioned this to be the new trend. According to them, some people use reading to project a reader identity or a certain reader identity – reading a classic, reading in French and so on – in places that value these artefacts. This can be argued to be a form of conformity, as these individuals' drive for reading is to abide by the prevailing cultural messages within certain fields:

> Malik: …it became *une mode* ['a fashion'], simply. A person can take a book that they don't read, or that is nonsensical, or a book that is really void… (Malik#I1).

In the same vein, a discussion around this theme took place in a focus group between Clara and Djahan:

Clara:	…our world has become so superficial and artificial that people started taking a book —
Djahan:	Prestige only —
Clara:	To attract others' attention. It is not to read…—
Djahan:	It became *une mode*
Clara:	…exactly *une mode* "Oh! I am a reader!" for nothing… kinda to show off (Clara&Djahan#FG2).

Reading, in this sense, becomes almost like an object that is used to indicate how much prestige and status a person has. This seems to be almost like wearing a Gucci bag or the latest Lancôme or Chanel perfumes. In fact, Misha perceived it to be similar to "wearing a new brand of clothes or something like that… It's a fashion" (Misha#I1). The above focus group discussion, as well as Misha and Malik's assertions, seem to suggest that reading is being used to attain status in society – a cultural capital. This, of course, is my participants' perception of this phenomenon. The 'performance' of reading relates back to Djahan reading Pierre Bayard's book *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read* (see Appendix D), which entails almost pretending to have read books through speaking about them (section 7.2.2). This also relates back to the feelings of embarrassment, discussed earlier, on Doula's part for not being a reader. Reading seems to be as much for others – a performance – as it is for oneself. This is reminiscent of what Hall (2009) contends: "always reading 'for another' as much as reading for oneself, a performance in context to use the Goffmanian metaphor, though it is often undoubtedly reading for oneself as well" (p. 334). The various feelings that readers expressed during the interviews – shame, embarrassment and guilt – seem to suggest that there is a pressure on them to desire a reading identity or, perhaps, become certain types of readers – specific texts, particular languages, certain places and so on. This contradicts the conception of leisure reading that is mostly associated with pleasure, enjoyment and one's free will, as discussed in section 3.2 of the literature review. We might want to reconsider the meaning of leisure reading, in this light, and in the particular context within which this research has been conducted.

7.3.2.3 The language of what is read

My data suggests that readers use language to comply with the rules of the game within certain fields. The choice of language appears to be an important means through which readers conform to the rules or impositions that they encounter regarding their reading. Following up

on the discussion with Misha, and her reasons for resisting reading in French (section 7.3.1.3), she further explained:

> Misha: …I saw some people here trying to read in French, struggling with French, with novels even if they don't like them, even if you ask them, you know, "what are you reading about?" they don't even understand but still they are holding a book in French. For God's sake, what does it mean? This is disgusting, yeah? (Misha#I1).

When I asked about their reasons for doing so, in her view, she responded:

> Misha: …when they read a book like in French, like the language, they think that they are gonna belong like *les faux riches*… So, yes, they will think that they belong to a social class that is higher than the one they naturally belong to… they would like to seem intellectual also. There is this trend, you know, it's not like before but somebody who reads a book is known to be intellectual… (Misha#I1).

Misha's quotes appear to suggest that not only is the act of reading itself used to exhibit an intellectual and cultured identity, but also the language used for reading. Thus, reading in French, in this case, is a means through which people accumulate cultural capital.

Doula's experience with learning French, as discussed earlier, was his way of conforming to the rules of his school, and to avoid being bullied. Doula explained that his impetus to learn French was to be accepted not only inside the school but also, later on, in society. He explained that mastering French was key to gaining status in society, and that it would ensure that he was "noticed" and "seen", as the following excerpts show:

> Doula: …it's obvious. We are Algerians so second language is French. You know, you go out in the street, if you — you know, French is the fancy, uh, French is the fancy side of our society (Doula#I2).

When I asked for elaboration, Doula added:

Doula: Okay. *Bah takhl'i* ['to impress people'], *pour ne pas passer inaperçu* ['so that you will be seen'], *pour avoir l'air de quelqu'un qui maitrise* ['to look like someone who masters'], *pour avoir l'air de quelqu'un de solide* ['to look firm'], you need to talk in French. Because French in Algeria rhymes with superficiality (Doula#I2).

In Doula's case, it appears that his *habitus* changed according to the predominant culture within the school field. That is, Doula's initial *habitus* did not dictate that French is a cultural capital. As he moved to another field, however, Doula's *habitus* or "feel for the game" dictated his need to adjust his *habitus* and acquire the language that would get him through this field (Bourdieu, 1986). The importance of languages in the history of Algeria makes them sought-after as cultural capital. Doula's experience at school – being laughed at for not speaking French – makes of the language a cultural capital that some teachers reinforce in the classroom. Thus, its mastery is an indicator of inclusion and success at school, which explains Doula's perseverance in learning it. The same could be said about him joining an Arabic language reading club, where reading in Arabic became his 'inclusion ticket' within the club field. He asserted reading for that matter to be able to speak during their meetings, and build his "confidence" to "kick a wall" (Doula#I2). This goes further to show the importance of languages for readers and their currency within different settings.

The capital attached to languages further shows in Jim's case. Further to expressing his views on Arabic being a "dead language", explaining that in terms of scientific research as well as literature, there was not much use of the language, and that English, especially, and French were more useful (Jim#I1). Jim's reasons appear to be more about the cultural capital attributed to the languages – French in this case, or English rather than Arabic. Although Standard Arabic is the first language learned in school before French, Jim resisted learning it. He confessed that his parents' focus was on French since he was a child because they envisaged him gaining a degree in a scientific stream – physics – and knew that French is the language used at university for this degree. In his words, "they wanted to make the task easier for [him]" (Jim#I1).

7.4 Reproduction of the same struggles or creation of a new artefact?

There seems to be a contradiction throughout my data regarding the reproduction of the same rules or struggles on the one hand, and the creation of a new artefact of reading on the other hand. That is, readers in this study, through judging other readers' tastes, and choices of where and in which language to read, appear to reproduce the same struggles they themselves have experienced. This is a surprising finding because what they proclaimed as a right was a subject of criticism vis-à-vis other readers. At the same time, nonetheless, a new reading culture is being created within some of the fields previously referred to as 'fields of struggle'.

7.4.1 Reproduction of the same struggles

My data appears to show that readers contribute to the reproduction of the same struggles they experience. That is, although they seem to be highly critical of those who have been hostile to them and judged their reading choices, perpetuate the same judgments against other readers - in some cases, referred to as 'fake readers', '*les faux-riches*' and 'followers of the reading fashion', as was shown in the previous section. This sort of 'reading narcissism' indicates a sense of appropriation of reading among some of the respondents. They appear to believe that their ways of reading – including the texts they read, the languages they choose and the places where they read – are more valid. This finding is important because it shows the contradiction inherent in the experiences of readers in this particular context and shows how readers themselves feed into the symbolic violence that is exerted on them.

Interestingly, some of the characteristics attributed to 'fake readers' by my participants were the very same *Rights of the Reader* that they have claimed for themselves (see section 7.2). I mentioned earlier that non-readers 'pretending' to be readers, according to respondents, and giving rise to the 'fashion of reading' is my participants' perception of people who read outside. The four readers in this study who mentioned the 'reading fashion' showed a strong dislike towards this type of readers. The attributes they have given to them were: reading outside (Misha, Clara, Djahan, Malik); reading texts with no substance (Malik, Djahan, Clara); reading in French (Misha); excessive reverence for paperback books (Djahan); making speaking about reading the centre of all their discussions (Clara); telling others that they have visited the international book fair (Clara), among other characteristics. This is striking because

readers in this study claimed the right to take ownership of their own reading practices and were disturbed by the judgments that others directed at them for reading outside their homes. At the same time, they condemned other readers:

> Clara: …they read, [it is like] a vice, to say that "we read". They go to SILA [international book fair], they take pictures of books and "I am this and that…" if only they do so for real (Clara#FG3).

This is an important finding because it shows the strong influence of readers' social environments on their views of reading, of themselves as readers, and of others around them. The objective social structures, using Bourdieu's (1986) words, are being reproduced by readers themselves. They are unconsciously and equally legitimising certain ways of reading and not others and, thus, feeding into the same hostility that they have experienced within certain fields. By so doing, they themselves are rendering other people's reading experiences invalid because they do not fall within their standards and what they think a 'reader' or 'reading' should be like. This finding contributes to the current body of literature regarding reading, such as studies conducted by Cherland (1994), Scholes (2015), Swift (2016), Sellers (2019) and many others who portray readers somewhat as 'victims' caught in the predominant culture of their homes, schools, peers or any other groups they interact with, without reporting on how readers themselves can reproduce hostility and legitimisation of certain ways of reading and obscure others.

7.4.2 Creation of a new artefact

Contradicting the reproduction of the same rules or struggles, a new artefact seems to be created in the context within which the present research took place – that of reading. This, of course, is not to claim that the narrative created by the media (see sections 2.2 and 2.3), or my participants' claims about the non-existent culture of reading in Algeria are true. My use of the term 'new', however, indicates that something that might have previously been perceived as 'novel', 'strange' or 'unfamiliar' is being more accepted or becoming less striking. That is, a shift in the *status quo* seems to manifest itself in a greater acceptance of reading, following the many attempts of some readers to promote it. Some of my respondents' experiences illustrate this:

Doula: I was holding it [a book], where? University food court… while I was queuing. I was holding my book… I was reading it and people, you know, there is a fuss, there is a lot of people. The few… persons around me were like talking quietly. You know, it's good. You know? You know what? It might seem trivial but, really, it's important because they thought that I was doing something… It influences in one way or another… (Doula#I2).

In comparison to what has been discussed earlier in this chapter regarding the hostility that readers reported witnessing, Doula's quote seems to suggest that in certain fields readers are being "respected" (Doula#I2). As described by Doula, it sounds banal and "trivial", but not being treated with hostility and, instead, feeling consideration from people around him was important for his sense of acceptance.

Doula further pinpointed aspiring to influence other people to become readers, akin to the way that Maria influenced him. He does not seem to be the only one, as other readers in the present research also made efforts to achieve this aim. I mentioned earlier the initiatives taken by Djahan in reading events in parks, as well as the reading club that she founded among pupils. They, as she avowed, passed the first round of the Arab Reading Challenge but, unfortunately, pupils were neglected and could not progress in the competition due to the lack of support from the school director. Because of the initial excitement of the children and their sadness at not being able to advance in the competition, Djahan organised a ceremony that she funded. She ensured that all the children were given gifts as encouragements. Other initiatives can be seen in Misha's reading in public spaces, despite the staring and the hostility:

Misha: …there must be a beginning for everything. If I try [to read outside], another person will try, another person will try, another person will try (Misha#I1).

Misha's quote seems to show that one of her reasons for reading outside is an effort to spread the reading culture in the Algerian context. According to her and many other participants, reading in plain sight is one of the characteristics of a 'reading culture'. Furthermore, reading outside seems to promote reading among Algerians from all walks of life. If we recall the incident when Djahan was reading in the park, and someone judged her taste of reading by asking her to read about religion instead, it is noteworthy that the same person, Djahan reported, came back later, asked her for a book and read a few pages:

Djahan: He wandered and wandered around and then came: “give us a book to read with you” (laughter)… Another time a group of adolescents who were recently released from prison all came and grabbed books [at the event] (Djahan#FG2).

Referring back to the ‘reading fashion’, regardless of whether or not people ‘pretended’ to be readers, it appears to contribute to making reading less of an unfamiliar phenomenon and, therefore, a reader more of a “normal person” within various fields (Doula#I3). In fact, with all the judgmental accounts directed by my participants towards those who, for them, pretend to be readers, some did not lose sight of the benefit of this phenomenon. Three out of four participants who have spoken about the reading fashion acknowledged that this phenomenon is contributing to reading being seen as a less unfamiliar practice in the Algerian context (Clara, Djahan, Malik). Malik, for example, confessed:

Malik: So it’s because it became a fashion that it started becoming acceptable… (Malik#I1).

These extracts seem to suggest that a new artefact is being created in the context within which my data has been collected. This is cognate with the literature of reading in Algeria reviewed in section 2.3 in that reading seems to be at its infancy stage. The literature reviewed indicates that an interest in reading has only manifested in recent years, with an investment in building more libraries across the country, in addition to the integration of reading in the curriculum and book clubs in schools. Currently, most of the reading-related manifestations are centred on capital and big cities, which creates a predicament for people from other places. This adds more weight to the importance of the current research in this particular context, in that it provides insights into the experiences of Algerian graduate readers and the challenges they undergo. Thus, the Algerian government might want to consider this, invest more in providing opportunities for readers to benefit from reading-related facilities and events, and promote reading not only in educational institutions, but also in public spaces.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on three main sub-themes: the struggles that readers encountered for being readers, or certain types of readers; their responses to these struggles; the elements of reproduction of the same rules and the creation of a new artefact within the fields surrounding them. The struggles that most readers in the present research experienced took two forms: external shaming experiences that were as explicit as being treated with hostility, and as implicit as being stared at. These appear to result from readers revealing their reader identities in fields within which reading did not seem to be perceived as a welcome practice. That is, readers' reader identities did not seem to be congruent with the predominant rules within these fields. The second forms of struggle were internal feelings of guilt and shame for either not reading or for not reading particular types of texts.

Readers' interactions within these 'fields of struggle' led to the constant construction and reconstruction of their reader identities into rebellious and compliant readers. They displayed rebellious and/or compliant reader identities through the act of reading, the content of what is read and the language in which they chose to read. The language chosen for reading is particularly important because most of the studies that looked at reading and identity did not take into consideration the complex nature of multilingual readers' experiences and the importance of the choice of language for them. Languages are important in my research and the choice of language appears to be very significant for my participants. This was a recurrent theme as well as a startling finding because although my participants were multilingual, some of them consciously chose to abstain from reading in certain languages and only read in others. Although being multilingual seems to be a luxury, not all multilingual readers seem to take advantage of it in that not all of them chose to read in all the languages they speak. This, once again, is a clear indication of the complex interplay that exists between readers' social worlds and their reader identities, in that the status of the language and the symbolic value attached to it is what determines, in many cases, whether or not readers choose to read in a certain language. This being said, some languages have been used as a means to rebel against, or comply with, implicit or explicit social structures and rules.

Another important finding discussed in this chapter is that of reproducing the same rules and struggles and at the same time creating a new artefact within some of the 'fields of struggle'. Paradoxically, although most of the readers in this study strongly asserted their right

to take ownership of their own reading experiences, without being judged by others around them, some of them appear to be judgmental towards other readers that they refer to as ‘fake’ and other names of the sort. That is, they appear to contribute to reproducing the same rules through judging other readers’ tastes, places for reading and the languages in which they choose to read. They, in this sense, were perpetuating the same impositions and legitimisation of certain ways of reading and certain texts at the expense of others, making other readers’ experiences invisible and invalid. Another contradiction is that while there seems to be a reproduction of the same rules, a new reading culture is being created within some of the fields previously referred to as ‘fields of struggle’. More acceptance of reading within some of these fields seems to exist. This, in fact, stresses the importance of the present research, considering the fact that reading appears to be at its infancy stage and some attention is starting to be directed towards its promotion, as discussed in the literature review.

CHAPTER 08: BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN READERS' 'UNREAL' AND 'REAL' WORLDS

8.1 Introduction

The two previous data chapters reported the complexity of reading practices by showing the relation that exists between readers and their social environments, accounting for the different social groups with whom they interact. This chapter shows another facet of this relation, accounting mainly for readers and the texts they read. As such, it yields insights into the private worlds of readers, and argues that reading is used to escape social worlds. In this escapist act, readers construct 'secret' reader identities and engage in reading privately, after which they reconnect with their 'real' worlds. As a result, readers construct and reconstruct their 'whole' identities through the texts they read.

The chapter is presented in three main sections. It first sets the scene by giving a glimpse into what triggers readers' desires to escape. The evidence suggests that their reasons encompass escaping: (1) socialising with people around whom they feel alienated and not understood; (2) their realities and daily routines. In this escapist act, the majority of readers long for interacting with characters that are more like them, and for experiencing realities that are different from their own.

The second section reports how readers create their private worlds and escape into their 'safe zones' to read. Themes arising from the data suggest that their triggers to escape, in addition to the hostility and shaming experiences that have been discussed in section 7.2.1, lead the majority of readers to construct 'secret' reader identities. That is, they perceive themselves as 'behind closed doors' readers. They see reading as 'private', 'intimate' and something that should not be shared with others. Reading behind closed doors appears to provide readers with a sense of control and ownership over their reading choices.

The third section of the chapter revolves around the changes that readers experience and the identities they construct as they read various texts. The analysis reveals that, for the majority of readers, these texts provide opportunities for experimenting with different identities, exploring possible selves and finding solutions to their problems. The chapter further

illustrates how readers move from their private and 'unreal' worlds and reconnect with their 'real' worlds, rendering this escapist act a bridge that connects both worlds.

8.2 Readers escaping their 'real' worlds

Reading appears to be a route that some readers take for escapist reasons. The majority of respondents referred to escapism, either explicitly or implicitly. Misha and Lucy, for instance, mentioned 'escape' three times and twice respectively. Once for both of them was not related to reading, in that Misha spoke about disliking the French language and only using it if there was no 'escape'. Lucy used it when speaking about one of the stories she read, where the protagonists 'escaped' the tyranny of the rulers. In both cases, the term seems to indicate breaking free from an unpleasant and restraining situation. In relation to reading, this same connotation was present: my participants appear to have an urge to break free from something or someone. It is, then, worth delving into their reasons for escaping. As such, this section is divided into two sub-sections: (1) escaping socialising with others; (2) escaping reality and daily routines.

8.2.1 Escaping socialising with others

Three of my participants read to escape socialising with others. This appears to be due to their feelings of alienation when interacting with people around them. Djahan's assertion illustrates this:

> Djahan: So, when you are a reader, and when you are in family gatherings, you feel some sort of an alienation. They speak about topics, uh, that do not interest you in any way: *gnader* ['traditional clothing that brides wear in weddings'], food… You feel: "what am I doing here?" (laughter). You wish: "when is this court session going to end?" (laughter)… You feel that there is nothing shared, except for blood ties… (Djahan#I1).

Similar feelings were shared by Clara and Misha. All three of them further explained feeling that their choices were not understood by others:

Misha: …when you read books and then you tend to, uh, you tend to think in a very special way, if we can say so, something that not everybody understands… You find yourself communicating with people that don't understand your language… you might seem strange to people a bit… (Misha#I1).

These extracts seem to suggest that readers' feelings of alienation are due to: having different interests, thinking differently and, thus, not being understood by others. What is also apparent from these extracts, and others not mentioned, is that there is agreement among Clara, Djahan and Misha, and three other participants, that feeling different is due to reading. Both Djahan and Misha began their statements with "when you are a reader" and "when you read books" to speak about this alienation. Furthermore, Djahan added that it was due to reading, for it led to "widening [her] horizons" in comparison to some of her family members' "narrow horizons" (Djahan#FG1). Djosour further made an assertion regarding those who do not read, claiming that they think in a "superficial way" compared to those who read (Djosour#FG3). Clara referred to it as an "increase in her awareness" that others might not have developed due to not reading (Clara#FG1). Regardless of the fact that these could be argued to be no more than big statements and unfounded judgments that readers have made about themselves versus others, being readers made them feel different. The present research does not agree with these negative claims, because they allude to a deficit model: 'either people read, or their thinking is shallow'.

These participants further expressed the need to plunge into their reading worlds to diminish their socialising with others. Thus, they perceived reading as a means to preserve their alienation:

Djahan: …this solitude [with reading] is also good so that you do not drift with their [family members'] current, because the narrow horizon becomes like water currents. It takes you with it (Djahan#FG1).

Clara: But you should not let them affect your – there is no melting… That's why I told you the balance, it [reading] is what holds the balance: it doesn't let you go this or that way (Clara#FG1).

These extracts suggest that readers are almost 'fleeing' and 'blocking' their family members' influences. Seeking alienation by reading appears to serve as a way to preserve their identities, in that delving in reading seems to help them retain who they want to be, as opposed to being

around their families and their impositions. This further shows the influence of readers' social environments on their reading practices, in the sense that they engage in reading to prevent themselves from mixing with those who do not share their passion. Clara avowed that some of her family members think she is "being philosophical" when sharing her views during discussions (Clara#FG1). In line with being regarded as 'philosophical' or 'cultured' as a reader within groups, Djahan shared a story that she felt emotional about during the interview. This is a story about being intimidated by a former classmate for being a 'reader' and not being able to secure a 'good' job. On her way to work, Djahan run into one of her former classmates who was a primary school teacher at the time. When she enquired about Djahan's job, Djahan said she was working with the ANEM (*Agence Nationale de l'Emploi*). The teacher's answer shows in the following extract:

> Djahan: … "[Djahan], the cultured, works with l'ANEM?" The tear was here [pointing to her eye], on my way to work. It really hurt me (Djahan#I1).

To provide some context, the ANEM is an Algerian employment organisation that ensures any individuals reaching the adequate age for work are secured an employment (ANEM, 2016). What is mostly known in Algeria is that young people who cannot easily find jobs go through the organisation that secures them provisional employments with relatively low wages. Thus, in Djahan's case, her former classmate's financial situation was better than hers. As a result, there was some mockery on the part of her classmate in that Djahan has been known to be a reader but, according to her, could not accomplish a lot. It seems that it is these pressures and expectations that create more need amongst readers to escape into their reading worlds.

These feelings of alienation that readers described can also be related to what has been discussed in section 7.2.1. This revolves around the struggles and shaming experiences that the majority of respondents in this study have undergone for revealing their reader identities. Thus, it is understandable that they would feel 'different' and 'strange' as readers, being surrounded by people who do not share their passion. In this case, however, it was more at the level of ideas, instead of solely being seen as readers. This being said, it is no wonder that readers escape socialising with those whom they think would not understand them, and use reading to soothe their feelings of alienation. This is important because it shows the role that reading plays in readers' lives, apart from the enjoyment and pleasure that is mostly associated with it. It helps readers stay sane and cope with feelings of alienation by offering them a space to connect

with other characters that they think are closer to them. Socialising with others is not all what readers wish to escape: reality and daily routine were also mentioned.

8.2.2 Escaping reality and daily routine

Escaping reality has been mentioned by Lucy and Misha. In both cases, the terms have been used alongside experiencing a predicament or a dissatisfaction with their realities. This is illustrated below:

> Lucy: …when I have a bad time, I usually escape that bad time and reality through novels (Lucy#I2).
>
> Misha: …It [self-help] is like a drug that you take every day so that you escape reality (Misha#I1).

Both participants are clearly attempting to escape a difficult time in their lives, details of which were not mentioned. Misha's use of the 'drug' metaphor is particularly interesting, because it indicates the strong urge for reading. The term 'drug' is usually known to have two connotations: a medication or an addiction. Two of the definitions offered by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary are: (1) "a substance used as a medication or in the preparation of medication"; (2) "something and often an illegal substance that causes addiction, habituation, or a marked change in consciousness" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Similarly, Porter and Teich (1995), from the field of science history, point out that 'drug' comes from the Greek *pharmakon* meaning "medicament and poison" (p. ii). They contend that drugs have been used throughout history as means to decrease pain and heal patients, but that its misuse has led to addiction behaviours (Porter and Teich, 1995). While Misha used 'drug' to describe reading, Doula spoke about it as an 'addiction'. He explained that there were some books or passages that he needed to read every other day, like an "addicted to coffee" who feels an urge to drink it (Doula#I3). 'Escaping reality' is, nonetheless, a vague statement. Thus, I prompted Misha's response, to which she responded:

Misha: …everybody has got a vision about how his/her life, uh, should be and, uh, the reality I am seeing in my life currently is not the thing that I want. So that's why I go for books trying to fill this gap inside, you know, trying to create this thing inside me instead of having it outside. I couldn't have it outside so basically what should I do? I should create it in one way. What is this way? It's reading. I am creating it inside of me instead of outside… (Misha#I1).

Her statement goes in line with the 'drug' and 'addiction' metaphors, in the sense that a pressing need appears to exist within Misha to engage in reading and escape to a more desired reality. These feelings are reminiscent of those expressed by drug users in Etherington's (2008) study. Writing from the field of psychotherapy, she reports on the life stories of eight drug misusers in the UK. What is common among all her participants is that they were longing to escape realities that they were living but did not like. Commenting on the statements made by one of her respondents, she asserts that drugs helped him escape to a "preferred 'unreal world' where he felt 'safe' and 'in control' – more so than in his relationships with most of the people he knew" (p. 95). There is little comparison that can be made between her participants who suffered trauma and my participants who mentioned none of this. The common point, however, is the urge to escape reality and look for alternatives in 'unreal' worlds. These statements indicate that 'escaping reality' is associated with experiencing difficult times and being unsatisfied with one's current situation. In this case, reading is used to cope with these, fill a void and, most importantly, explore one's possibilities through living the 'desired' possible self until this is reached. Discussed below, in section 8.4, is how reading is used to construct different identities.

Less striking than escaping reality is some readers' desire to escape their daily routines (Doula, Malik, Misha). These were mostly related to their work and study pressures. They appear to escape these by reading to relax. When asked about her reasons for reading, Misha asserted reading "as an escape from work" (Misha#I1). Malik, when comparing sports and reading, explained that it was easier to read to relax than to do sports with a busy schedule:

Malik: …but reading, you are at home, exhausted from work, you can take a book and read for an hour. Plus, there are some books which offer relaxation tips (Malik#I1).

This section reported on how readers use reading as a means to escape: (1) socialising with people due to their feelings of alienation when they are around them; (2) reality and daily routines due to their feelings of unsatisfaction or the need to relax respectively. The findings discussed in this section further build upon the body of evidence about escapism being one of the main reasons behind reading. In fact, it is uncommon to find studies that look at the reasons, the effects or the role of reading in readers' lives, where 'escapism' is not one of the themes, if not the main one (e.g., Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011; Kamhieh, 2012; Swift, 2016; Coban, 2018, to cite a few). Two of Richardson and Toyne's (2002) participants explained reading to escape their problems and realities. One of them, akin to Lucy, escaped to overcome breaking up with her boyfriend. The other participant, like Misha, read to escape a reality she did not like. Among these, however, only Swift (2016) and Sellers (2019) found that readers use reading to avoid social participation within their school settings, and socialisation with their peers. Furthermore, while my research enquired about readers' reasons for escaping, this is not a line of enquiry that all studies pursued including those of Kamhieh (2012) and Coban (2018). Knowing more about participants' reasons for escaping proved to be fruitful in the sense that it provided significant insights into the influence of their social environments on their engagement in reading, and readers' efforts to preserve their desired identities through reading. As argued by Radway (1994), researching their reasons allows an understanding of the "cultural conditions that had prepared" readers to choose to read certain texts (p. 12). The next section reports on the private worlds that readers create for themselves as their means to escape.

8.3 Creating private reading worlds

The evidence presented in this section suggests that readers create their private reading worlds, away from the "eyes of others" (Djahan#I1). It also suggests that this is partially due to the hostility and shaming experiences they witness when they read outside, as was suggested earlier. Thus, in this escapist act, that is as physical as it is mental, they develop an intimate relation with reading. It, however, seems to be a 'balanced' one in the sense that readers showed awareness of not 'melting' in reading, and equally immersing themselves in their 'real' worlds. This section is presented in two subsections: the first reports on readers' perceptions of reading

as ‘private’ and ‘intimate’ while the second discusses their perceptions of the need to balance their escapism with their ‘real’ worlds.

8.3.1 “Reading is intimate”

The privacy of reading practices shows through readers’ preferences for reading within the confines of their homes, as well as viewing reading as ‘private’, ‘intimate’, and something that should be kept to themselves. As was discussed in section 7.2.1 many of the participants have experienced reading outside their homes. Nonetheless, ‘reading at home’ and the ‘intimacy’ of reading reverberated throughout my data. This is illustrated below:

> Djahan: …it [reading] is something I live with myself. After the events we have had in the park, I realised that I can leave my intimate relation with reading and with the book to myself, away from the lights (Djahan#FG2).

Djahan was referring to the reading events that she, and her friends, organised in parks. This consisted of promoting reading by gathering, exchanging books and reading outside. An incident that happened during one of them, as reported in section 7.2.1.1, was that of being judged and asked to read about religion, instead of reading a ‘meaningless’ novel. In the same vein, Misha asserted:

> Misha: I just prefer to be at home laying down and, um, reading... as I said it’s something personal so I don’t need anybody to stare at me in the bus or something like that… No, I don’t need that (Misha#I1).

These extracts suggest that the shaming and staring that readers experienced were among the reasons that led them to retreat to their private worlds, and construct secret reader identities. The extracts also appear to suggest that the choice of reading at home happened after they have experienced reading outside, which they felt was not ‘welcome’ as a practice. As has been argued in sections 7.2, different cultural fields have different currencies, such as: Malik’s workplace, where being a ‘good’ medical doctor was the currency for which people competed. Reading there, and in many other fields, was not perceived as a currency and, thus, readers’ *habitus* or ‘feel for the game’ oriented them towards this understanding (Bourdieu, 1986). As

a result, they perceived reading as a practice that should be kept "behind closed doors", as Lucy best described it (Lucy#I1). Six participants expressed a preference for reading in their homes. Few examples include reading "at home… in my room" (Djahan#I1), "in bed" (Djosour#FG1), "in my room… just me and the book" (Lucy#I1). Although Amir asserted not having a preferred place, when asked to speak about what leisure reading meant to him, he mentioned being at home under a blanket, with a book at hand. This suggests that although the place does not seem to be as important for him as it is for the others, he would still prefer reading at home. Thus, their social environments shaped their identities as 'secret readers'.

Perceiving reading as 'personal', 'private', and 'intimate' is further detected in interview extracts and some of the pictures that readers have chosen to articulate their perceptions of reading. The process of choosing pictures is explained in section 5.6.4. Starting with the former, the following extracts illustrate this:

> Lucy: I don't like reading in the open. I feel that reading is, um, I don't know (laughter), since we spoke about it as an orgasm, it is something that you do behind closed doors (Lucy#I1).

Djahan explained that she has changed, and so did her reading habits. She further avowed that she became more inclined towards reading on her own, for she viewed reading as intimate. When I prompted her response, she said:

> Djahan: Intimate. Yes, intimate. Uh, I like to be alone when I am reading... I don't know, you sort of develop a relation, you feel that this book or what you are reading, uh – you see prayer? when you pray, and don't like anyone to stare at you, you are in isolation… when you feel that someone is looking at how you are praying, you become ill at ease… reading is prayer of another kind (Djahan#I1).

In the same vein, the pictures chosen by some of the readers are cognate with their statements. For example, Djosour, Lucy and Jim particularly selected pictures that depict reading privately in their homes – an image of a 'secret' reader:

Figure 8.1 Lucy's perception of reading

Figure 8.2 Jim's perception of reading

Figure 8.3 Djosour's perception of reading

These pictures depict the intimacy with which some of my participants spoke about reading. Lucy and Djosour, for instance, explained that the image of a reader in figures 8.1 and 8.3 is how they viewed themselves respectively. Djosour further proclaimed that reading helped her to diminish the isolation that she felt on her own, by living through the characters, thinking and answering for them. Thus, reading appears to provide a space for readers to interact with characters, and delve into imaginary worlds. Amir further said: “when you read, you do not need people” (Amir#I1). Jim described the feeling of comfort that reading near a fireplace provided for him. Moreover, reading has been described by Djahan and Malik as a “refuge” (Djahan#I1; Malik#I1).

Lucy, when asked about her reasons for reading in an earlier discussion, explained that reading books, and more precisely novels, gave her a “brain orgasm” (Lucy#I2). This was the expression she used to articulate how pleasurable and enjoyable reading was for her. Her statement seems to also suggest the extent to which she perceived reading as intimate, especially when she described those who share what they read as “brave” (Lucy#I2). This was a comment she has made regarding one of the pictures she selected (figure 8.4), describing the woman who was reading with her partner, and claiming that the choice of books says loads about the person. Thus, it is similar to “letting someone into your brain” (Lucy#I2). She

explained that the picture depicted a woman's intimacy with her partner and with the book to be the same.

Figure 8.4 Lucy's perception of reading

These pictures speak volumes and are open to myriads of interpretations. Given what has been discussed in earlier chapters regarding the struggles that readers endure due to the impositions they face, such as reading religious books, reading in libraries or at home, or reading in a particular language, choosing a secret reader identity can be interpreted as longing for more control and ownership over their reading practices. Thus, some of these images could be said to project an aura of control, in that readers are able to read anything, anywhere, at any time and in any language. In figure 8.4, the woman could be said to be in control because she is the one holding the book. This might indicate that it is a book of her choice, while her partner is leaning towards her, resting his head on her shoulder to read from her book. It can also be said that she does not appear to be making any efforts to bring the book closer to her partner's side, nor does her facial expression indicate contentment with sharing her reading. The desire for control and ownership, interestingly, is also apparent in Misha's comments on the picture she had chosen:

Figure 8.5 Misha's perception of reading

Her choice of this picture, with an eye-bird view, portrays her desire to be in control. She avowed that she felt able to be “in control”, “omnipresent” and “see everything” (Misha#I2). She related this to reading novels, where the reader is the only person who can know everything about the characters’ lives – their past, present and future – which made her feel in control. This being said, it could be argued that what triggered readers’ preferences for reading in their homes, ‘behind closed doors’ and ‘away from the eyes’ of others, are their desires to have some control over their reading and who they want to be. They appear to be more so; they can read whatever they want without being judged and treated with hostility by those around them.

These findings are significant because they teach us that choice is important for allowing readers to have the “best” reading experiences, as Lucy described it (Lucy#I1). Their ways of speaking about their experiences of reading in isolation, in comparison to those of reading outside their homes speak volumes about the importance of taking ownership of their reading. Finding a ‘safe zone’ for enjoying some reading was important for them. As was discussed in sections 7.3.1.1 and 7.3.2.1, the majority of readers had a preference for paperback books over electronic ones: “the best experience is a paper book” and “the pleasure is in a

book" as Lucy and Amir asserted respectively (Lucy#I1; Amir#I1). This being said, reading outside, in particular fields, would entail using an electronic book, which does not correspond to their desired experiences, rendering reading in the shadows the only option.

These findings are important because they show that readers enjoy reading and develop an intimate relation with it when they feel safe and in control of their practices, rather than when they are stared at or treated with hostility for revealing their reading identities. This is even more significant given what my participants reported regarding their difficulties of juggling reading with their other obligations (Amir, Clara, Doula, Jim, Lucy). Amir described his life as a "charged" one to insinuate that it is full of responsibilities that can hardly leave room for reading (Amir#I1). Some of them apologetically expressed feelings of discontent with not having the opportunity to engage in reading more often. Moreover, Jim expressed his regrets for not being able to read more often than he did. He attributed this to being busy with his studies. After asking whether he would have read more if he had more time, his answer was the following:

> Jim: I always imagine myself retired, a book in my hand, reading calmly. But now, generally speaking, there is no time (Jim#I1).

Jim's aspiration for an older version of himself holding a book appears to suggest that, although his busy schedule prevented him at the time from reading more often, he expressed an intention to preserve a place for it while picturing his older, retired and future self. This also seems to suggest that the value participants attributed to reading did not fade away with their busy lives. It is rather left for a belated time. Hence, it can be argued that the safer the environment, the more likely they are to read, instead of waiting for that only time when they are in the shadows to be able to read safely. This is also important considering the various benefits of reading that are discussed in section 8.4. While this section gave insights into readers' private reading worlds, the next section discusses their awareness of the need to ensure a balance between retrieving to these worlds and reconnecting with their realities.

8.3.2 "Too much [isolation] is too bad… One needs to be balanced"

Although, as was discussed earlier, most of the participants expressed their longing for isolation, they similarly showed their awareness of its drawbacks. That is, as much as they

enjoyed escaping to the worlds that their reading provided for them, they showed awareness of the need for a balance. Clara and Malik referred to it as the necessity for not "melting in reading" and "being theoretical" respectively (Clara#FG1; Malik#I1). Otherwise, respondents explained, readers would become "slave[s] of reading" (Clara#FG3), imprisoned in a state of "obsession" for it (Djahan#FG1). This is further illustrated in this focus group exchange:

Clara:	…you melt in reading… if you keep reading, reading, reading, you will become far away from the world, from life…
Djahan:	You isolate yourself
Clara:	You isolate yourself a lot, and this isolation is not good. Sometimes it can be positive, but too much is too bad. One needs to be balanced… we have to try and see, for instance, music, sports, reading, romance, films… (#FG1).

In line with Clara's and Djahan's statements, Malik stated that reading and life experiences should go hand in hand, explaining that "[l]ife is made up of ingredients, like a medicine", two of which are reading and life experiences. A deficiency or an overdose, according to him, would have consequences. Thus, in his view, people should not "remain theoretical" and, instead, should "go into the world and socialise with people" (Malik#I1). Thus, for all these participants, it was important to spend time in the 'unreal' worlds that reading created for them, but also engage with the people around them.

The majority of respondents seemed to agree that this isolation with reading 'should' result in a change that would show in their thinking or behaviours. Terms such as: 'radical change', 'evolve', 'new person', 'adds something', 'different' were used extensively across the majority of interviews. Two examples include:

Malik:	…they say that two things change a person: the people they meet or the books they read. For me, it was both, but mostly reading (Malik#I1).
Doula:	Reading for me is… embarking on a new world… resulting in you being radically changed, from the beginning of your reading of the novel till the end (Doula#I3).

All participants, except for one, stated that change was an inevitable outcome of reading. Moreover, some of them drew a distinction between two types of reading. Doula referred to

them as “real reading” and the “reading for the sake of reading” (Doula#I1), while Djahan and Clara labelled them “reading that adds to you” and “reading that takes from you” (#FG1). Amir and Malik were less explicit in their distinction, but they also alluded to both types using terms such as ‘cultured’ in alignment with the first set of statements.

They all related the second set of statements to people who read and accumulate information, without this being reflected in their lives or behaviours – they do not use what they learn. Djahan used a strong expression in Arabic to refer to it “*wash ga’ad yaqra fi wad w houwa ‘ayesh fi wad*”, which literally translates to: “what he is reading is in a valley, and he is living in another valley” (Djahan#FG1). This is a common expression that is used in Algerian dialect to refer to two things that do not go hand in hand, being in two completely different states. Thus, she used it to state that what these readers read appears to have no effect on how they think and act. This relates closely to how Doula described it: “…just reading… after the book you are the same person… nothing has changed” (Doula#I1). The first set of statements, however, was attributed to those whose reading changes them and adds to their lives. Thus, they considered change as an inseparable part of their definitions of reading. In the same vein, when requested to provide a picture of his perception of reading, Doula chose the one below:

Figure 8.6 Doula's perception of reading

This picture, according to him, represents the darkness that prevailed before he started reading, and the shining spots that formed each time he read a book. He contended that these spots represented the “new points of view” and “new ideas” that he acquired from reading and that

changed him (Doula#I3). His choice is an interesting one because I expected, as with most other pictures, to see the theme of reading – books, a reader and so on. Thus, I inquired about the choice of words that he used to google this picture, after he informed me that this was where he looked for it. He avowed that he immediately thought about unclarity verses clarity: "something unclear and something clear starting to merge together", after which he narrowed his search and typed "black wall paper with white spots" (Doula#I3). This being said, change is an indicator of 'proper' reading for them. The majority of readers saw it positively, using expressions such as: "[i]t changed me in a positive way" and "my head was a box closed above and it opened…" (Doula#I2).

Nonetheless, not all change is positive. Misha, for instance, avowed that connecting with some of the characters like Zorba from *Zorba the Greek*, written by Nikos Kazantzakis (1946), influenced her behaviour and led to "being wild with [her] parents" (Misha#I1). Mood change is another point that she, and few other participants, mentioned. She explained that reading sad stories affected her mood, like what happened to her with Khawla Hamdi's (2012) *A Jewish Girl Lies within my Heart*. Lucy described similar feelings with Jojo Moyes' (2012) *Me Before You.* She asserted not being able to finish the book. Clara avowed that she would not read a story knowing it is a sad one, claiming that "we have got enough sadness in reality" (Clara#FG1). This said, reading cannot be claimed to solely have benefits, because doing so would entail a simplistic perception of it, which goes against what this thesis claims – reading is complex. These findings are echoed in Sweeney's (2008) and Swift's (2016) studies. Sweeney (2008) reports on a participant whose reading triggered a desire to steal clothes from shops, while Swift (2016) refers to one whose reading was a means to explore death and suicide.

In this section, I argued that readers, fleeing their alienation, reality and struggles, construct secret reader identities. They create private reading worlds, characterised by an intimate relationship that they develop with reading, in which they perceive themselves as 'behind closed doors' readers. As much as readers appeared to enjoy being in their reading private worlds, they showed their awareness of the drawbacks of this isolation. They also claimed this isolation to be beneficial only if it produces change. In this sense, they viewed change in people's mindsets and behaviours as an inevitable consequence of reading. With this in mind, it was relatively easy for readers to speak about the change that reading brought to

their lives, and their senses of themselves. This was for them necessary to reconnect with their 'real' worlds.

8.4 Reconnecting with their worlds

Readers appear to construct and reconstruct their 'whole' identities through reading. In this sense, the texts they read provide a space that allows them to explore their agencies, possible selves, and (re)reconstruct their senses of themselves. This then feeds into their 'real' worlds. By so doing, readers build a bridge between their 'unreal' and 'real' worlds. Paralleling section 8.2 where the discussion was around what readers escape from – socialisation and reality – this section tackles how readers construct more desirable identities to cope with both reasons. The section is presented in two sub-sections: (1) empathy and understanding of others; (2) problem-solving.

8.4.1 Empathy and understanding of others

My data suggests that reading offers a space where readers can connect with various characters and develop a sense of themselves as more empathetic and understanding of those around them. Two thirds of my participants reported stories of how reading helped them to become better persons, more accepting of those who were different to them. The following quote best illustrates this:

> Djahan: … For instance, reading novels makes you more humane. We read last time in the reading club *Don't Tel Me You're Afraid*… It is about… Samia Omar Youssef, a young runner from Mogadishu… Her journey allows you to see the orphans of Mali [in Algeria] and think to yourself: "these people went through a journey that is similar to this one. They suffered in the desert" … When you see these people [refugees] here [in Algeria] with some sort of arrogance and so on, you say to yourself: "all this journey, and they have suffered so that they could find something to eat and safety, because they ran away from the war"… (Djahan#FG1).

This book, written by the Italian author Giuseppe Catozzella (2014), is about the true and tragic story of the Somali runner, Samia Omar Youssef, and her journey towards attempting to realise her dream: participating in 2012 London Olympic games. It traces her upbringing in Somalia in the midst of war, poverty and Islamists' restrictions on women from one side, and her dream of becoming a champion from the other. His book also describes the risks she had taken in her journey to reach Europe, which ended in her drowning at sea. Djahan further explained how the author, in the last pages of the book, provides detailed descriptions of the hardships encountered on the way, such as: 200 refugees squeezed against each other, the limited amount of air, and all types of odours resulting from spending a long time on their boats.

Djosour, Djahan and Clara agreed during the focus group discussion that reading allowed them to be less judgmental and more understanding of others. In fact, Djosour and Djahan reported on the fact that novels allowed them to see criminals differently. Among the *Rights of the Reader*, mentioned in sections 3.2.1 and 7.2, Djosour chose *le droit au Bauvarism* ('the right to mistake a book for real life'), where she could relate to the expression *C'est tout a fait moi!* ('that's exactly me!') on the poster. She explained that she could see herself in most of the characters about whom she read, "even if it is a criminal", and would always find a side of them to which she could relate (Djosour#FG2). She explained:

> Djosour: … when you read and see many characters, you see so many stories, you become tolerant towards these people, you understand why they act like that, even when they are wrong, you become more understanding (Djosour#FG1).

Djahan, during our interview, avowed that she felt she became a "better person", in that she became "more understanding of those who are different than her" (Djahan#I1). She went on giving examples of a killer, or a paedophile as in the story of *Lolita*, written by Vladimir Nabokov (1955). Although she described it as a "shock to humankind", reading the novel allowed her not to accept, as she explained, but rather to understand how people become as such:

> Djahan: …before you see that a person committed something that goes against what is socially acceptable, know that he did not get there just like that. There are other things that he lived, like the Arabic saying goes: "if you look at the end of the matter, you forget its beginning" (Djahan#I1).

Relating this to her real life, Djahan mentioned the story of one of her acquaintances who committed a crime: he killed his mother and brother. She explained that he was among the best of people in character and that she was certain that the crime he committed, with no intension to justify the act, did not come without triggers. She asserted that "things do not come from nothingness" (Djahan#I1). This frame of mind extended, in Malik's case, to the workplace. He referred to it as an emotional and a social intelligence that allowed him to better understand and deal with patients, colleagues and managers, compared to his other colleagues, also medical doctors.

The findings discussed in this section are important because they clearly show that there is a connection between what readers read and their real worlds. Readers reported that through reading, they are constructing 'better' versions of themselves. Reading, then, appears to build bridges between people and increase their acceptance of others regardless of how different they might be. Taking the example of empathy, tolerance and better understanding of others, this is highly significant in relation to Algeria. As discussed at the end of sections 1.3 and 2.3.3, the country has suffered years of violence and divides, the effects of which can still be seen in the Algerian landscape. The various colonial forces that occupied Algeria throughout the centuries, and the civil war that lasted for a decade, all left their scars. Moreover, the evidence presented in sections 7.3.1.3 and 7.3.2.3 indicates the division over languages, and the experiences of readers speak volumes about the need for empathy and acceptance of differences in the region – not to speak about the ethnic conflicts that still exist between Arabs and Berbers, which are beyond the scope of this research. Thus, the importance of the promotion of reading is evident from these findings.

8.4.2 Problem-solving

My data appears to show that it is in the escapist act of reading that the majority of readers found answers to their predicaments. Evidence suggests that readers read as an escape from their problems. At first sight, one might argue that this is a form of fleeing one's responsibilities and an inability to face the real world and confront one's own problems, as has long been believed (Usherwood and Toyne, 2002). My data suggests that they go towards reading to find solutions to their problems, by relating to characters in their books and how these resolve a shared issue. The following excerpts illustrate this:

Lucy: … it was one time that I was in a bad place and, uh, that was when I read the first time the novel of *I Loved You more than I Should* and, uh, I don't know, because the hero had moved on, so it sort of helped me hate that person and move on (Lucy#I2).

Misha: *A Jewish Girl Lies within my Heart*… the hero passed through so many difficulties… so many complexes… and then she got out of it. So, um, I find all the time myself in those books. And they, um, kind of solve a certain problem in my life (Misha#I1).

This embodiment and identification with other characters whose experiences are closer to theirs seem to provide both a refuge and an elixir for some of their emotional aches. In this sense, reading about worlds that are similar to their own provides not only comfort, but also strength gained from characters. Misha mentioned sharing the solutions that characters deployed to solve their problems with her brother whenever he faced similar issues. Thus, their attraction towards characters who 'made it' at the end was apparent.

My data further suggests that experimenting with different identities is also something some of my respondents did. It has previously been mentioned that Misha, unhappy with her reality, read about other characters who were living a life that she desired. This slightly compensated for her desire to lead a different life, meanwhile she can achieve it. Furthermore, due to her lack of experience with romantic relationships and being a 'lover', she engaged in reading about it and tried to apply what she learned with her boyfriend. Although she admitted that not everything worked and that books offered a "utopian" vision of love that deluded her into thinking "…this is not supposed to happen. This is not what I read in the book", she still tried it (Misha#I1). Djahan, who out of being a reader and reading about "great authors", as she referred to them, was inspired to enrol in translation studies at university, and then became a translator and a writer. During one of the interviews, she expressed her admiration for Radwa Ashour, an Egyptian novelist who is married to Mourid al-Barghouti, a Palestinian poet, and has a son, Tamim al-Barghouti, who is also a poet. Djahan described this combination as: "the family that every Arab cultured dreams about" (Djahan#I1).

Another example is that of Amir who mentioned having read self-help books as a way of becoming self-confident. That is, contemplating his confident self, he read to explore this possibility and refashion his identity. In fact, two thirds of my respondents mentioned reading,

or having read, them. Malik described it as an "inevitable step" (Malik#I1). Others mentioned books by Anthony Robbins, Deepak Chopra, Ibrahim al-Fiqi, Stephen Covey and Wayne Dyer. This, in fact, can be related back to readers' feelings of alienation and being different that reverberated throughout my data. Reading self-help books could be interpreted as a step taken by readers to gain more validation of their identities as being different to those surrounding them. Misha, during an interview, asserted:

> Misha: …we go back to the motivational things [self-help books discussed earlier], like, they say that you are unique, you are unique, you are unique, you are not like others. So, people tend to break the society's or, yeah, the society's rules or conventions by doing something that is a bit different [reading] (Misha#I1).

She further explained that people are longing for validation in regards to being different and, therefore, read self-help books to reinforce it. Readers, according to her, get accustomed to the idea of feeling different; an idea that some of the self-help books reinforce and praise (Cherry, 2009). My intention, nonetheless, is not to make any claims about whether self-help books work or bring about any change, for this has not been evidenced through my research and is beyond its scope.

Reading in all those cases provided a 'figured world' for readers to contemplate their possibilities, experiment with various identities and refashion their own (Holland *et al.*, 1998). In this sense, the texts that readers read offered alternative ways of "being and enacting" and, therefore, allowed for improvisation and identity modification (Pahl, 2005, p. 128). They formed artefacts that mediated identity reconstruction and a refiguring of readers' worlds. The findings discussed in this section build upon the body of evidence on the role that escaping through reading plays in the lives of readers. Compton-Lilly's (2003) participant asserted that reading allowed her to "explore new worlds and new experiences" (p. 51). Kamhieh's (2012) respondent liked to escape to a world "where everything can happen" (p. 148). This research, therefore, adds further evidence to Begum's (2011) suggestion that although escaping and reconnecting with reality may sound contradictory, reading offers a means to "cement the reader's link to the 'real' world" (p. 743). Howard (2011) reinforces the idea that readers experiment with various identities and future selves by relating to other characters. She further argues that readers develop a sense of themselves as empowered to act upon the principles they gained through reading, such as empathy. My study, in this sense, similarly dispels the myth

that readers escape and retreat to their 'ivory towers', divorcing themselves from their 'real' worlds, and argues that it is an active and fruitful act.

It is important to also note that readers have read different texts to attain the same goal – that of coping with difficulties and solving their problems. This is another reason for not imposing any types of texts on readers, as their needs might be fulfilled by different books or other reading materials, and what works for a particular reader might not work for another. Someone might find solutions through a work of fiction (Clara, Lucy, Misha), through a self-help book (Amir, Djahan, Malik, Misha) or/and religious books and the *Quran* (Misha, Lucy).

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter further reinforces the complexity of reading practices and their relationship with readers' social environments and their identities. It argues that readers use reading to escape socialising with other people around whom they feel alienated, as well as to escape their realities and daily routines. By so doing, they create their own private reading worlds. It also argues that it is in this act of escapism that readers construct and reconstruct their identities, explore their possibilities and find solutions to their problems – whether this is sought after or happens unconsciously. Thus, reading forms a bridge that connects readers' 'unreal' and 'real' worlds. In this sense, my research takes its place alongside the body of literature that dispels the myth of readers who retreat to their 'imaginary' and 'unreal' worlds and do not fully participate in their 'real' worlds (e.g., Radway, 1984; Cherland, 1994; Ross, 1999; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Rothbauer, 2004; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011). This is discussed more fully in the literature review chapter, section 3.5.2.2.

Accordingly, it was presented in three main sections. In the first section, I set the scene for the reader and reported on readers' desires to escape through reading, and their triggers for doing so. The latter include escaping socialising with certain people, around whom they feel alienated and not understood. They also encompass escaping their realities - their problems – and daily routines. Reading, therefore, offers them a space to temporarily live in more desired realities. The second section argued that readers construct a 'secret' reader identity, in that they view themselves as 'behind closed doors' readers. Some environments can be hostile towards readers at times, which can lead some participants to avoid reading outside and create their

private reading worlds inside their homes. The latter consist of perceiving reading as a practice that should be kept private and intimate. The safety that reading in their homes, away from the hostility and the staring experienced outside, made it that their reading experiences were more enjoyable. Thus, readers enjoy reading when they are in a 'safe zone', and feel that they are in control of their reading practices, without being judged or forced to read something they have not chosen. Furthermore, this section argued that readers' escapism was balanced, in the sense that they all showed awareness of the importance of not 'melting' in reading. This term alludes to the fact that they should immerse themselves in their 'real' worlds, and that what they read should not remain 'theoretical'. This being said, change in their ways of thinking and behaviours should be an outcome of their reading.

In the third section, I argued that readers, as a result of plunging into 'unreal' worlds, construct different identities. The majority of readers could easily think about the changes brought about by reading. They have experimented with different identities that they have not necessarily experienced in their 'real' worlds, they have contemplated some possible selves, and they have connected with some of the characters they read about. This allowed them to become more connected to the people surrounding them, in that they perceived themselves as more empathetic and understanding of others. They have similarly found solutions to their problems. Although not all the change was positive, the majority described themselves as 'better' persons.

All these findings are significant because they, once again, show the interplay that exists between readers and their social worlds. This is evident in their engagement in reading as an escape from what happens in their lives, as well as the fact that it is triggered by their social environments. As it is an interplay, it also shows how readers feed into their worlds, in that what they experience when interacting with texts shapes their identities and, thus, feeds into their social environments. As argued earlier, this shows how important taking ownership and control over one's reading choices – and experiences more broadly – is for readers. A predicament that most readers reported facing relates to their busy schedules, which prevents them from engaging in reading more frequently given the hostility they encounter outside, forcing them to wait until they are in their 'safe zones' to read. This should be a concern, taking into consideration the numerous benefits that could be attained from reading. The context within which this research took place adds more weight to this concern because of its unique

history and the conflicts that the data discussed throughout the three chapters vividly indicates, and that still prevail. Developing empathy and understanding of others are arguably needed.

CHAPTER 09: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This research investigates reading practices within a group of graduates in Algeria. More specifically, it seeks to explore what influences their reading, as well as the role that reading plays in their lives. The following research questions guided the present inquiry:

- How do participants' social environments influence their reading practices?
- How do participants' social environments influence the construction of their 'reader' identity?
- To what extent do participants' reading practices impact on their social environments?
- How do the texts participants read impact on their identities?

In this final chapter, I start by summarising the main findings of my research with an attempt to answer my research questions. My contribution to the existing body of literature is also discussed. The implications, limitations and recommendations for further research are further outlined. I conclude the chapter with a reflection on this research. It is important to remind the reader, before proceeding with the section, that this research involved a small number of participants and, therefore, does not aim to make any generalisations. The findings, nonetheless, offer insights into a group of readers' reading practices that other readers from various parts of the world might relate to.

9.2 Key findings: Answering the research questions

This section aims at summarising the key findings and answering the research questions. The findings reported in chapters 06, 07 and 08 provide a nuanced, complex and multi-layered portrait of the nature of reading practices. This is due to an amalgam of various forces that influence these practices. As such, my findings show the complex relationships that exist between readers' reading practices, their social environments and their identities. I highlight these relationships while answering my research questions. This section is presented in two

sub-sections, each answering a pair of research questions – the first with the second, and the third with the fourth – for their interconnectedness. The first two research questions have been addressed in chapters 06, 07 and 08, and the second pair in chapters 07 and 08. In each sub-section, relevant themes are discussed.

9.2.1 Social environments' influence on the construction of reading identities and reading practices

The first two research questions have been addressed in chapters 06, 07 and 08. My findings demonstrate the importance of scrutinising the various social environments within which readers interact, and acknowledging their influence on reading practices and the meanings attributed to them. My research, hence, takes its place alongside the literature that views reading as a social practice (e.g., Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Kamhieh, 2012; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019), and argues for the merit of approaching reading as such in understanding the complexity of reading practices. In relation to readers' social environments, my findings further show that they have played a significant role in the construction of reading identities, and shaping reading practices. Arguably, delineating these influences is important to fathom the various encouraging or hindering forces involved in how readers come to see themselves as such. Three headings are discussed below: transmission and improvisation upon the *habitus*; 'mosaic' reader identities; reader identities in discord with the prevalent rules.

9.2.1.1 Transmission and improvisation upon the *habitus*

The evidence presented in this study demonstrates the crucial role that home environments play in the formation of a reading *habitus*. Viewing readers' reading dispositions through the lens of *habitus* entails an examination of their reading practices in relation to the social structures within which they take place. Bourdieu (1986) acknowledges the influence of the social context in shaping individual practices. *Habitus* is defined as a set of dispositions that orient agents to behave in certain ways, and in which childhood experiences are crucial (Thompson, 1991). For the majority of my participants, reading was fostered by their family members at an early age, and was, therefore, made a 'common' and 'natural' practice in which to engage; hence I refer

to them as ‘natural readers’. This was done by: ensuring early contact with books; reading to them; showing positive attitudes towards reading (section 6.2.1.1). At an initial phase of my data analysis, it became evident that readers in this study had different activators of reading: home environments or functional reasons (section 6.2.1). Unlike ‘natural readers’, ‘anomalous readers’ engaged in reading for functional reasons such as learning languages or succeeding in school (section 6.2.1.2). They reported being the only, or first, ones to read in their families; hence I call them ‘anomalous readers’. Doula, for instance, started reading to learn French for the symbolic capital it carried in his primary school, and after he had been bullied by his teacher and peers for not speaking it. It soon became apparent that although both groups had reading triggers as children, the family’s influence was stronger in sustaining reading for longer among natural readers. For anomalous readers, reading ceased when they attained the goals behind which they initially started reading. This research, therefore, adds further evidence to Swift’s (2016) suggestion, that the family played a major role in “normalising” reading (Swift, 2016, p. 106).

My findings further build upon the body of evidence about the significance of the home environment in encouraging reading (e.g., Cherland, 1994; Michaudon, 2001; Baker and Scher, 2002; Compton-Lilly, 2003; Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Allington *et al.*, 2010; Clark and Hawkins, 2010; Evans *et al.*, 2010; Kamhieh, 2012; Yeo *et al.*, 2014; Swift, 2016; Merga and Roni, 2018). For instance, Baker and Scher (2002) in the USA, combining quantitative and qualitative data among pupils aged six and their parents, argue that parents who hold positive attitudes towards reading transmit them to their children “either directly through their words or indirectly through the nature of the literacy experiences they provide” (p. 265). Cherland (1994), undertaking an ethnographic study to explore reading practices within schoolgirls aged eleven to thirteen in a Canadian town, reports that her participants emulated their mothers’ reading practices.

This study, therefore, challenges the growing evidence arising from studies in a number of Arab countries, that argues there exists a lack of parental involvement in their children’s reading lives in numerous Arab countries (e.g., Bendriss and Golkowska’s, 2011; MBRF and UNDP, 2016; Altmann, 2019; see section 2.2). Although arguably my research can only speak about a handful of people, a significant benefit of a study with a small number of participants is that the researcher can spend time gaining participants’ trust and unveiling deeper evidence

about a phenomenon. In this study, participants revealed that they were encouraged to read as children, even those whose parents were illiterate or non-readers.

Evidence from my data further shows the power of cultural artefacts, such as books, in improvising upon the family's *habitus*. What is particularly significant about some 'natural readers' is the fact that their parents were illiterate or uninterested in reading, as Lucy and Malik described them respectively. Although the parents did not possess reading dispositions, they encouraged their offspring to read. Malik's father bought him books while his mother kept him informed about any reading-related events on television. Lucy's mother provided her with books with which she remembered playing as a child. In both cases, the parents used cultural artefacts to change the family's *habitus*, and create a new artefact in that reading became part of their families' practices (section 6.2.1.1).

Artefacts refer to the means by which "worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful" (Holland *et al*., 1998, p. 61). They can be material, such as a book, or immaterial, such as a language or a label, and are attributed a collective meaning (Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007; section 4.3.3). My findings are significant because they stress the importance of artefacts in improvising upon one's *habitus*. In this sense, immersing children in a "scholarly culture" where books are valued encourages them to become readers. This reinforces Evans *et al.*'s (2010) statements that ensuring an inviting environment for reading can be more important than the parent's education (p. 171). The provision of books can especially be seen to have contributed to eliciting reading among children at an early age (Allington *et al*., 2010; Evans *et al*., 2010; National Literacy Trust, 2019). More importantly, the mere presence of books within the home was crucial in fostering reading by Lucy and Malik, even though they both only had school or religious books as children. Thus, although the books were not self-selected, as was the case in Allington *et al.*'s (2010) study, they contributed to the fact that they became readers. Having early contact with books, therefore, is essential in making reading a 'common' practice among readers since their childhood (section 6.2.1.1).

Encouragement outside the home environment, especially within peer groups, is significant in maintaining readers' engagement in reading and validating their reader identities (section 6.2.2). Although the home environment was significant in triggering reading within children, a closer look at my participants' stories further reveals the need for having support throughout the reading journey, and not only at the beginning. Jim's case best illustrates this.

Among all participants, he was the only one who mentioned not engaging in any reading-related activities with his friends, after he initially did not identify himself or his friends as readers. He further described reading as "boring" (Jim#I1). That is, although his reading was initiated by his parents during his childhood, he did not identify as a reader and his attitudes towards reading were negative in some instances of the interview, unlike all the other participants. Furthermore, all three anomalous readers reported that they only identified as readers after befriending other readers, despite having read for functional reasons. They all said they had experienced a phase of 'hibernation', in that they ceased reading after they attained their goals, and only 'reconnected' with reading after meeting these friends. That said, peers played two significant roles: 'reinforcers' for natural readers, in that they helped to reinforce their reading and views of themselves as readers, as well as to explore various reading choices (section 6.2.2.2); 'reactivators' for anomalous readers, in that they caused them to reconnect with reading (section 6.2.2.3). Anomalous readers, therefore, improvised upon their initial *habitus* and constructed reading identities by their engagement in reading-related activities with their peers. It is not clear whether they were attracted to their friends because they were readers, or whether they reconnected with reading because their friends read, making reading a way to guarantee their "full participation" within their peer groups (Sellers, 2019, p. 947). What is evident throughout the data, however, is the significance of being surrounded by other people who validate readers' reading identities and share or encourage their interest in reading.

The findings discussed in this section reinforce the role of cultural artefacts in the improvisation upon and change of *habitus*, which Bourdieu (1986) does not capitalise on (section 4.2.4). His work is described as determinist in the sense that it enslaves agents to their pasts and focuses on the "reproduction aspects of the fields", instead of their change (Thomson, 2014, p. 77). For instance, Jenkins (1992) argues that he does not account for change and limits people's agency. Moreover, *habitus* is believed to reinforce determinism "under the appearance of relaxing it" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 132). These claims seem at odds given that Bourdieu introduced his concept of *habitus* to establish a balance between the influence of social structures and individual agency (Reay, 2004). In fact, Bourdieu mentions the possibility of change. Addressing his critics, he notes that *habitus* "is not the fate that some people read into it", and that it is "an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 133, emphasis in original). My findings, therefore, confirm his statement. As was evidenced earlier, natural readers' *habitus* was

reinforced and anomalous readers' *habitus* was modified through their interactions with various social groups. Thus, it has been made clear that change of *habitus* is possible. Nonetheless, what seems to be missing in Bourdieu's concepts is how this change occurs. Holland *et al*. (1998) and Bartlett and Holland (2002) also critique his work and argue that he does not attend to local interactions and day-to-day practices, leading to a "lack of localism", as referred to by Choudry and Williams (2017, p. 250). That is, Bourdieu's work misses a micro level illustration of how change happens and how agents enact their agencies through everyday interactions and using cultural artefacts to improvise upon their *habitus* and (re)construct identities – an aspect that Holland *et al*. (1998) and Bartlett and Holland (2002) focus on (section 4.3).

My findings resonate with other studies that stress peer influence on readers, but also add more nuance regarding the various roles that peers can play among adult readers (e.g., Cherland, 1994; Hopper, 2005; Sterponi, 2007; Clark, Osborne and Dugdale, 2009; Ooi and Liew, 2011; Kamhieh, 2012; Mansor *et al*., 2012; Merga, 2014; Mottram, 2014; Powell, 2014; Jones, 2015; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). A similarity that can be discerned across these studies is their focus on children or teens, with the exception of Ooi and Liew (2011) and Kamhieh (2012), indicating a lack of research on peers' influence on adult readers. My research, therefore, shows that even among adult readers, peers' influence is strong and leads to the construction and validation of reading identities. Kamhieh's (2012) qualitative study among female Emirati university students draws upon the importance of family and friends in triggering, facilitating and, eventually, sustaining reading among readers, and points to the fact that reading can be triggered by functional reasons. Her findings, however, do not indicate any link between those who only read for specific purposes and cease reading after those are attained, and peer groups' influence. Furthermore, my research challenges statements of the family environment being a determining factor in readers' positive attitudes towards reading and their identification as readers. For instance, Clark and Hawkins (2010), surveying 17,089 primary and secondary pupils aged eight to sixteen across the UK, found that the children who grow up in an encouraging environment show more enjoyment, exhibit positive attitudes towards reading and have more frequency of reading than those who do not. As explained earlier, although Jim asserted being encouraged to read as a child, he did not show much enjoyment and instead described reading as 'tiring'. Furthermore, three of my participants grew up in families that they described as indifferent towards reading. Nonetheless, they held very positive attitudes towards reading, after reading had been triggered and

reinforced outside their homes. My findings are in line with Ross *et al.*'s (2006) statement: although early years' inculcation of reading is essential in fostering reading throughout life, it is never too late to read.

9.2.1.2 'Mosaic' reading identities

Readers' reading identities have been found to be coloured by various sub-identities, forming 'mosaic' reader identities (section 6.3). Readers carried with them various other sub-identities – constituting their 'whole' identities – and negotiated them as they interacted within and across the different fields that encompass their social environments. The most salient ones were those related to their religious practices (section 6.3.1), the languages they speak (section 6.3.2), and their occupations (section 6.3.3). If each sub-identity is pictured as a pebble of a certain colour, the intersection of reader identities with the linguistic, religious and occupation-related identities would result in a mosaic. The mosaic concept depicts the diversity inherent in the construction of reading identities and, thus, the variety of existing reader identities. These sub-identities were constructed along readers' interaction with their social environments. For instance, reading religion-related texts appeared to be highly valued by many of my participants' households. Malik, for instance, was enrolled in a religious school as a child and his readings then were exclusively about religion. Jim's reading as a child was primarily in French, while Clara's, Djahan's and Lucy's were in standard Arabic. All four of them maintained that these remained their preferred languages for reading. Doula's case was more complex, in that he started reading in French for its symbolic value within his school setting, but then shifted to Arabic after meeting a friend and joining an Arabic reading club. In both cases, he improvised upon his initial *habitus* and deployed the language artefact as a membership card to enter the school and the reading club fields. This further shows the complexities involved in constructing a certain reader identity, and its changing nature.

Gaining insights into the diversity of reading identities and attending to the sub-levels of identity is important to scrutinise because it helps disrupt binary divides regarding what 'reading' means and who a 'reader' is in comparison to a 'non-reader'. Furthermore, acknowledging this diversity is significant because it adds weight to the argument that reading should not be viewed as a simple and homogeneous concept that can be defined within rigid

boundaries, leading to the inclusion of certain types of readers and the exclusion of others. For example, many of the respondents considered reading the *Quran* along with other religious books to be part of their leisure reading (section 6.3.1). If a claim is made about reading being limited to fiction, this would exclude these readers. Gee's (2017) sub-type principle is particularly relevant to this discussion (p. 83). His main argument revolves around the need to delve into sub-types (and sub-sub-types) below identities to be able to see diversity and, therefore, step away from making generalisations and totalising statements: "[r]eal diversity exists one or more levels down below any general label" (p. 83). In this sense, instead of situating all readers under the 'reader' label, delving into the minutiae of their sub-identities shows how diverse they can be. The implication of this is that acknowledging this diversity is likely to be the start of legitimising all reading practices and 'reader' identities instead of imposing 'one way' of reading. He established this notion in relation to: "activity-based" identities and "relational" identities (p. 83). The former refers to the identities that people 'freely' choose, such as: birders, gardeners, gamers (Gee, 2017). Relational identities are those that are "often imposed on or assigned to people, the result of 'fate', or picked up in early socialization in life within families", such as: cultural identities (Native-American), religious identities (Christian), age (elderly), among others (Gee, 2017, p. 87).

The findings presented in this research, although supporting his sub-type principle, challenge the binary distinction that he makes between these two types of identities. That is, there appears to be a fine line between some "activity-based" and "relational" identities. Taking the example of a 'reader', this could be an activity-based identity in that people identify as readers and 'freely' choose to be readers, or a relational identity in that it has been transmitted by their families. Furthermore, I feel sceptical about the use of the term 'freely', for my research has shown how complex reading practices are and that, in many cases, reading can be a means to accumulate capital (section 7.3.2). Examples of this include reading in French, or reading a paperback book for the symbolic capital that these acts carry within particular settings (section 7.3.2). Thus, does this count as 'freely' choosing to read? Furthermore, if we adhere to his classification of these identities, some linguistic and religious identities would be referred to as 'relational' identities, vocation-related identities would be perceived as 'activity-based' identities, and 'reader' identities could be both. Instead of seeing these types of identities as two separate entities, as seems to be Gee's (2017) conceptualisation of them, considering the intersection between all these identities brings more diversity to light: mosaic 'reader' identities that are flavoured by their various other sub-identities (section 6.3).

Thus, exploring these sub-types of identities brings about a diversity – readers of certain texts, in certain languages, certain places and times – that would have lain unrevealed beneath the mere label of 'reader' and, therefore, certain 'reader' identities would be legitimised because of meeting an already established benchmark related to the totalising labels. This is especially significant because impositions on readers led to the struggles – staring, hostility, feelings of guilt and shame – that they have experienced and became associated with their reading experiences (section 7.2). The intersection of sub-identities is echoed in Kamhieh's (2012) concept of reader-as-XYZ that drives readers' choices and explains their reasons for reading, such as reader-as-Muslim or reader-as-Arab (p. 96). She, however, does not account for diversity nor is it something she considers in her work.

9.2.1.3 Reader identities in discord with the prevalent rules

The evidence presented in this thesis indicates that the majority of readers have experienced struggles as they navigated their ways within and across various fields (section 7.2). They repeatedly used terms such as 'unusual', 'unfamiliar', 'novel', 'strange', 'anomalous phenomenon' and 'forbidden' to describe the views of reading within settings like: the workplace; the university; parks; public transport; social media. As such, I refer to them as 'fields of struggle'. The data revealed that readers underwent two forms of challenges within these settings: shaming experiences (section 7.2.1), and feelings of guilt and shame (section 7.2.2). Shaming experiences were caused by the fact that readers revealed their reader identities in settings where reading did not seem to be perceived as a welcome practice, or where certain texts or ways of reading were more favoured than others, such as: reading religious books; reading at home or in libraries. Accordingly, participants were explicitly treated with hostility or stared at for reading in the fields mentioned earlier. For instance, Djosour witnessed hostile comments from two men, as she was reading on the bus, requesting her to read at home and that the bus was no place for reading (section 7.2.1.1). Doula and Misha reported witnessing 'strange' looks for reading in public places (section 7.2.1.2). The feelings of guilt and shame, however, resulted from either identifying as a non-reader, not reading what was deemed a 'must-read', or not reading as much as readers thought they should. Djahan, for instance, expressed relief for encountering Pierre Bayard's (2007) book *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read*, and the 'guilt complex' from which it freed her, reinforcing her belief that she did not have to read every classic (section 7.2.2).

What was more surprising to me was the fact that the unfamiliarity of reading went beyond public transport and parks and included academic institutions, such as universities and schools. Djahan recounted how one of her teachers made a statement about being certain that none of the students was a reader, and described her as an "exception" (Djahan#FG2). Clara and Djahan further described their reading experiences in primary school as a "punishment" and that their teachers had no interest in reading (Djahan#FG2). This study, therefore, problematises the role of schools and universities in encouraging reading, being one of the pillars of educational attainment (Sullivan, 2001; National Endowment of the Arts, 2007). This is particularly significant because most of the participants asserted that universities were the places where they met the friends they described as readers, and where they thrived as readers. Thus, more should be done to facilitate and encourage university students' engagement in reading. Furthermore, although it is beyond the scope of this research to investigate reading in relation to schools and the educational system, the literature indicates a clear lack of research and attention to reading (section 2.3.2). The lack of school libraries is reported by Bouanaka (2015). She claims that 93% of Algerian schools do not possess a library, and that very few are found in big cities. Moreover, it was not until June 2018 that an official document was issued by the Algerian Ministry of Education, urging schools to integrate leisure reading activities in their curriculum and to promote reading clubs. Arguably, much more needs to be done regarding the promotion of reading in schools, universities and other settings. As such, it is no wonder that people still view reading as a strange phenomenon.

It became evident from the analysis that both types of struggles originated from impositions of certain forms of reading or non-reading, with which readers' reading identities were incompatible. As a result, readers negotiated their reading *habitus* and constructed rebellious and compliant reader identities (sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 respectively). They did so through the act of reading, the content of what they read or the languages in which they read. On the one hand, Clara, Doula and Malik read on public transport, knowing that this was perceived as an unwelcome practice within these settings (section 7.3.1.1); Clara resisted reading Shakespeare although she had been made to believe that, as a teacher of English, she had to know his work (section 7.3.1.2); Misha rebelled against the social structures that dictated the symbolic status of French and resisted using the language in reading or speaking (section 7.3.1.3). These readers are what Sellers (2019) refers to as "outside readers" in the sense that they "actively positioned themselves" against the dominant social norms, as outsiders, rather than striving to "fit in" (p. 945). On the other hand, Misha and Jim conformed by reading from

their phones on the bus (section 7.3.2.1); Malik read self-help books because they were trending (section 7.3.2.2); Doula read in French because of its high status (section 7.3.2.3). Similarly, Scholes (2015), Swift (2016) and Sellers (2019) report that their participants concealed their reading identities within fields – peer groups in this case – due to the dominant culture being unwelcoming of reading (section 2.3.1.2). Scholes (2015) refers to these readers as "clandestine readers" for concealing their enjoyment of reading to appeal to the "anti-reading culture" amongst their peers (p. 364). Sellers (2019) refers to them as "resistant readers" for hiding their reading due to believing that it had a "negative currency" within peer groups (p. 942). Interestingly, some of my participants adopted both identities in different settings. For example, Malik was rebellious on the bus and read a paperback book. At his workplace, however, he conformed to the rules by abstaining from reading there, after his colleagues treated him with hostility for doing so. He asserted solely aspiring to being a good doctor at his workplace, which excluded his identity as a reader. The prevailing cultural capital within this field seemed to be a doctor, and Malik was interested in accumulating it, which clearly entailed not showing a reader identity.

The 'fashion of reading' was particularly interesting as a finding. In line with the previous discussion on using artefacts to improvise upon one's *habitus* is the 'reading fashion' phenomenon (section 7.3.2.2). It entails performing reading without actually being a 'real' reader, as pinpointed by four of my participants, in places that value certain texts, particular languages, or the mere act of reading. In this sense, reading was exhibited almost like a Gucci handbag or the latest iPhone to project a certain identity and gain status in certain fields within which those artefacts have cultural capital. Reading in French, for example, appears to be attributed a positive currency within particular settings, in which case some readers felt compelled to read in French. This can be understood in light of Algeria's history, reinforcing the importance of acknowledging the influence of and scrutinising the social contexts within which reading practices occur and their meanings are embedded (Cherland, 1994; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Bartlett, 2007; Scholes, 2015, Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). The French colonialism lasted for 132 years in Algeria. Throughout the colonial period, there were constant conflicts over the status of French and Arabic, each being promoted as the most suitable for the country (Benrabah, 2014). Furthermore, the French coloniser directed its efforts towards eliminating Arabic or even bilingual (Arabic-French) schools (Djité, 1992). This meant that only few people had access to education – that was in French – which might explain the view of those who speak or read in French as 'educated' and 'cultured'. Thus, the status attributed

to languages still persists and shows through reading practices and the choice of the languages in which to read depending on the meanings attributed to them within their social environments (sections 7.3.1.3 and 7.3.2.3). Misha referred to it as some readers' way of belonging to the "*faux riches*" (Misha#I1).

The use of artefacts to position oneself and assert a certain identity is reminiscent of Bartlett's (2007) research. Her ethnographic study in two Brazilian cities demonstrates how people use cultural artefact to "seem" or "feel" literate (p. 51). The latter refers to their views of themselves as literates, while the former refers to others' views of them as such. Her participants used various artefacts, such as pencil cases, printed materials and a blackboard to feel and seem literate. By wearing a school t-shirt and carrying a plastic folder outside the school, two of her participants strived to 'seem' literate to others (Bartlett, 2007). Another participant kept a blackboard in her kitchen, on which the theme of the literacy class was written, to help her feel literate and "less stupid" (p. 60). Another group of readers that Sellers (2019) mentions is that of "social readers" whose engagement in reading is driven by their desire to fully participate within peer groups rather than by their own interest in reading (p. 946). This appears to be their way of refashioning their identities. This way, using Bartlett's (2007) line of thought, they could challenge their social positioning and assert themselves as readers by using artefacts.

The findings discussed in this section contribute to the literature as they go further to show the strong influence of readers' social environments beyond their families' and peers' fields and, therefore, reinforce the significance of scrutinising other settings. That is, most of the literature only considered – all or one of – readers' interactions with their families, peer groups and schools (e.g., Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Kamhieh, 2012; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). Scholes (2015) in Australia and Sellers (2019) in the United Kingdom, for example, look at young readers' interactions within school settings, while Cherland (1994) in Canada focuses on their homes and schools. My research, nonetheless, looks at reading practices within and beyond some of these fields to include readers' interactions within wider settings such as: the university, the workplace, parks, public transport, and social media. The present research offers fine-grained details of instances in different settings and, hence, provides a better understanding of readers' complex practices. It can, therefore, be argued that solely looking at family, peers and schools leaves us blind to the other forces influencing reading practices.

Furthermore, it sheds light on the effects of impositions within various fields in restricting people's freedom to read anything, anywhere or, even, choose not to read. All participants were clearly disturbed by these incidents and described them using terms such as 'xenophobia', 'bothersome', 'disturbing' and limited their ownership of their reading practices. Thus, my research expands on the previously-mentioned studies that focus on young readers (Cherland, 1994; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019), and shows that struggles are similarly experienced by adult readers when their reading identities are in "conflict with social norms" (Sellers, 2019, p. 943). Although Kamhieh's (2012) study focuses on university students in the United Arab Emirates, her findings do not indicate any struggles. My findings, in this sense, add to the literature by reporting on adult readers' experiences. Moreover, language – e.g., Arabic/French – use as a means to resist social structures or abide by the rules adds more complexity to readers' reading experiences. Yet, previous literature has overlooked readers' choices of language. Most importantly, this study demonstrates how impositions legitimise the struggles, or symbolic violence, to which readers are subjected for not meeting specific standards set within particular fields: reading religious books; abstaining from reading outside; reading at home or in a library; reading the texts deemed canonical. This is worthy of attention because it leads to delegitimising any other reading practices that transgress these 'norms'. All these findings taken together back up the argument put forward by MBRF and UNDP (2016) regarding the need to improve opportunities to access reading at all levels: family, school and society. It argues that: "[c]reating a generation that both actively reads and enjoys reading is a shared responsibility that requires concerted efforts by families and schools, as well as through active political will and strong social support" (p. 30).

9.2.2 Reading practices' influence on readers' social environments and their identities

The second pair of research questions has been addressed in chapters 07 and 08. My findings indicate that readers' reading practices have an influence on their social environments and their various sub-identities. Three themes are discussed in relation to these research questions: reproduction of the same struggles; creation of a new artefact; (re)construction of identities through texts. As a reminder, the two research questions I attempt to answer in this section are:

- To what extent do participants' reading practices impact on their social environments?
- How do the texts participants read impact on their identities?

9.2.2.1 Reproduction of the same struggles

There was a tendency amongst the majority of readers in this study to believe that their ways of reading – the texts they read, the languages they choose or the places where they read – were more appropriate than those practised by other readers (section 7.4.1). This is what I refer to as 'reading narcissism' insinuating a sense of appropriation of reading among some readers in my research. They consciously positioned themselves in relation to other readers, and perceived reading in terms of a hierarchy: 'real' reading and 'fake' reading. This was particularly an unexpected finding because those same readers strongly opposed the shaming experiences they were subjected to and the judgments of others via-a-vis their reading tastes (section 7.2.1). Furthermore, they attributed a few characteristics to those 'fake' readers, such as: reading outside their homes; reading texts with no substance; reading in French; excessive reverence for paperback books; making speaking about reading the centre of their discussions; telling others that they have visited the international book fair, among others. Interestingly, some of these features are what these readers proclaimed to be their rights from Daniel Pennac's (1992/2006) *Rights of the Reader* (sections 7.2.1.1 and 3.2; Appendix A). These included readers' rights to 'read anything' and 'anywhere', among others.

Readers, by so doing, reproduced the same struggles they experienced. The symbolic violence, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) refer to it, that readers were subjected to in the form of shaming and hostile incidents due to impositions from their social environments regarding their reading is what they reproduced (section 7.2). Although their judgments could be argued to be far less hostile than what they have experienced, this 'reading narcissism' and viewing reading in terms of hierarchies, as my research shows, led participants to feelings of guilt and shame for not reading what is deemed a 'must-read' (section 7.2.2). By condemning other readers, they were feeding into the same inequalities by limiting reading to a single definition, reinforcing the reading hierarchies and, eventually, validating certain reading identities that were congruent which their own, and excluding those that were not. It, therefore, follows that these readers were very much part of the problem as much as the people that they reported judged them, and whose staring and comments they found bothersome. This goes further to demonstrate the strong influence that their social environments had on their definitions of reading, in that they unconsciously reproduced these meanings and inflicted restrictions upon other readers that were not necessarily like them.

The present research contributes to the existing literature because it problematises the role that readers play in feeding into the same rules that limit readers' freedom to take full ownership of their reading practices, and that create struggles. That is, the literature reviewed projects a sense of readers being 'victims' of their social environments, in that the conflicts they experience are a result of their reading identities not being cognate with the predominant cultures of the social groups surrounding them (Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019). Scholes (2015), Swift (2016) and Sellers (2019), for instance, report on how some readers were compelled to conceal their reading identities due to these being incompatible with the predominant cultures of their peer groups. Their studies, however, do not scrutinise the active role that readers play in perpetuating the same impositions, through setting a benchmark against which they judged what a 'reader' and 'reading' should be like. Thus, 'reading narcissism', to the best of my knowledge, has not been mentioned across the literature. This finding is significant because if the intention is to democratise reading, it is crucial to look at all the infrastructure included in perpetuating these inequalities or legitimising certain reading choices and experiences and not others, including the role played by readers in this amalgam of influences. Thus, capitalising on the perceptions of readers towards reading and other readers and what this adds to the equation is vital to obtain a clearer and more complete picture, rather than solely looking at family, schools and peers, as is the case in most of the literature.

9.2.2.2 Creation of a new artefact

My findings reveal that readers in this study had an influence on their social environments. Engaging in reading-related activities within various fields, including educational institutions, the workplace, parks, public transport and social media, contributed to the creation of an artefact – the 'reading culture', as referred to by my participants (section 7.4.2). Some readers aimed at spreading reading around them by: founding reading clubs; recommending books to others; sharing their favourite passages on social media; organising events for group reading in public places. Djahan explained how group reading in a park attracted people who appeared to have no interest in reading and, further, attempted to intimidate her because of the novel she was reading (section 7.2.1.1). She explained that one of them came back, asked her for a book and read a few pages. Doula similarly noted how reading while queuing near the university food court made other students around him speak quietly, which he contended has never previously been the case (section 7.4.2). Readers, in this case, played an active role in

refiguring their social environments through the use of cultural artefacts and, therefore, contributed to promoting reading, making it more "acceptable" (Malik#I1), and seeing a reader as a "normal person" within various fields (Doula#I3).

The role that readers played in the promotion of reading and the impact it had on their communities is especially important in relation to the setting in which my data was collected, in that reading could be argued to be witnessing its baby steps (sections 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.3). After witnessing French colonialism from 1830 until 1962, and a decade of civil war during the 1990s, Algeria was left with high rates of illiteracy and poverty (Abdelillah, 2016). Furthermore, during the civil war, many people who were involved in the book industry and cultural practices were either killed or exiled (Abdelillah, 2016). This partially explains the fact that reading in Algeria has only started captivating the government's attention in recent years, as mentioned earlier. Building libraries across the country is also one of the main projects that the Ministry of Culture has been working towards attaining (Ministère de la Culture, 2016). There has also been a drastic increase in (functional) literacy rates in recent years (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2018), rendering the possibility of making reading more accessible to a wider population. Reading can, therefore, be argued to be in its infancy stage in Algeria. A change of culture seems to emerge and it is important to research reading in light of this shift, giving more weight to the present research.

9.2.2.3 (Re)construction of identities through reading

Reading was a means through which participants in this study constructed and reconstructed their identities. The texts that they read provided a means to escape (section 8.2), and an opportunity to experiment with various identities, contemplate future selves and explore their agencies (section 8.4.2). Misha avowed that she was unhappy with her reality, and that reading offered her a way of living her desired reality through book characters who lived that reality. This was, in a sense, a coping mechanism that she used to create an alternative and better reality for herself. She also read about love relationships to construct a 'lover' identity, as she explained it was her first experience. Richardson and Eccles (2007) assert that through reading, readers are able to "try on and contemplate future selves" in different areas, such as beliefs and values, occupations, romance, adventures, taking risks and relationships (p. 5). Lucy similarly asserted coping with her separation from her boyfriend after the protagonist overcame a similar situation.

This embodiment and identification with characters in books, and its potential in helping readers cope with their predicaments, is reflective of Radway's (1984) and Cherland's (1994) seminal ethnographies in Canada (section 3.5.2.2). The school girls in Cherland's (1994) study were attracted to strong-willed female characters, imagined themselves as such and, most importantly, questioned the social structures that dictated what being 'good' girls entailed. The women in Radway's (1984) research obtained the emotional nourishment that was missing in their lives by "escap[ing] figuratively into a fairy tale where a heroine's similar needs are adequately met" and, therefore, "vicariously attend[ing] to their own requirements" (p. 93). Reading, therefore, helps readers "imagine – and create – new ways of being in the world" (Sweeney, 2008, p. 304). Some participants' views of themselves also changed, in that most of them reported becoming more 'understanding' and 'empathetic' towards other people around them (section 8.4.1). Readers escaped their 'real' worlds and engaged with 'unreal' ones to return to the former with (re)constructed identities (section 8.4). In this sense, these texts provided alternative worlds, or figured worlds, where readers could contemplate possible selves and (re)construct their identities and refigure their worlds (Holland *et al*., 1998). As such, these findings reinforce the body of literature that claims that reading is a catalyst in identity construction (Richardson and Eccles, 2007).

These findings are important because they add to the literature that dispels the myth of the reader who escapes into imaginary worlds and does not actively participate in social life (e.g., Radway, 1984; Cherland, 1994; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Sweeney, 2008; Lindell, 2009; Begum, 2011; Howard, 2011). My research shows that although escaping and reconnecting with one's social world may sound like an "oxymoron", as referred to by Begum (2001), reading offers this possibility (p. 742). My findings, thus, confirm the claims that reverberate across the literature asserting that reading can be a way to "cement the reader's link to the 'real' world" (p. 743). Thus, instead of viewing readers who escape through reading as passive and unable to engage with those around them, it is important to understand their reasons for escaping, for Radway (1984) contends that delving into this allows for an understanding of the cultural circumstances that lead readers to particular texts (Radway, 1984). More importantly, it is essential to celebrate escaping through reading for its myriad benefits. My research taps into these conditions and further reveals that reading provides a means to cope with the alienation that readers feel within their immediate environments. It could be said to have allowed them ownership and more control over their reading practices and choices, but, most importantly, it allowed them control over their

identities and what they wanted to be and become instead of certain other identities being enforced on them (sections 8.2.1 and 8.3.1). Thus, this study adds to the literature that did not consider delving into readers' reasons for escaping, such as Kamhieh's (2012) and Coban's (2018). What is similarly significant about these findings is the benefit of reading and its role in the lives of readers, offering them a 'safe zone' to read, refashion their identities and refigure their worlds. As such, it must be emphasised that reading should be encouraged and readers should be allowed ownership of their reading choices, for the potential of this artefact has clearly been shown to contribute to their identity (re)construction.

9.3 Contribution

This section sketches the contribution of my study in relation to reading and identity research, and to the theory.

9.3.1 Reading and identity research

My research contributes to the existing body of literature on reading and identity by providing an understanding of the complex relations that exist between reading practices, identities and social environments. Most of the literature on reading and identity either focused on the relationship between readers' 'reader' identities and their social environments, or the relationship between their 'whole' identities, or various sub-identities, and their reading practices, specifically the texts they read. The present research, nonetheless, brings both perspectives together to which scant attention is directed. Thus, my research builds upon literature on reading and identity research looking at both perspectives (e.g., Cherland, 1994; McCarthey, 2001; Kamhieh, 2012): readers constructing and negotiating their 'reader' identities through their interactions with their social environments (e.g., Scholes, 2015; Swift, 2016; Sellers, 2019), and readers (re)constructing their identities through the texts they read (e.g., Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011). It is, therefore, clear from this research that taking both perspectives into consideration is fundamental in yielding deeper insights into the complexity of reading practices.

9.3.2 Theory

The theoretical implications of this research are also fruitful. By combining Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of *habitus*, capital and field with Holland *et al.*'s (1998) identities in practice, cultural artefacts and figured worlds, it was possible to understand how readers' reading *habitus* is formed and improvised upon, and how reading identities are constructed through the use of cultural artefacts in everyday interactions, as was discussed earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, by analysing readers' reading dispositions as *habitus*, it was possible to understand their reading practices in relation to their social environments and how these fields are governed by rules that dictate the predominant currency within them, leading some agents to change their *habitus* to accumulate this capital. Offering more depth, Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts helped to shed light on particular instances where cultural artefacts – such as the act of reading, the content of the reading material, and its language – are used to construct particular reading identities to "feel" or "seem" as readers (Bartlett, 2007, p. 51). This could be said to be a response to the appeal made by Bartlett and Holland (2002) and Bartlett (2007) for more investigations into literacy practices using Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts. Additionally, Gee's (2017) sub-type principle and Kamhieh's (2012) reader-as-XYZ offer a useful analytic tool with which to explore the diversity that lies beneath the 'reader' label, and how reading identities are shaped by readers' other sub-identities. These theoretical tools coalesce together to form a fruitful analytic tool through which reading practices can be articulated and understood.

Holland *et al.*'s (1998) propositions further helped in explaining how readers engage in the 'figured worlds' of reading, offering them a space to 'try on' various identities and explore their possibilities. In this sense, the texts they read are artefacts that mediate their agency and offer them an opportunity to refashion their identities and, therefore, refigure their worlds. Pahl (2005) draws upon their concepts in her ethnographic study about video games (section 4.3.2). She argues that video games offer spaces for children to explore multiple identities and various ways of being, which contribute to modifying their *habitus*. In the same way, reading, as my findings indicate, was a means through which readers improvised upon their *habitus* and (re)constructed their identities (section 8.4). Reading and the texts that readers read have not been conceptualised as such using Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts, although there is literature that supports this idea. That is, much of the literature used in this research demonstrates how reading offers spaces for escapism through which readers explore their various possibilities

and start enacting these identities (e.g., Cherland, 1994; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002; Richardson and Eccles, 2007; Howard, 2011). The schoolgirls in Cherland's (1994) study remain a great example of this, for their reading of fiction allowed them to explore the possibilities that were available to them to position themselves in the world and contest the roles that their families imposed on them, leading them to negotiate their identities. In this sense, readers project into alternative worlds, or figured worlds, "where identities can be modified" (Pahl, 2005, p. 98). My research, therefore, shows that Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concepts are useful to further our understanding of the figured world of reading and the possibility it offers of (re)constructing identities.

9.4 Implications

The findings reported in this research show the strong influence that readers' social environments had on their reading practices and the construction of their 'reader' identities. It could be argued that democratising reading and making it accessible to everyone constitutes a joint effort across a whole infrastructure, including families, peer groups, educational institutions, the publishing industry, the government and the media. As rightfully put by Cremin (2014), readers should view themselves as "members of communities that view reading as a significant and enjoyable activity" (p. 15). Thus, the hope is for this research to start a conversation about reading in the Algerian setting, its role in the lives of readers, as well as the role of all these parties in promoting it.

9.4.1 Families and peers

Following the findings related to the importance of family and peers in readers' reading lives (sections 6.2.1.1 and 6.2.2.1), there is a need for both groups to encourage reading. As far as the home environment is concerned, reading-related practices – ensuring early contact with books, reading to children and showing positive attitudes towards reading – should be encouraged. Book provision especially proved to be a powerful tool for inciting children to establish a bond with reading even before being able to read, and even when parents do not or cannot read. Thus, family members' efforts should be focused on providing an inviting reading environment, where books are available, reading is practiced or, at least, thought of positively

and encouraged, to make reading a ‘common’ practice at an early age. More ‘normalising’ of reading as a practice necessitates other social groups, such as peers. The presence of peers who share readers’ passion for reading was crucial in reinforcing their reading practices and identities (section 6.2.2.2), and further contributed to encouraging those who ceased reading to reconnect with it (section 6.2.2.3). Thus, reading-related practices – reading clubs, book exchanges and recommendations – should be promoted and facilitated among peers, given the fact that friends have served as a financial support for readers, as some mentioned not being able to afford expensive book prices.

9.4.2 Government and educational institutions

The government and educational institutions – schools and universities – should play their part in raising awareness and promoting reading. The shaming experiences that readers in this study have experienced and the ‘unfamiliarity’ of reading within various fields stress the need for action. Worthy of mention is the fact that during the course of my research, the Ministry of National Education made an appeal regarding reading. Yet, as argued earlier in section 2.3.2, it is surprising to learn that it was only in June 2018 that the Algerian Ministry of National Education issued an official document, requesting schools to promote reading. This, of course, is what is written on papers. Only research in this area can reveal whether this has been implemented. Thus, it could be argued that the lack of ‘normality’ of manifest reading on public transport, parks and even in some educational institutions (section 7.2), is partly due to the lack of promotion of reading in the latter, starting from primary schools, or kindergartens, and moving towards universities.

It is startling that the only times schools were mentioned by my respondents in relation to reading were in a pejorative way. Djahan’s experience with the children’s reading club best depicts this (section 7.2.1.2). Furthermore, Clara’s and Djahan’s recollections of memories about reading in primary school being like a ‘punishment’ also speaks for itself. Thus, the Algerian Ministry of Education, teachers and all the individuals involved in the educational sector have key roles to play in normalising reading, especially for those whose reading is not initiated within the confines of their homes. As well argued by Nieuwenhuizen (2001), a society that “preaches the importance of literacy but pays scant attention to reading is not practising what it preaches” (p. 22). Furthermore, it is important to ensure that every school is equipped with a library and reading spaces. Moreover, with the massive area that Algeria

occupies, accounting for 2.381,740 sq. km (CIA, 2019), there are only few libraries across the country (Bouanaka, 2015). As argued in section 4.3.2, the available data regarding reading in Algeria is not in abundance, nor could it be said to be accurate, as it does not seem to be based on empirical works. The official websites do not help either. Yet, the lack of reading promotion is evident through my participants' accounts. Librarians have an equally important role to play. A story that one of my participants recounted regarding a library in Algiers is particularly relevant to this discussion. Misha is originally from the north-eastern region of Algeria. She, however, moved to the capital, Algiers, for work purposes. She confessed going to one of the few libraries in Algiers, on which occasion she was denied access because she was not a resident in that region. Thus, libraries might want to readjust their regulations and facilitate access so that readers, whatever regions they travel to, can easily use library facilities. This, of course, is along with more libraries being built everywhere in Algeria.

9.4.3 Publishing industry and media

The lack of advertising for reading in Algeria is evident through the data reported in this research (end of section 6.2.1.2). The experiences and the staring that readers in this study were subjected to is partly due to the unfamiliarity of seeing readers reading outside their homes or university libraries. As posited by Doula, Misha and Malik, reading is still perceived to be only related to studies. If, however, reading is seen everywhere in the streets, parks, tubes or coach stations, people are likely to become acquainted with it. Thus, a way of democratising reading is to advertise for it in various public spaces: it should be as present on big billboards as any other market products. It could equally be promoted by television channels and radio programs. The media can effectively contribute to the promotion of reading, instead of releasing myriads of articles with unfounded claims about the lack of a reading culture in Algeria (section 2.3).

The media and the publishing industry might want to focus their efforts on promoting local authors and books, given that many of my participants reported an interest in reading foreign materials – mainly literature and self-help – which can be said to represent a threat to local productions (section 6.2.1.2). This could similarly be attributed to the lack of advertising. They similarly explained finding out about books through Facebook pages, television shows and movie adaptations. All the books they encountered via these means were foreign ones, with the exception of *Memory in the Flesh*, a movie adaptation of Ahlam Mosteghanemi's novel, being an Algerian author. This, hence, indicates that publishing houses should play their parts

in advocating Algerian authors by organising open days or other events and facilitating contact between readers and authors, as well as publicise their works. Such events should be held frequently, and not only once a year at the international annual book fair that takes place in the capital, Algiers, making it hard for people from other places to attend (section 2.3.3).

The prices of books have been reported to form an obstacle for readers in this study (discussed in section 2.3.3 and illustrated in section 6.2.2.1). My observations confirm their claims, in that my visit to few bookshops during my fieldwork revealed that book prices account for around 5% to 10% of the minimum wage per book. Amir asserted hacking books online to be able to read. Lucy recounted that her mother used to give her a thick book to read when she was a child, as they did not have enough money to buy many books. She also explained that her definition of the 'best' reading experience would entail paperback books – somethings that she has not always been able to have due to their expensive prices – and that her dream would be to have a library that is full of books. Her statements and those of the majority of my participants, preferring paper over electronic books, indicate the need to decrease the prices of books if reading is to occupy a place in people's daily lives in Algeria. Furthermore, this would mean 'hitting two birds with one stone': books would be more accessible to all readers and the publishing industry would benefit from selling more products.

9.5 Reflections on the strengths and limitations of the research design

The present research followed a qualitative research approach inspired by phenomenographic principles. Coming from a quantitative research background, my initial readings about qualitative research started off with phenomenography, which was my gateway to qualitative research (section 5.2). Delving more into its theoretical constituents, it resonated with me in the sense that it assumes a relational view of the world and acknowledges the influence of social environments on the ways people experience a phenomenon (Marton, 1986; Akerlind, 2012). It also holds that there are diverse ways of experiencing and perceiving the world and, thus, any research only covers a limited number of experiences (Marton, 1986). This entails stepping away from making generalisations and defining phenomena within rigid boundaries. This was a useful lens through which to perceive reading experiences and practices, considering their complex nature.

Nonetheless, I found that the over-reliance of phenomenographic research on interviews as the primary data collection tool (Marton, 1986; Svensson, 1997; Bowden, 2005) limits the potential of gaining rich insights into reading experiences. Thus, I deployed a variety of other methods including focus groups, visual representations and informal interviews (section 5.6). The complexity of reading became evident during some of the interviews where participants found it hard to articulate their thoughts on how they viewed reading and what it meant to them. This is when the idea of asking them to provide images that represented their thoughts emerged. This arguably proved to be a useful way of generating rich and in-depth data. There is no recipe in deciding upon data collection tools, as Patton (2002) puts it, as it was a response to an issue that came up throughout the process of data collection. Focus group discussions were immensely crucial in generating rich data, especially due to participants' identifying with each other while speaking about shaming experiences (section 5.6.2.1). Furthermore, the combination of these data collection methods permitted the triangulation of different segments of data, thereby ensuring research trustworthiness (section 5.8). This goes further to show the adequacy of using interviews, focus groups and visual representations in reading research.

Qualitative research is commonly criticised for only investigating a small number of participants, and for the lack of generalisability of its findings. Indeed, my research only included nine participants. This was due to the issues of access that I encountered at the beginning of this research and that I explain more fully in section 5.5.2. I could, therefore, only recruit a smaller and less diverse group of participants than I anticipated. Furthermore, the vast majority of my participants were from literary and languages majors, which might explain – or not – their interest in reading literature, and reading in different languages. Thus, having participants from a variety of other majors would have perhaps allowed for an exploration of more reading practices. Despite these limitations, researching a small number of participants certainly had its benefits in that it allowed for long in-depth discussions that enabled me to tap into readers' reading worlds. The advantage of conducting qualitative research is its potential in providing a "particular description and themes developed in the context of a specific site" (Creswell and Creswell 2018, p. 275). That said, this research offers rich and fine-grained details of reading practices in various settings, thereby accessing the nuances, voicing my participants' stories and taking them 'out of the shadows'.

Despite these limitations, my hope is for this research to form a starting point for further research that would scrutinise more reading practices, especially in the context within which this research has been conducted.

9.6 Recommendations for further research

It is beyond the scope of my study to provide a thorough discussion on further research. Thus, in this section, I briefly sketch some areas of research that would evidently be useful:

- The need for exploring parents', peers' and teachers' perceptions towards reading, for the strong influence that the social environments surrounding readers had on their reading practices was demonstrated in this study;

- Educational researchers should investigate reading in schools. As noted in section 2.3.2, the few available papers on reading in Algeria have been conducted by researchers from a librarianship background (Bouanaka, 2015; Abdelillah, 2016), information sciences (Chain Draa Tani, 2012), or literature (Miliani, 2016) rather than from education;

- With the little interest that began to be directed towards reading at the level of the Ministry of Education in Algeria, as mentioned in section 2.3.2, research is needed at the level of schools to evaluate the programmes that have been – or are still to be – implemented regarding the promotion of reading (and writing) in schools;

- It would be interesting to interview those who do not self-identify as readers and learn about their perceptions of reading and readers, which might explain the hostility and the staring that readers in the present research experienced;

- There is a need to conduct large-scale studies to investigate the reading interests of Algerian readers, so that publishing houses would produce more of what fits their tastes, and ensure other local or international productions are easily accessed.

9.7 A concluding note

My hope is for this research to be more than mere theoretical ruminations of the reading practices of a group of readers. I hope that it has been efficient in furthering our understanding of the nuanced and complex reading practices, and that perhaps attempting to define reading only leads to creating rigid boundaries that could legitimise certain forms of 'reading' and delegitimise others. The stories of struggles that my participants shared bear witness to the effect of doing so. This understanding, among others, is something that I only came to realise after conducting this research. Since that time, I have become extra cautious about insinuating that any text has more value than another, especially in light of the 'reading narcissism' and 'reading hierarchies' discussed in this research.

This study has certainly been more than a piece of academic work. It has been an enriching journey that changed my perception of reading. I started this research with a less complex idea about reading. Although I assumed the influence of many hindering or encouraging forces on reading, just like almost anything else, I did not envision the hardships that my participants described, especially those related to the hostility they encountered when reading outside their homes. This, perhaps, is due to the fact that I almost never read outside. Furthermore, akin to Djahan and Doula who disclosed that they could only make sense of segments of their stories through our interviews, I could only fathom my own story through the present research. It helped me restore some of the memories that were lost in the past, by dint of the stories that my participants recounted. The incident of my aunt requesting me to speak in French instead of Standard Arabic was particularly one of the many instances that I had never thought about before conducting the current research. I started connecting the dots to know how I came to be the 'reader' I am today.

Having control over my emotions and reactions was something else I have learned from this research. This happened, especially, during two types of instances. The first was related to the sad stories that my participants recounted. Lucy explicated how her illiterate mother encouraged her to read and gave her one thick book at a time because they did not have enough money to buy many. Djosour spoke about the two men who treated her with hostility because she was reading on the bus, after which she decided never to do it again. It was very challenging to hold back my tears while listening to their accounts. What, perhaps, helped was turning these

stories into jokes by my participants and me, and laughing about them instead. I am certain each one of us cried on their own, however.

The second type of instances was when my principles or views of myself collided with those held by my participants. During one of the focus groups, my participants discussed their perceptions about reading in terms of hierarchies and, I thought, they were explicitly judgmental about other readers: 'real' readers versus 'fake' readers. Although this did not go in line with my views on the matter, I abstained from showing any reaction. I cannot guarantee that my facial expressions did not betray me, but I strived to control them. Another incident was related to a discussion regarding my participant's preferences in terms of languages. She explained that she preferred reading in Arabic and disliked French, and then added: "no offence to you". This, although it might seem futile, made me feel excluded, as though we did not share the same identity of being Algerian and Arab, and this grew to be an identity issue for me during this research, as well as illustrating the linguistic 'tug of war' that is attached to the history of Algeria.

Finally, "is there really no reading culture in Algeria?" is a burning question that initially fuelled this present research. A question that was so burning that it led to the creation of a questionnaire to count how many readers there were, and to my going back to Algeria protesting that "my data shows that people read", and "all the fuss in the media about us, young people who have no interest in reading, is a myth". During the journey, however, it became less important, if it mattered at all. Numbers were important no longer, and stories became the kernel of my interest. Thus, I learned that people should be encouraged to read rather than forced to do so. They should see reading as 'normal' rather than an attribute of the 'cultured'. The democratisation of reading can only be attained through 'naturalising' reading while children are growing up, rather than enforcing it with 'conditions' – only at home or in libraries, only religious books or the 'classics', only in Arabic or French, and so on. Hence, the satisfaction I feel from conducting this research is greater than any numbers that I could have collected had I remained with the mindset with which I began this study. I perceive this research as a way of speaking up for those readers who are subjected to a form of violence for manifestly being readers. Doing otherwise, in this sense, would add my name to the list of those who contribute to this symbolic violence, as this appears to have become the 'norm' for so many.

Bibliography

Abdelillah, A. (2016) 'L'industrie du livre et l'offre de lecture en Algérie' [in French], in Miliani, H. (ed.), *Productions et Réceptions Culturelles: Littérature, Musique et Cinéma*. Editions CRASC, pp. 11-40.

Achoui, M. (2006) 'The Algerian family: Change and solidarity', in Georgas, J., Berry, J. W., Vijver, F. J. R., Kajitcibasi, C. and Poortinga, H. Y. (eds.), *Families Across Cultures: A 30-Nation Psychological Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 243-250.

Akacem, K. (2004) 'Economic reforms in Algeria: An overview and assessment', *The Journal of North African Studies*. 9(2), pp. 115-125.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2012) 'Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 31(1), pp. 115-127.

Alateeq, Z. A. (2016) *Understanding the factors influencing Saudi primary students' reading engagement: A mixed-methods approach*. Ph.D. thesis, The University of Sheffield.

Algérie Presse Service (2017) *Constantine: Inauguration en Novembre de la bibliothèque urbaine de Bab el Kantara* [in French]. Available at: http://www.aps.dz/regions/63156-constantine-inauguration-en-novembre-de-la-bibliotheque-urbaine-de-bab-el-kantara (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Allen, L. (2012) 'Schools in focus: Photo methods in educational research', in Delamont, S. and Jones A. (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 241-251.

Allington, R. L., McGill-Franzen, A., Camilli, G., Williams, L., Graff, J., Zeig, J., Zmach, C. and Nowak, R. (2010) 'Addressing summer reading setback among economically disadvantaged elementary students', *Reading Psychology*, 31(5), pp. 411-427.

Altmann, J. (2019) 'Arab World turns page on literacy', *The Media Line*. Available at: https://themedialine.org/top-stories/arab-world-turns-page-on-literacy/ (Accessed: 23 May 2020).

ANEM (2016) *F.A.Q*. Available at: http://www.anem.dz/fr/contact/faq (Accessed: 20 September 2020).

Arab Reading Challenge (2019) *Participants' Manual*. Available at: https://www.arabreadingchallenge.com/ar/tool-box (Accessed: 23 May 2020).

Arab Reading Challenge (2019) *School registration*. Available at: https://www.arabreadingchallenge.com/ar/registration (Accessed: 23 May 2020).

Arab Reading Challenge (2019) *Participated countries*. Available at: https://www.arabreadingchallenge.com/country (Accessed: 23 May 2020).

Arab Thought Foundation (2020) *Arab children literature*. Available at: https://www.arabthought.org/ar/researchcenter/agebook (Accessed: 23 May 2020).

Atlapedia (2011) *Countries A to Z – Algeria*. Available at: https://www.atlapedia.com/online/countries/algeria.htm (Accessed: 20 December 2019).

Baker, L. and Scher, D. (2002) 'Beginning readers' motivation for reading in relation to parental beliefs and home reading experiences', *Reading Psychology*, 23, pp. 239-269.

Barbour, R. (2007) *The sage qualitative research kit: Doing focus groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Barron, I. (2013) 'Finding a voice: A figured worlds' approach to theorising young children's identities', *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, pp. 1-19.

Bartlett, L. and Holland, D. (2002) 'Theorizing the space of literacy practices', *Ways of Knowing Journal*, 2(1), pp. 10-22.

Bartlett, L. (2007) 'To seem and to feel: Situated identities and literacy practices', *Teachers College Record*, 109(1), pp. 51-69.

Barton, D. (2007) *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language*.2nd edn. John Wiley & Sons.

Bashir, H. (2020) 'Mohammed bin Rashid announces new record of 21 million participating student in upcoming Arab Reading Challenge', *WAM*. Available at: http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302829310 (Accessed: 23 May 2020).

Bates, E. A., McCann, L. K. K. and Taylor, J. C. (2017) '"Beyond words": A researcher's guide to using photo elicitation in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 14(4), pp. 459-481.

Bayard, P. (2007) *How to talk about books you haven't read*. London: Granta.

Begum, S. (2011) 'Readers' advisory and underestimated roles of escapist reading', *Library Review*, 60(9), pp. 738-747.

Belmihoub, K. (2018) 'English in a multilingual Algeria', *World Englishes*, 37, pp. 207-227.

Bendriss, R. and Golkowska, K. (2011) 'Early reading habits and their impact on the reading literacy of Qatari undergraduate students', *Arab World English Journal*, 2(4), pp. 37-57.

Benrabah, M. (2005) 'The language planning situation in Algeria', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 6(4), pp. 379-502.

Benrabah, M. (2014) 'Competitions between four "world" languages in Algeria', *Journal of World Languages*, 1(1), pp. 38-59.

Berryah, Z. (2015) 'Al maqrouiya fil Jazair: Al kitab… aniss yabhathou 'an makanihi 'inda qoraihi' [in Arabic], *Djazairess*, 27 October. Available at: http://www.djazairess.com/eldjoumhouria/63480 (Accessed: 12 December 2016).

Bird, C. (2005) "How I stopped dreading and learned to love transcription", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(2), pp. 226-248.

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (2010) *How to research*. 4th edn. Open University Press.

Bouanaka, S. (2015) 'Fadaat al qiraa al mutaha litifl al jazairi' [in Arabic], *Cybrarians Journal*, 38, pp. 1-26.

Boukrouh, M. and Kessab, A. (2010) 'Algeria', in van Hamersveld, I. (ed.) *Cultural Policies in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.* Cultural Resources (Al Mawred Al Thaqafi), pp. 26-50.

Boulekiban, I. (2018) *The rise and fall of the middle class: A sociological study of the Algerian society's structure*. Alpha Doc.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital', in Richardson, J. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 241-258.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The logic of practice*. Stanford university press.

Bourdieu, P. (2005) *The social structures of the economy*. Polity.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, J. D. (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago Press.

Bowden, J. (2005) ‘Reflections on the phenomenographic team research process’, in Bowden, J. and Green, P. (eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press, pp. 11-31.

BERA (2018) *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. 4th edn. London.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology’, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013) *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Sage Publications.

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social research methods*. 5th edn. London: Oxford University Press.

Carrington, V. and Luke, A. (1997) ‘Literacy and Bourdieu's sociological theory: A reframing’, *Language and Education*, 11(2), pp. 96-112.

Chaib Draa Tani, B. (2012) ‘Les réseaux de lecture sur Facebook: Le cas d’Arabesk et de Oasis Littéraire’ [in French], in Stricevic, I. and Ksibi, A. (eds.), *Intergenerational Solidarity in Libraries / La Solidarité Intergénérationnelle dans les Bibliothèques*, pp. 325-340.

Chemami, M. A. (2011) ‘Discussing pluralism in Algeria: The status of French and English languages through the educational policy’, *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 4(18), pp. 227-234**.**

Chen, S. Y. (2008) ‘Who is the avid adolescent reader in Taiwan? The role of gender, family, and teacher’, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52(3), pp. 214-223.

Cherland, M. R. (1994) *Private practices: Girls reading fiction and constructing identity*. Taylor & Francis.

Cherry, N. (2005) ‘Phenomenography as seen by an action researcher’, in Bowden, J. and Green, P. (eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press, pp. 56-62**.**

Cherry, S. (2009) *The promise of the hyphen: An ethnography of self-help practices*. PhD Thesis, Loughborough University.

Chong, S. L. (2017) ‘Many languages, whither literacy? Understanding the ontology of reading in linguistically-diverse Contexts’, *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature, 23*(2), pp. 1-13.

Choudry, S. and Williams, J. (2017) 'Figured worlds in the field of power', *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 24(3), pp. 247-257.

CIA (2019) The World Factbook – Africa, Algeria. Available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html (Accessed: 12 March 2019).

Clark, C. and Hawkins, L. (2010) *Young people's reading: The importance of the home environment and family support. More findings from our national survey*. National Literacy Trust.

Clark, C., Osborne, S. and Dugdale, G. (2009) *Reaching out with role models: Role models and young people's reading*. New Literacy Trust. Available at: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.601.4737&rep=rep1&type=pdf (Accessed: 15 April 2020).

Clark, C. and Rumbold, K. (2006) *Reading for pleasure: A research overview*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Clyne, I. D. (2001) *Finding common ground: cross-cultural research in the Muslim community*. Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Meeting, Fremantle.

Coban, O. (2018) *Reading choices and the effects of reading fiction: The responses of adolescent readers in Turkey to fiction and e-fiction.* Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow.

Coffey, A., and Atkinson, P. (1996) *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Sage Publications.

Commission Nationale Algérienne pour l'Éducation la Science et la Culture. 'La science et la culture' [in French], *Culture et Communication*. Available at: http://www.unesco.dz/index.php/fr/culture-et-communication (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Compton-Lilly, C. (2003) *Reading families: The literate lives of urban children*. Teacher College Press.

Constantine d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. *Constantine capitale de la culture Arabe 2015* [in French]. Available at: http://www.constantine-hier-aujourdhui.fr/LaVille/capitale_culture_arabe_2015.htm (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Constitute Project (2019) Algeria's constitution of 1989, reinstated in 1996, with amendments through 2016. Available at: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Algeria_2016.pdf?lang=en (Accessed: 18 December 2019).

Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2015) *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. 4th edn. Sage publications.

Cossham, A. F. (2017) 'An evaluation of phenomenography', *Library and Information Research*, 41(125), pp. 17-31.

Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F. M., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (2014) *Building communities of engaged readers*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Cremin, T. (2014) 'Reading for pleasure and reader engagement: Reviewing the research', in Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F. M., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (eds.), *Building Communities of Engaged Readers*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 5-19.

Creswell, J. W. and Creswell J. D. (2018) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. 5th edn. Sage Publications

Crossley, N. (2001) 'The phenomenological habitus and its construction', *Theory and Society*, 30(1), pp.81-120.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) 'Literacy and intrinsic motivation', *Daedalus*, 119(2), pp. 115-140.

Cullinan, B. E. (2000) 'Independent reading and school achievement', *School Library Media Research*, 3, pp. 1-23.

Currie, D. H. and Kelly, D. M. (2012) 'Group interviews: Understanding shared meaning and meaning-making', in Delamont, S. and Jones A. (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 405-414.

Dali, K. (2012) 'Books in their suitcase: Leisure reading in the lives of Russian-speaking immigrants in Canada', *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 45(4), pp. 261-293.

Daoud, M. (2012) 'Ouvrage collectif: Les jeunes et la lecture en Algérie (edition distribution et nouveaux supports de lecture)' [in French], *Revue Algérienne d'Anthropologie et de Sciences Sociales*, 55-56, pp. 201-203.

Daoudi, A. (2018) 'Multilingualism in Algeria: Between "soft power", "Arabisation", "Islamisation", and "globalisation"', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 23(3), pp. 460-481.

Denscombe, M. (2010) *The good research guide: for small-scale social research*. 4th edn. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Derras, O. (2011) 'Mobilité sociale et changements sociaux en Algérie : Essai d'analyse des inégalités des chances et des différenciations sociales' [in French], *Insaniyat*, 53, pp. 143-166.

Dezcallar, T., Clariana, M., Clandellas, R., Badia, M. and Cotzens, C. (2014) 'La lectura por placer: Su incidencia en el rendimiento académico, las horas de televisión y las horas de videojuegos' [in Spanish], *OCNOS: Revista de Estudios Sobre Lectura*, 12, pp. 107-166.

Direction Générale du Trésor (2019) *Algérie : Indicateurs et conjoncture* [in French]. Available at: https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/DZ/indicateurs-et-conjonctures (Accessed: 18 December 2019).

Djité, P. G. (1992) 'The arabization of Algeria: Linguistic and sociopolitical motivations', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 98(1), pp. 15-28.

Dzair TV (2018) *Al Djazair taqra… min safahat fil Facebok ila souq al kitab* [in Arabic]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwCYoIK73x8 (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

El Amrani (2010) 'Cultural politics and cultural policy in the Arab world', in van Hamersveld, I. (ed.), *Cultural Policies in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.* Cultural Resources (Al Mawred Al Thaqafi), pp. 13-22.

El Djazairia One (2019) *Mazal el Hal: Rachid Nekkaz, Ryma Dkhil, Salim Agar* [in Arabic]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AMPvaBXzKI (Accessed: 12 September 2019).

El Hayat TV (2019) *Al i'lami Hmida Ayachi yastadhif as-sayid Mossaab raiss nadi Qassantina Taqraa* [in Arabic]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpOA9BxBCMg (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Etherington, K. (2008) *Trauma, drug misuse and transforming identities: A life story approach*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London and Philadelphia.

Evans, M. D. R., Kelley, J., Sikora, J. and Treiman, D. J. (2010) 'Scholarly culture and educational success: Books and schooling in 27 nations', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 28, pp. 171-197.

Farrimond, H. (2013) *Doing ethical research*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Flick, U. (2015) *Introducing research methodology*. 2nd edn. London: Sage.

Frankel (2017) 'What does it mean to be a reader? Identity and positioning in two high school literacy intervention classes', *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 33(6), pp. 501-518.

Forsey, M. (2012) 'Interviewing individuals', in Delamont, S. and Jones A. (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 364-376.

Furedi, F. (2015) *Power of reading: From Socrates to Twitter*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Gallik, J. D. (1999) 'Do they read for pleasure? Recreational reading habits of college students', *Journal of Adolescent and Adolescent Literacy*, 42(6), pp. 480-488.

Gee, J. P. (2017) 'Identity and diversity in today's world', *Multicultural Education Review*, 9(2), pp. 83-92.

Gerrig, R. J. (1993) *Experiencing narrative worlds: On the psychological activities of reading*. Yale University Press.

Ghioua, I. (2015) 'Becheikh el Houssin Samy, commissaire de 'Constantine, capital de la culture Arabe' a l'expression 'il y a des retards dans certains travaux''' [in French], *L'Expression*. Available at: http://www.constantine-hier-aujourdhui.fr/LaVille/capitale_culture_arabe_2015.htm (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Glenn, W. J. and Ginsberg, R. (2016) 'Resisting readers' identity (re)construction across English and young adult literature course contexts', *Research in the Teaching of English*, 51(1), pp. 84-105.

Greaney, V. and Hegarty, M. (1987) 'Correlates of leisure-time reading', *Journal of Research in Reading*, 10(1), pp. 3-20.

Graff, H. J. (2010) 'The literacy myth at thirty', *Journal of Social History*, 43(3), pp. 635-661.

Gray, D. E. (2014) *Doing research in the real world*. 3rd edn. London: Sage.

Gray, D. E. (2018) *Doing research in the real world*. 4th edn. London: Sage.

Grenfell, M. (2014) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts*. 2nd edn. Routledge.

Hall, G. (2009) 'Texts, readers - and real readers', *Language and Literature*, 18 (3), pp. 333-339.

Hall, L. A. (2012) 'The role of reading identities and reading abilities in students' discussions about texts and comprehension strategies', *Journal of Literacy Research*, 44(3), pp. 239-272.

Hammersley, M. (2012) 'Transcription of speech', in Delamont, S. (ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 439-445.

Hanafy, H. (2007) 'What Arabs read: A pan-Arab survey on readership': A commentary.

Harker, R., Mahar, C. and Wilkes, C. (1990) *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory*. Springer.

Harper, D. (2002) 'Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation', *Visual Studies*, 17(1), pp. 13-26.

Harold, B. (2005) *Researching education in the Middle East: Issues and future direction*. Paper presented at British Educational Research Association.

Heath, S. B. (1983) *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms.* Cambridge University Press.

Hejase, A. J., Hejase, H. J., Younis, J. A. and Abbas, O. (2019) 'Reading interests and habits in Lebanon: Explorative analysis', *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(3), pp. 149-166.

Henwood, K., Shirani, F. and Groves, C. (2018) 'Using photographs in interviews: When we lack the words to say what practice means', in Flick, U. (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*. Sage Publications Ltd, pp. 1-25.

Holland, D. C., Lachicotte Jr, W., Skinner, D. and Cain, C., (1998) *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Harvard University Press.

Holliday, A. (2016) *Doing and writing qualitative research*. 3rd edn. London: Sage.

Hopper, R. (2005) 'What are teenagers reading? Adolescent fiction reading habits and reading choices', *Literacy*, 39(3), pp. 113-120.

Howard, V. (2011) 'The importance of pleasure reading in the lives of young teens: Self-identification, self-construction and self-awareness', *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 43(1), pp. 46-55.

Howard, V. (2008) 'Teens and pleasure reading: A taxonomy of young teen readers', *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of CAIS/Actes du congrès annuel de l'ACSI*.

Howitt, D. and Cramer, D. (2011) *Introduction to research methods in psychology*. 3rd edn. Harlow, England: Pearson.

Hughes-Hassell, S. and Rodge, P. (2007) 'The leisure reading habits of urban adolescents', *International Reading Association*, 51(1), pp. 22-33.

Intrator, M. (2004) 'Avenues of intellectual resistance in the Ghetto Theresienstadt: Escape through the central library, books, and reading', *Libri*, (54), pp. 237-246.

Jenkins, R. (1992) *Pierre Bourdieu*. London and New York: Routledge.

Jones, S. A. (2015) 'Children reading series books: Ways into peer culture and reading development', *Changing English*, 22(3), pp. 307-325.

Kamhieh, C. (2012) *The leisure reading habits of first year female Emirati university students: An investigation*. Ph.D. thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Keltner, D. and Buswell, B. N. (1997) 'Embarrassment: its distinct form and appeasement functions', *Psychological Bulletin*, 122(3), p.250.

Kassel, E. G. (1977) 'From colonialism to national independence: Algiers' social ecology', *GeoJournal*, 1(5), pp. 5-12.

Krashen, S. (2004) *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. ABC-CLIO.

Krueger, R. A. (1988) *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage.

Krueger, R. A. and Casey, M. A. (2015) *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. 5th edn. Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Kucirkova, N. and Cremin, T. (2020) *Children reading for pleasure in the digital age: Mapping reader engagement*. Sage Publications Limited.

Kvale, S. (2007) *Doing interviews*. London: Sage Publications.

LADDH (Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme) (2018) *LADDH : Le rapport 2018 sur les droits de l'homme en Algérie* [in French]. Available at: https://www.lematindalgerie.com/laddh-le-rapport-2018-sur-les-droits-de-lhomme-en-algerie (Accessed: 18 December 2019).

Lakjaa, A. (2007) 'Le jeunesse Algérienne: Entre valeurs communautaires et aspirations sociétaires' [in French], *Ecosphère*, 3, pp. 1-14.

Lambirth, A. (2011) *Literacy on the left: Reform and revolution*. London: Bloomsbury.

Lamont, M. and Lareau, A. (1988) 'Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments', Sociological Theory, pp. 153-168.

Langer, E. J., Fiske, S., Taylor, S. E. and Chanowitz, B. (1976) 'Stigma, staring, and discomfort: A novel-stimulus hypothesis', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 12(5), pp. 451-463.

Lee, A. (2018) 'Physical and digital reading habits of Adult Singaporeans', *Journal of Library Administration*, 58(6), pp. 629-643.

Lindell, L. R. (2009) '"So long as I can read": Farm women's reading experiences in depression-era South Dakota', *Agricultural History*, 83(4), pp. 503-527.

Love, K. and Hamston, J. (2004) 'Committed and reluctant male teenage readers: Beyond bedtime stories', *Journal of Literacy Research*, 36(3), pp. 335-400.

Macfarlane, B. (2010) 'Values and virtues in qualitative research', in Savin-Baden, M. and Major, C. H. (eds.), *New Approaches to Qualitative Research: Wisdom and Uncertainty*. Routledge: London and New York, pp. 19-27.

Manguel, A. (2013) *The traveler, the tower, and the worm: The reader as metaphor*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mansor, A. N., Rasul, M. S., Abd Rauf, R. A. and Koh, B. L. (2012) 'Developing and sustaining reading habit among teenagers', *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 22(4), pp. 357-365.

Manzo, A. V. and Manzo, U. C. (1995) *Teaching children to be literate.* Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace College Pub.

Marton, F. (1986) 'Phenomenography: A research approach to investigating different understandings of reality', *Journal of Thought*, 21(3), 28-49.

Marton, F. and Booth, S. (1997) *Learning and awareness*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (2016) *Designing qualitative research*. 6th edn. Sage Publications.

Maton, K. (2014) 'Habitus', in Grenfell, M. (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. 2nd edn. London, Acumen, pp. 48-64.

Mathews, G. (2000) *Global culture/individual identity: Searching for home in the cultural supermarket*. Psychology Press.

Mathis, M. N. (2008) 'Comment parler de livres que l'on n'a pas lus de Pierre Bayard' [in French], *La Critique Parisienne*, pp. 37-39.

MBRF and UNDP (2016) Arab reading index 2016. Available at: https://knowledge4all.com/admin/uploads/files/ARI2016/ARI2016En.pdf (Accessed: 15 May 2019).

McCarthey, S. J. (2001) 'Identity construction in elementary readers and writers', *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(2), pp. 122-151.

McCarthey, S. J. and Moje, E. B. (2002) 'Identity matters', *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(2), pp. 228-238.

Mead, M. (1969) 'Research with human beings: A model derived from anthropological field practice', *Daedalus*, 98(2), pp. 361-386.

Meier, L. (2015) 'Choice and the reader's identity', *Journal of Teacher Action Research*, 2(1), pp. 21-28.

Merga, K. M. (2014) 'Peer group and friend influences on the social acceptability of adolescent book reading', *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 57(6), pp. 472-482.

Merga, K. M. and Roni, S. M. (2018) 'Parents as social influences encouraging book reading: Research directions for librarians' literacy advocacy', *Journal of Library Administration*, 58, pp. 674-697.

Merriam, S. B. (2009) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Merriam, S. B. and Tisdell, E. J. (2016) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. 4th edn. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam-Webster (2020) *Drug*. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/drug (Accesses: 02 October 2020).

Merriam-Webster (2020) *Leisure*. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leisure (accessed: 20 August 2020).

Michaudon, H. (2001) 'La lecture, une affaire de famille', *INSEE Premiere*, 777, pp. 1-4.

Miliani, H. (2016) 'Pratiques de lecture chez les étudiants de langue Française en Algérie: Etude d'un sondage' [in French], *Une Enquête au Pays*, pp. 63-83.

Ministère de la Culture (2016) *Projets de développement* [in French]. Available at: https://www.m-culture.gov.dz/index.php/fr/programme-de-developpement (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (2020) *Bikhousouss Al-Mutala'a Al-Mumti'a wa An-Nawadi Al-Adabiya* [in Arabic]. Available at: http://www.education.gov.dz/-بخصوص-المطالعة-الممتعة-والنوادي-الأد/ (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Mishler, E. G. (1999) *Storylines: Craftartists' narratives of identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Moje, E. B. and Luke, A. (2009) 'Literacy and identity: Examining the metaphors in history and contemporary research', *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(4), pp. 1-55.

Motte, W. (2008) 'How to talk about books you haven't read by Pierre Bayard and Jefferey Mehlman', *World Literature Today*, 82(2), pp. 76-77.

Mottram, M. (2014) 'Reader relationships within and beyond school', in Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F. M., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (eds.), *Building Communities of Engaged Readers.* Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 108-127.

Murphy, E., and Dingwall, R. (2001) 'The ethics of ethnography', in Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Loftland, J. and Loftland, L. H. (eds.), *Handbook of ethnography*. London: Sage, pp. 339-351.

National Endowment for the Arts (2007) *To read or not to read: A question of national consequence*. Research Report No. 47. Washington, DC. Available at: https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/ToRead.pdf (Accessed: 4 March 2017).

National Literacy Trust (2019) *Gift of reading: Children's book ownership in 2019*. Available at: https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Gift_of_reading_-_research_summary.pdf (Accessed: 03 May 2020).

Neira, M. (2011) 'Hábitos de lectura de los alumnos de educación primaria: Análisis de la situación en un centro escolar asturiano' [in Spanish], *I Congreso Internacional Virtual de Educación Lectora*, Universidad de Málaga, pp. 1-12.

Nell, V. (1988) *Lost in a book: The psychology of reading for pleasure*. Yale University Press.

Next Page Foundation and Synovate (2007) *What Arabs read: A pan-Arab survey on readership. Phase One: Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco*. Available at: http://www.npage.org/IMG/pdf/3 (Accessed: 20 October 2018).

Nieuwenhuizen, A. (2001) *Young Australians reading: From keen to reluctant readers.* Melbourne, Victoria: Australian Centre for Youth Literature**.**

ONS (2013) *Enquête sur l'emploi du temps ENET Algérie 2012: Rapport d'enquête* [in French]. Available at:

http://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/RAPPORT_ENET_2012_FRAN_2_.pdf (Accessed: 2 February 2019).

ONS (2018) *Démographie* [in French]. Available at: http://www.ons.dz/spip.php?rubrique34 (Accessed: 18 December 2019)

Ooi, K. and Liew, C. L. (2011) 'Selecting fiction as part of everyday life information seeking', *Journal of Documentation*, 67(5), pp. 748-772.

Pahl, K. (2005) 'Narrative spaces and multiple identities: Children's textual explorations of console games in home settings', in March, J. (ed.), *Popular Culture, New Media and Digital Literacy in Early Childhood*, pp. 126-145.

Pandit, A. and Han, L. (2021) *Hidden borders – Internet access in Algiers*. COMPLIT 236A Final Project. Available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/41010e02639a40869f7cc60fef0f4e58 (Accessed: 19 November 2021).

Patton, M. Q. (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3rd edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks.

Patton, M. Q. (2015) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 4th edn. Sage Publications.

Pennac, D. (1992) *Comme un roman*. Paris: Gallimard.

Pennac, D. (2006) *The rights of the reader*. London: Walker Books.

Porter, R. and Teich, M. (1995) *Drugs and Narcotics in History*. Cambridge University Press.

Powel, S. (2014) 'Influencing children's attitudes, motivation and achievements as readers', in Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F. M., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (eds.), *Building Communities of Engaged Readers*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 128-146.

Power, E. M. (1999) 'An introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's key theoretical concepts', *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*, 3(1), pp. 48-52.

Radway, J. A. (1984) *Reading the romance: Women, patriarchy, and popular literature*. University of North Carolina Press.

Rajab, H. and Al-Sadi, A. (2015) 'An empirical study of reading habits and interests of Saudi university EFL learners', *International Journal of Linguistics*, 7(2), pp. 1-16.

Rakhamya, K. M. M. and Al Fawal, M. K. A. (2017) 'Waqi' al-qiraa al-hurra lada talabat kuliyat at-tarbiya bi jami'at Dimashq' [in Arabic], *Journal of Al-Quds Open University for Educational and Psychological Research and Studies*, pp. 85-95.

Rallis, S., and Rossman, G. (2009) 'Ethics and trustworthiness', in Heigham, J. and Croker, R. A. (eds.), *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 263-287.

Reay, D. (2004) '"It's all becoming a habitus": Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25, pp. 431-444.

Richardson, P. W. and Eccles, J. S. (2007) 'Rewards of reading: Toward the development of possible selves and identities', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 46, pp. 341-356.

Robinson, J. (2012) 'Using focus groups', in Delamont, S. and Jones A. (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 391-404.

Rose, G. (2014) 'On the relation between "visual research methods" and contemporary visual culture', *The Sociological Review*, 62, pp. 24-46.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1969) 'Towards a transactional theory of reading', *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 1(1), pp.31-49.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978) *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. SIU Press.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (2004) 'The transactional theory of reading and writing', in Ruddell, R. B. and Unrau, N. J. (eds.), *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*. 5th edn. International Reading Association, 48, pp. 1363-1398.

Roser, M. and Ortiz-Ospina, E. (2018) 'Literacy', *Our World in Data.* Available at: https://ourworldindata.org/literacy (Accessed: 9 January 2019).

Ross, C. S. (1999) 'Finding without seeking: The information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure', *Information Processing and Management*, 35(6), pp. 783-799.

Ross, C. S. (2006) 'The company of readers', in Ross, C. S., McKechnie, L. Y. F. and Rothbauer, P. M. (eds.), *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community*. Libraries Unltd Incorporated, pp. 1-56.

Ross, C. S., McKechnie, L. and Rothbauer, P. M. (2006) *Reading matters: What the research reveals about reading, libraries, and community*. Libraries Unlimited Incorporated.

Rothbauer, P. M. (2004) 'People aren't afraid anymore, but it's hard to find books: Reading practices that inform the personal and social identities of self-identified lesbian and queer young women', *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science*, 28(3), pp. 53-74.

Säljö, R. (1997) ‘Talk as data and practice - a critical look at phenomenographic inquiry and the appeal to experience’, *HERD*, 16(2), 173–190.

Scholes, L. (2015) ‘Clandestine readers: Boys and girls going ‘undercover’ in school spaces’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(3), pp. 359-374.

Scribner, S. and Cole, M. (1981) *The psychology of literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press.

Seidman, I. (2013) *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and social sciences*. 4th edn. New York: Teachers College.

Sellers, C. (2019) ‘“Fitting in” and “Standing out”: The peer group and young people’s development of reader identity’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 40(7), pp. 938-952.

SILA (2017) 22 *Salon international du livre d’Alger: Le livre, un trésor inépuisable* [in French]. Available at: https://www.sila-dz.com/sila-presentation.html (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

SILA (2019) 24 *Salon international du livre d’Alger: Le livre, un continent* [in French]. Available at: https://sila.dz/fr/ (Accessed: 24 May 2020).

Skjerdingstad, K. I. and Rothbauer, P. (2016) ‘Introduction’, in Rothbauer, P., Skjerdingstad, K. I., McKechnie, L. E. F. and Oterholm, K. (eds.), *Plotting the Reading Experience: Theory/Practice/Politics*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, pp. 1-18.

Stephens, D. (2009) *Qualitative research in international settings: A practical guide*. Routledge.

Sterponi, L. (2007) ‘Clandestine interactional reading: Intertextuality and double-voicing under the desk’, *Linguistics and Education*, 18, pp. 1-23.

Stokes, A. (2011) ‘A phenomenographic approach to investigate students’ conceptions of geoscience as an academic discipline’, in Feig, A. D. and Stokes, A. (eds.), *Qualitative Inquiry in Geoscience Education Research*. Geological Society of America. Special Paper 474, pp. 23–36.

Street, B. V. (1984) *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Street, V. B. and Lefstein, A. (2007) *Literacy: An advanced resource book for students*. Routledge.

Sullivan, A. (2001) 'Cultural capital and educational attainment', *Sociology*, 35(4), pp. 893-912.

Sullivan, E. (2001) 'Some teens prefer the real thing: The case for young adult nonfiction', *The English Journal*, 90(3), pp. 43-47.

Svensson, L. (1997) 'Theoretical foundations of phenomenography', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 16(2), pp. 159-171.

Sweeney, M. (2008) 'Reading and reckoning in a women's prison', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 50(3), pp. 304-328.

Swift, C. (2016) *Negotiating contexts for reading: Becoming 'someone who reads'*. Ph.D. thesis, University of York.

The Belmont Report (1979) *Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*. Washington, DC: OPRR Reports.

The Reading Agency (2015) 'Literature review: The impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment', *BOP Consulting*. Available at: https://readingagency.org.uk/news/The%20Impact%20of%20Reading%20for%20Pleasure%20and%20Empowerment.pdf (Accessed: 6 March 2017).

Thompson, J, B. (1991) 'Editor's introduction', in Bourdieu, P. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press, pp. 1-31.

Thomson, P. (2014) 'Field', in Grenfell, M. (ed.) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. 2nd edn. London, Acumen, pp. 48-64.

Tiliouine, H. and Achoui, M. (2018) 'Family characteristics and family life education in Algeria', in Robila, M. and Taylor, A. C. (eds.), *Global Perspectives on Family Life Education*. Springer, pp. 117-133.

UAE Vision (2018) *UAE Vision 2021*. Available at: https://www.vision2021.ae/en (Accessed: 21 January 2019).

UNESCO (2015) *Effective, training and employment for women, Algeria*. Available at: https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/literacy-training-and-employment-women-algeria (Accessed: 21 October 2021).

UNESCO (2015) *Quadrennial Periodic Report: 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression*. Available at: https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/periodic_reports/old/uae_qpr.pdf (Accessed: 12 January 2019).

UNESCO (2021) *Algeria*. Available at: http://uis.unesco.org/country/DZ (Accessed: 22 October 2021).

UNICEF (2015) *Algeria: Country report on out of school children*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/6526/file/Algeria%20Country%20Report%20on%20OOSC%20Summary_EN.pdf%20.pdf (Accessed: 21 October 2021).

Urrieta, L. (2007a) 'Identity production in figured worlds: How some Mexican Americans become Chicana/o activist educators', *The Urban Review*, pp. 117-144.

Urrieta, L. (2007b) 'Figured worlds and education: An introduction to the special issue', *The Urban Review*, 39(2), pp. 107-116.

Usherwood, B. and Toyne, J. (2002) 'The value and impact of reading imaginative literature', *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 34(33), 33-41.

Vogrincic, A. C. (2010) 'Pleasure and shame: Books on (not) reading (An overview of the field)', *The International Journal of the Book*, 7 (3), pp. 57–67.

Wacquant, L. (2002) 'The sociological life of Pierre Bourdieu', *International Sociology*, 17(4), pp. 549-556.

Wagner, C. J. (2020) 'Multilingualism and reading identities in prekindergarten: Young children connecting reading, language, and the Self', *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, pp. 1-16.

Walford, G. (2007) 'Classification and framing of interviews in ethnographic interviewing', *Ethnography and Education*, 2(2), 145-157.

Walliman, N. (2011) *Your research project: A step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher.* 3rd edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Webb, J., Schirato, T. and Danaher, G. (2002) *Understanding Bourdieu*. London: Sage.

World Bank (2021) *Individuals using the internet (% of population) – Algeria*. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=DZ (Accessed: 19 November 2021).

Wright, A., Murray, J. P. and Geale, P. (2007) 'A phenomenographic study of what it means to supervise doctoral students', *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 6(4), pp. 458-474.

Yandell, J. (2015) 'Teenagers and reading: Literacy heritages, cultural contexts and contemporary reading practices', *English in Education*, 49(2), pp. 188-191.

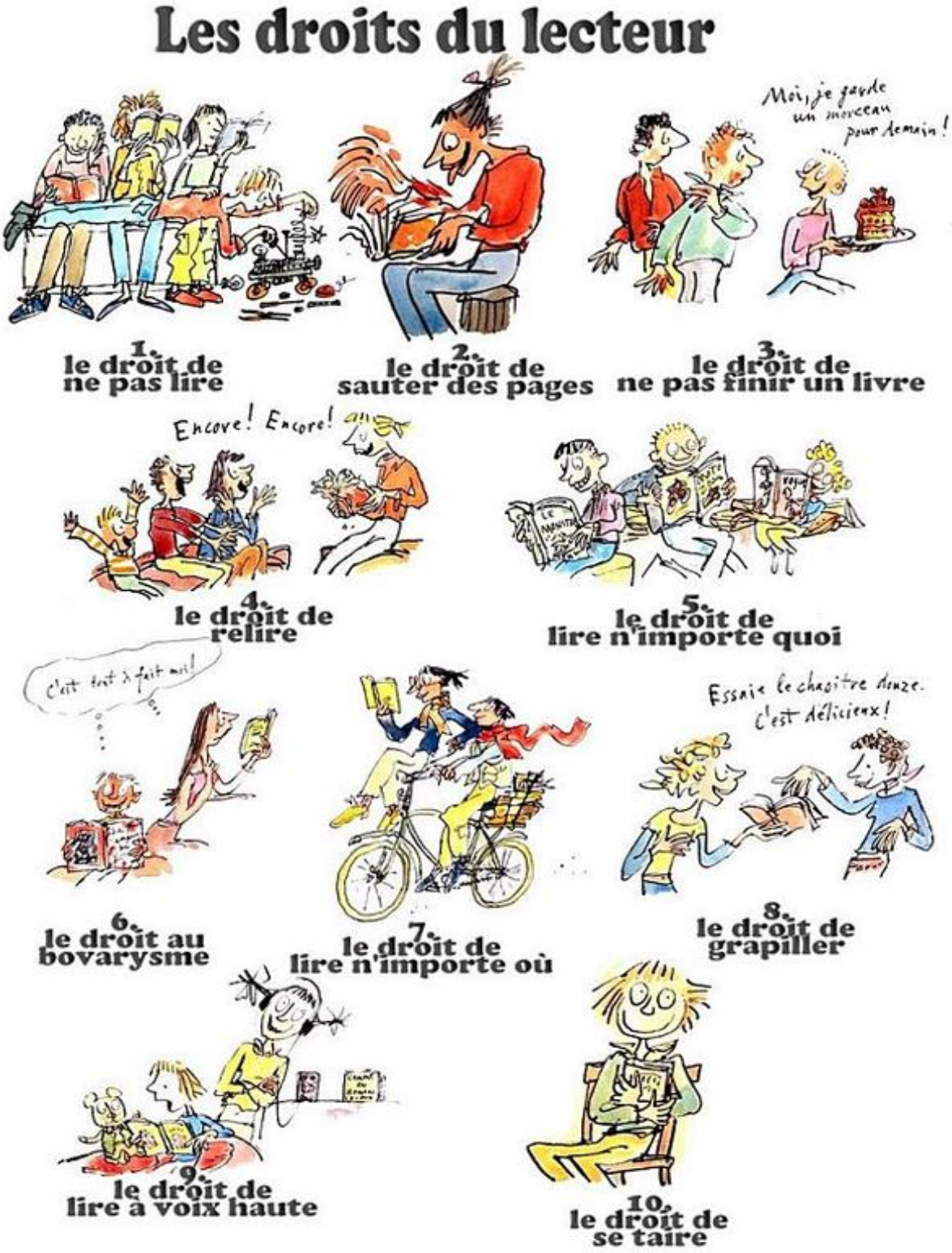
Yeo, L. S., Ong, W. W. and Ng, C. M. (2014) 'The home literacy environment and preschool children's reading skills and interest', *Early Education and Development*, 25(6), pp. 791-814.

Zakaria, S. (2016) '7-year-old Farah is Arab Reading Challenge winner', *Khaleej Times*. Available at: https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/dubai/dubais-rta-issues-clarification-on-smart-parking-meters-ticket-displays- (Accessed: 23 May 2020).

List of Appendices

Appendix A

Daniel Pennac's poster: The Rights of the Reader



Appendix B

Interview schedule

The order of questions was not necessarily followed. More prompting was used during interviews depending on participants' responses and the aspects they disclosed at different instances.

- Do you like to read for leisure?
- Have you been reading anything at all lately?
- What was it about? What did you like about it?

- What do you usually like to read?
- Can you think of anything that you have read and really liked?
- How do you usually choose what you read?
- When do you usually read? *And why?*
- Where do you usually read? *And why?*
- Do you usually read in print or on screen or both? *And why?*
- In what languages do you like to read? *And why?*
- Do you have equal fluency in reading in different languages? If you are given the same book in the different languages that you speak, which one would you read?

- Talk to me about reading. How would you define it? *And why?*
  Or
- What does reading mean to you? *And why?*

- What would you say are your reasons for reading?

- Would you say that reading had an effect on you?
- Was it a positive or a negative effect? *And why?*
- Can you give me examples of how it affected you?

- How did you begin reading?
- Did anyone or anything encourage you to read as a child?
- Were you read to as a child? *Who read to you?*
- Who or what influences you to read nowadays? *How?*

- Do any of your family members read in their leisure time?
- Do you have friends who like to read in their leisure time?
- Would you say that your family is encouraging of your reading?
- Do you discuss your readings with your family, friends or anyone else?

- What about your wider environment? Would you say that it is encouraging of your reading? *How?*
- How do you see reading in Algeria? *Why?*

- Are there any challenges that you faced, or still face, in relation to reading?
- What are they?
- How do you cope with these challenges?

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me, perhaps, something that I have not asked about, or something that you would like to share?

Appendix C

Examples of translated and original data extracts

	Translation	Original Language
Extracts from Chapter 06	Djahan: I don't know. I just found myself, since I was a child, I like to read stories. I think, uh, my cousin brought me the first story *Snow White* and to my sister *Cinderella*… I consider that my relationship with reading started like that… My uncle also used to bring us a lot of stories that I used to like reading (Djahan#FG1).	Djahan: Ma'labalish. Lguit rohi meli kount sghira wana neshti naqra lqissass. Balak, uh, ma couzine jabetli *Thulayja al-Bayda'e* w khti *Roumayda Cendrillon*… na'taber 'alaqti belqira'a bdat haka… Khali kan yjibena qissass bezef bezef teni kount dima nhab naqra (Djahan#FG1).
	Clara: They [parents] used to read for us before we sleep, like short stories… It became something that was part of our lives (Clara#FG1).	Clara: Kanou yaqrawena qbel ma norgdou qissass, hakda genre sghouyrin… 3adet un truc qui fait partie de notre vie (Clara#FG1).
	Jim: At first, I used to take books and look at the pictures. Then when I got bored of them, I said "Oh! There are words! Why not read them?" (laughter) (Jim#I1).	Jim : Au début, je prenais les livres et je voyais les photos. W mba'da ki qloqt men les photos goult « Ha tiens ! y a des mots. Pour quoi pas les lires ? » (rire) (Jim#I1)
	Amir: …in general, we don't buy the [paperback] book… because the books I like are very expensive and they are not available. So, we turn towards hacking them from internet (Amir#I1).	Amir: …en general manashriwsh le [papier] livre… puisque lektabat li nhabouhom ghalyin bezef w mekenesh. Donc, nwaliw dima npiratiw men l'internet (Amir#I1).

	Malik: I went to the international book fair looking for Edward Said's book and couldn't find it. I looked everywhere in the fair and couldn't' find it, while in the East or in the West, Edward Said is sacred (Malik#I1).	Malik : Al ma'rad douwali roht nhawess 'ala lektab ta' Edward Said malguitesh. Hawesst l ma'rad kamel malguitesh, alors que d Sharq wela fel Gharb, Edward Said c'est quelqu'un de muqadass (Malik#I1).
	Amir: The environment is what affects you. If you hang out with people who read, you are likely to become a reader (Amir#I1).	Amir: L'environnement houwa tani li y'athar 'alik. Parce que koun t'ashri 'abed yaqraw tweli taqray (Amir#I1).
	Djahan: … My sister was the one who would ease the, uh, this feeling of alienation, see? When my sister and I are together we can overcome this — …if it was not for my sister, I would have felt more of the alienation and isolation (Djahan#I1).	Djahan: …Oukhti hiya li toukhafif 3ani l, uh, had as-shu'ur bil ghorba. Fhamti? Ki n3oud ana w oukhti zey ba3dana naqdrou nejtazou l—… koun majatesh kayna khti, koun n7ass akthar bil 'ouzla w ghorba (Djahan#I1).
	Djahan: …although the book's value is beyond any price, its material value remains out of rich for many people. Like, for example, you buy a novel for 450, it is expensive (Djahan#I1).	Djahan:… raghm ana l kitab la yuqadar bi thaman, laqin yabqa l qima l madiya mesh fi mutanawal l ghashi kamel. Ya'ni, mathalan, teshri riwaya b 450 c'est cher (Djahan#I1).
	Jim: Standard Arabic, yes, which serves at, according to me, nothing, apart from the religious side, I precise, in which	Jim: Lfossha, oui, qui sert, d'après moi, a plus rien appart, je précise, appart le côté religieux li fih un seul livre [le Coran] (Jim#I1).

	only one book [the *Quran*] exists (Jim#I1).	
	Malik: …when we are children, we are more into something that is religious. The parents think "I will send him to the *masjid*". "In the *masjid*", uh, "he will only find good things". So in my childhood, all my readings were into something religious, so *al a'ima* [Islamic leaders who, in this case, are the instructors], and you read, uh, you read things related to the *deen* [religion]… not only was I reading about these religious things, I was rather only reading about them… (Malik#I1).	Malik : …f l'enfance nkounou surtout branchés l quelque chose de religieux. Les parents ygouleq « assena nhoto fel masjid ». « Fel masjid », uh, « yelga que les bonnes choses ». Donc c'était f l'enfance, même mes documentations c'était envers quelque chose de religieux. Donc al a'ima, w taqray, uh, taqray haka hwayej ta' deen… kount naqra gher 3lihom mashi 3lihom bark, gher 3lihom… (Malik#I1).
	Jim: I don't care about the "origins" thing regarding the language. I consider myself Earthian, human, Algerian, Arab, Berber, but mostly human (#RJ, E12).	Jim: J'ai pas le truc des 'origines' wela par rapport à la langue. Je me considère comme Terrien, humain, Algérien, Arabe, Berbère, mais surtout humain (#RJ, E12).
	Clara: …wisdom comes out of the mouth of the insane. That person said what everybody on that bus wanted to tell you but did not… Tell yourself that everybody else that minute was thinking about the same thing. Algeria is like that (Clara#FG2).	Clara: …wisdom comes out of the mouth of the insane. That person said what everybody on that bus wanted to tell you but did not… Tell yourself that everybody else that minute was thinking about the same thing. Algeria is like that (Clara#FG2).

Extracts from Chapter 07	Djahan: They [people on the bus] are not acquainted with seeing someone read… (Djahan#FG2).	Djahan: [Nass li fel bus] mash mwalfin yshoufou wahed yaqra... (Djahan#FG2).
	Djahan: …he told us: "I challenge you if anyone of you… has got a book in their bags" (Djahan#FG2).	Djahan: …galena atahada anou wahed fikom… lakan 'andou f sac ktab (Djahan#FG2).
	Djahan: The title is attractive. I mean, in a time when all people are saying we should read and so on, he says: "how to talk about books you haven't read?" and he says that, uh, "it is not necessary for you to read everything" (Djahan#I1).	Djahan: Al 'ounwan mouthir lil intibah. Tessema fi waqt anou nass tgoul lazemna naqraw w koulesh, ygoulek "kayfa tatahadath 'an koutoub lam taqra'ha?" w ygoulek enou, uh, "mash darouri taqr'a koulesh" (Djahan#I1).
	Djahan: Because the idea that you read, that you live to read, read, read, read is impossible to reach. I mean, the books that you haven't read will always outnumber the books that you have read. So, this shouldn't make you feel *'oqdat ad-danb* ['the guilt complex']…The guilt complex, you keep feeling: "Oh, I haven't read", "oh, I haven't read that book", "oh, I haven't read *Anna Karenina*", "oh, I haven't read *Ulysses*", "oh, I haven't read those literary books"... (Djahan#I1).	Djahan: Li ana fikrat anek taqray, anek t'ishi bash taqray, takray, taqray, taqray rahi mousstahilat tahqik. Yaani rah yabqa da'iman 'adad al koutoub li makritihash akbar min 'adad al koutoub li qritiha. Fa lazem had al amr ma ykhalikesh thassi bi 'oqdat ad-danb… 'Oqdat ad-danb, tebqay dima thassi: "Oh, ana ani maqritesh", "oh, lektab hadak maqritesh", "oh, maqritesh *Anna Karenina*, "oh, maqritesh *Ulysses*", "oh, maqritesh hadou al koutoub al adabiya"… (Djahan#I1).
	Clara: …reading is kind of like an art. The desire comes to take, uh, just like	Clara: Al qira'a genre keli c'est un art. Tjik nefha thazi, uh, kima tjik nefha thazi

	you desire playing the lute, the same way the desire comes to take a book and read in the metro, the park… at university, in your room, in the terrace, everywhere… (Clara#FG2).	l ‘oud, kima tjik nefha thazi ktab wtaqray fel métro, fel jnan... fel jami3a, fel bit, f la terrasse, partout... (Clara#FG2).
	Clara: I still haven’t read Shakespeare… It is true that I did English and I have to read Shakespeare, but I didn’t feel like reading it. I was criticised for this. Once one of the teachers [told me]: “hey [Clara], why didn’t you read Shakespeare?” (Clara#FG3).	Clara: Ana l dork maqritech Shakespeare… Ana sah mdayra Anglais w lazem naqra Shakespeare, but I didn’t feel like reading it. I was za’ama criticised for this. Wahd nhar one of the teacters “ha [Clara], why didn’t you read Shakespeare?” (Clara#FG3).
	Djosour: I would say “no!” because I would say “who is she to tell me ‘you should’” Why would I read it while she is telling me “you should” (Djosour#FG1).	Djosour: Ngoul “non” parce que ngoul “shkoun hadi li tgouli ‘yajibou’” ‘alah naqrah ana w hiya tgouli “yajibou” (Djosour#FG1).
	Malik: At work, I don’t say that I read books. At work, I need to be a good doctor, that’s it. In sports, I need to be a good athlete, that’s it. But outside [these] when I am with [Nora] and the others [readers], I should be updated in terms of reading. So, uh, I do not mix things (Malik#I1).	Malik: Fel khadma, mangoulesh ani naqra lektabat wela. Fel khadma je dois être un bon médecin, c’est tout. F le sport, je dois être un bon athlète, c’est tout. Mais barra ki nji m’aa [Nora] w hadouk [li yaqraw], je dois être actuel en matière de lecture. Donc, uh, je ne mélange pas les choses (Malik#I1).

	Clara: …our world has become so superficial and artificial that people started taking a book — Djahan: Prestige only — Clara: To attract others' attention. It is not to read…— Djahan: It became *une mode* Clara: …exactly *une mode* "Oh! I am a reader!" for nothing… kinda to show off (Clara&Djahan#FG2).	Clara: ...le monde ta'na il est devenu tellement superficiel w artificiel que 'adou za'ma yhazou le livre – Djahan: Prestige bark – Clara: Pour attirer l'attention des autres. C'est pas pour lire... – Djahan: 'adet une mode Clara: ...voilà une mode "Ah! je suis une lectrice!" pour rien... genre bash yviyssou (Clara&Djahan#FG2).
	Djahan: He wandered and wandered around and then came: "give us a book to read with you" (laughter)… Another time a group of adolescents who were recently released from prison all came and grabbed books [at the event] (Djahan#FG2).	Djahan: Dar dar w mba'ad ja: "hatouna kashma ktab naqraw m3akom" (rire)… W khatra tani hadouk les adolescents kheriji lahbass boukoul jaw hazou lektabat w ya9raw men hadou [durant l'évènement] (Djahan#FG2).
Extracts from Chapter 08	Djahan: So, when you are a reader, and when you are in family gatherings, you feel some sort of an alienation. They speak about topics, uh, that do not interest you in any way: *gnader* ['traditional clothing that brides wear in weddings'], food… You feel: "what am I doing here?" (laughter). You wish: "when is this court session going to end?" (laughter)… You feel that there is nothing shared, except for blood ties… (Djahan#I1).	Djahan: Bittali, ki t'oudi taqray heka wala, mba'ad ki t'oudi f tajamou'at al 'ailiya, thassi b wahd an-naw3 mina al ghorba heka. Houma yahkiw fi mawadi', uh, la ta'niki la min qarib wa la min ba'id: gnader [les gondouras], yahkiw 'la el makla… Nti thassi: "wash rani ndir hna?" (rire). Tweli tetmenay: "waktah tantahi had jalssat al mouhakama hadi" (rire)… Thessi anou makanesh heka haja moushtaraka, 3ada rawabit ad-dam... (Djahan#I1).

	Djahan: …this solitude [with reading] is also good so that you do not drift with their [family members'] current, because the narrow horizon becomes like water currents. It takes you with it (Djahan#FG1).	Djahan: …d'un autre côté, positive parce que ay mliha l3ozla hadi teni bah matenssaqich wra hadak at-tayar tahom [la famille], l'ofoq ad-dayiq aw yweli ki at-tayar ta' nahr jarif yedik ma'ah (Djahan#FG1).
	Clara: But you should not let them affect your – there is no melting… That's why I told you the balance, it [reading] is what holds the balance: it doesn't let you go this or that way (Clara#FG1).	Clara: Bessah malazemsh ykoun 'andhom athar kbir – makanch inssihar… 'Ala hadi goutlek lmizan, hiya [al qiraa] li tahkemlek lmizan: matkhalikesh trohi hak w hak (Clara#FG1).
	Djahan: … "[Djahan], the cultured, works with l'ANEM?" The tear was here [pointing to her eye], on my way to work. It really hurt me (Djahan#I1).	Djahan: …"[Djahan], al mouthaqafa, takhdem f l'ANEM?" Dam'a hak [pointing to her eye] w ana tal'a nakhdem ghadetni rohi (Djahan#I1).
	Djahan: …it [reading] is something I live with myself. After the events we have had in the park, I realised that I can leave my intimate relation with reading and with the book to myself, away from the lights (Djahan#FG2).	Djahan: …hadi [al qiraa] haja n'ishha bini bin rohi. Mba'ad ktasheft wra madarna les évènements ta' ljnan w ktasheft anou 'alaqti al hamima ma'a al qiraa ma'a lktab naqder nkhaliha liya, liya l rohi ba'idan 'an al adwae (Djahan#FG2).
	Jim: I always imagine myself retired, a book in my hand, reading calmly. But now, generally speaking, there is no time (Jim#I1).	Jim: Je m'imagine toujours retraité, un livre a la main, naqra bien tranquilo. Mais dorka, généralement y a pas de temps (Jim#I1).

	Malik: …they say that two things change a person: the people they meet or the books they read. For me, it was both, but mostly reading (Amir#I1).	Malik: …ils disent que deux choses changent une personne: les gens qu'elle fréquentent ou les livres qu'elle lisent. Pour moi, c'était les deux, mais beaucoup plus la lecture (Amir#I1).
	Djosour: … when you read and see many characters, you see so many stories, you become tolerant towards these people, you understand why they act like that, even when they are wrong, you become more understanding (Djosour#FG1).	Djosour: …ki taqray tshoufi bezef les caractères [personnages], tshoufi bezef des histoires t'oudi hadouk la'bad tefhmihom, tefhmi 'alah ydirou hak, lashta ghaltin wela, t'oudi tefahmi ktar (Djosour#FG1).
	Djahan: …before you see that a person committed something that goes against what is socially acceptable, know that he did not get there just like that. There are other things that he lived, like the Arabic saying goes: "if you look at the end of the matter, you forget its beginning" (Djahan#I1).	Djahan: …qbel ma tshoufi inssan irtakab haja mounafiya li wash kayen fel moujtama', a'arfi beli rahou ma wssalhash hakak. Aw kayen hwayej oukhrin 'ashhoum, kima tgoulha al maqoula al 'arabiya "ida nadhartoum akhir al amri, nassaytoum awalahou" (Djahan#I1).

Appendix D

Participants' readings

This table includes the names of authors and the titles that my participants mentioned, and either have read in the past or were reading at the time of data collection. I use Latin script to write the titles that are originally written in Arabic to avoid script inconsistency. The same applies to Greek script (Zorba the Greek).

Author	Title in English and Original Language
Agatha Christie	No title
Ahlam Mosteghanemi	Memory in the Flesh (Arabic: Dhakirat al-Jassad)
Ali Shariati	Gumption and Mockery (Arabic: An-Nabaha wa al-Istihmar)
Amin Maalouf	Samarkand (French: Samarcande) Balthasar's Odyssey (French: Le Périple de Baldassare) The Disoriented (French: Les Désorientés) In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong (French: Les Identités Meurtrières)
	The Little Prince (French: Le Petit Prince)

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry	
Anthony Robbins	No title
Athir AbdAllah Al-Nishmi	I Loved You more than Enough (Arabic: Ahbabtuka Akthar mima Yanbaghi)
Cesca Major	The Silent Hours
Dan Brown	The Da Vinci Code
Djahane Samarcande	Why Should You Marry a Man who Reads? (Arabic: Why You Should Marry a Man Who Reads)
Deepak Chopra	No title
Edgar Allan Poe	No title
Elif Shafak	Honour The Forty Rules of Love

Elizabeth Gilbert	Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman’s Search for Everything
Fatema Mernissi	Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems
Frantz Fanon	Black Skin, White Masks (French: Peau Noire, Masque Blancs)
Friedrich Nietzsche	No title
Gabriel Garcia Marquez	No title
Gibran Khalil Gibran	Rebellious Souls (Arabic: Al-Arwah al-Mutamarida)
Giuseppe Catozzella	Don’t Tell Me You’re Afraid (Italian: Non Dirmi Che Hai Paura)
Ibrahim Al-Fiqi	Ten Keys to Ultimate Success (Arabic: Al-Mafatih al-Ashara li An-Najah) Neuro Linguistic Programming (Arabic: Al-Barmaja al-Loughawia al-‘Assabiya wa Fan al-Itissal al-la Mahdoud)

Jane Austin	Pride and Prejudice
Joanne Rowling	Harry Potter
John Boyne	The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas
John Green	The Fault in our Stars
John Maxwell Coetzee	Waiting for the Barbarians
Jojo Moyes	Me before You
Khaled Hosseini	No title
Mahdi Al-Mosawi	Dance with Life (Arabic: Ar-Raqss ma'a al-Hayat)
Mahmoud Darwish	Nothing Impresses Me (Arabic: La Shaya Yu'jibuni)

	Wait for Her (Arabic: Intadhirha)
Malek Bennabi	The Question of Ideas in the Muslim World (French: Le Problème des Idées dans le Monde Musulman) Encounters of Damascus (French: Les Rencontres de Damas)
Milan Kundera	No title
Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfaluti	No title
Mustafa Mahmoud	My Journey from Doubt to Belief (original: Rihlati mina ash-Shak ila al-Iman)
Nikos Kazantzakis	Zorba the Greek
Nizar Qabbani	No title
Paulo Coelho	The Alchemist (Portuguese: O Alquimista) Veronika decides to Die (Portuguese: Veronika Decide Morrer)

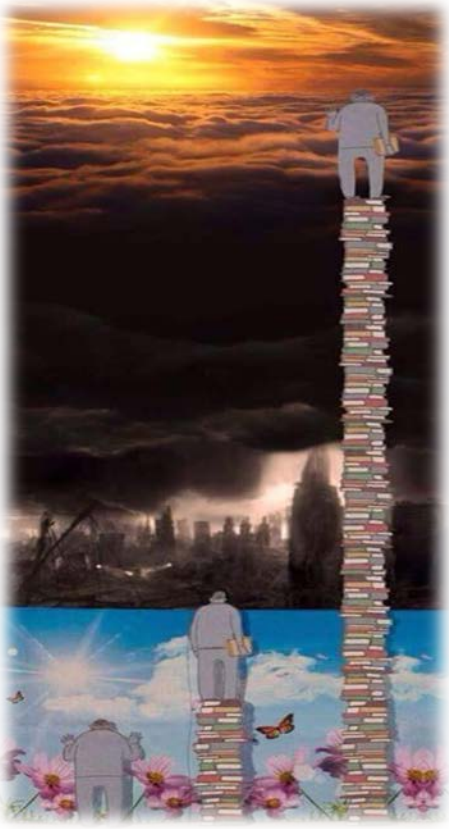
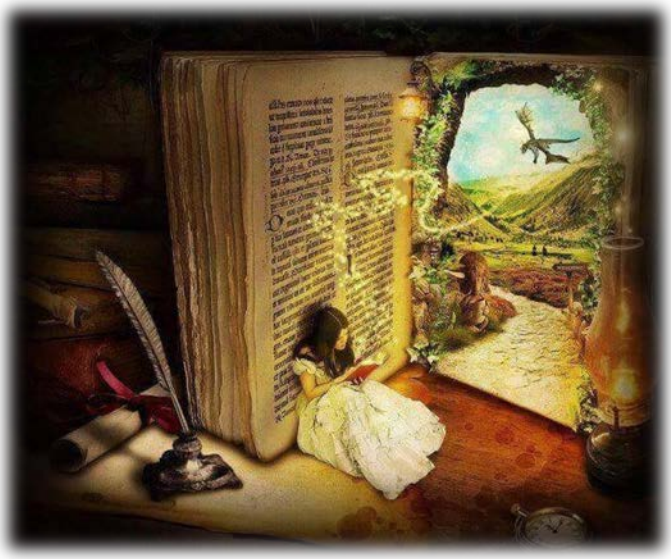
Pierre Bayard	How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read (French: Comment Parler des Livres que l'On n' pas Lus)
Quran	
Radwa Ashour	Granada Trilogy (Arabic: Thulathyat Gharnata) At-tantouriya (Arabic: At-Tanturiya)
Said Khatibi	Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle (Arabic: Arba'una 'Aman fi Intidhar Isabel)
Salah Ar-Rashid	No title
Spencer Johnson	Who Moved my Cheese?
Stephen Covey	No title
Victor Hugo	The Hunchback of Notre-Dame (French: Notre-Dame de Paris)
Vladimir Nabokov	Lolita

Wayne Dyer	No title
William Golding	Lord of the Flies

Appendix E

Picture chosen by participants

Participants	Pictures
Amir	
Clara	

Djahan	
Djosour	

Doula	
Jim	
Lucy	

Lucy	
Misha	

Appendix F

Example of invitation letter/ Focus group

Dear X,

I am Akila Tabbi, a doctoral student at Canterbury Christ Church University. I am interested in researching leisure reading within a group of Algerian graduates.

I am contacting you to ask if you would kindly accept to take part in this research. Your participation entails taking part in a focus group with other participants. The discussion will roughly revolve around your reading experience, interests, and so on. This will take place three to four times, each taking up to 60 minutes. All discussions will be audio-recorded. I might get in touch again if further information is needed.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained to the best of my ability. Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any point.

Thank you very much. Please, feel free to get back to me with any inquiries.

Kind regards,
Akila

Akila Tabbi
PhD Student
School of Education
Canterbury Christ Church University
Canterbury CT1 1QU
a.tabbi409@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix G

Example of invitation letter / Interviews

Dear X,

I am Akila Tabbi, a doctoral student at Canterbury Christ Church University. I am interested in researching leisure reading within a group of Algerian graduates.

Based on our quick chat the other day, I am contacting you to ask if you would kindly accept to take part in my research. Your participation entails taking part in an interview. You will be required to answer a number of questions about your reading experience, interests, and so on. You might be interviewed more than once. Our discussions will be audio-recorded.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained to the best of my ability. Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any point.

Thank you very much. Please, feel free to get back to me with any inquiries.

Kind regards,
Akila

Akila Tabbi
PhD Student
School of Education
Canterbury Christ Church University
Canterbury CT1 1QU
a.tabbi409@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix H

Consent form in English

Title of Project: **Leisure Reading Experiences: Voices of Algerian University Graduates**

Name of Researcher: **Akila Tabbi**

Contact details:

Address: N Holmes Rd, Canterbury CT1 1QU

Tel: +447424762476

Email: a.tabbi409@canterbury.ac.uk

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential	
4. I agree to take part in the above study.	
5. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded.	

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Date Signature

_____ _____ _____

Researcher Date Signature

Copies: 1 for participant

1 for researcher

Appendix I

Consent form in Arabic (نموذج الموافقة)

موضوع البحث: المطالعة: أصوات الشباب الجامعي الجزائري

إسم الباحثة: طبي عقيلة

بيانات الإتصال:

العنوان: N Holmes Rd, Canterbury CT1 1QU

الهاتف: +447424762476

البريد الإلكتروني: a.tabbi409@canterbury.ac.uk

الرجاء وضع علامةXفي الخانات التالية:

	اؤكد أني قرأت ورقة المعلومات الخاصة بهذا البحث وفهمتها جيدا وقد أتيحت لي الفرصة لطرح مختلف التساؤلات
	أفهم أن مشاركتي في هذا البحث هي بملء إرادتي وأنه بإستطاعتي الإنسحاب في أي وقت بدون تقديم أي تفسير أو إعطاء سبب الإنسحاب
	أفهم أن أي معلومات شخصية أزود بها الباحث ستبقى سرية للغاية
	أنا أوافق على المشاركة في الدراسة المذكورة أعلاه
	أنا أفهم انه سيتم إستعمال مسجل صوتي لتسجيل كل المقابلات

إسم المشترك: ..... التاريخ: ..... التوقيع:

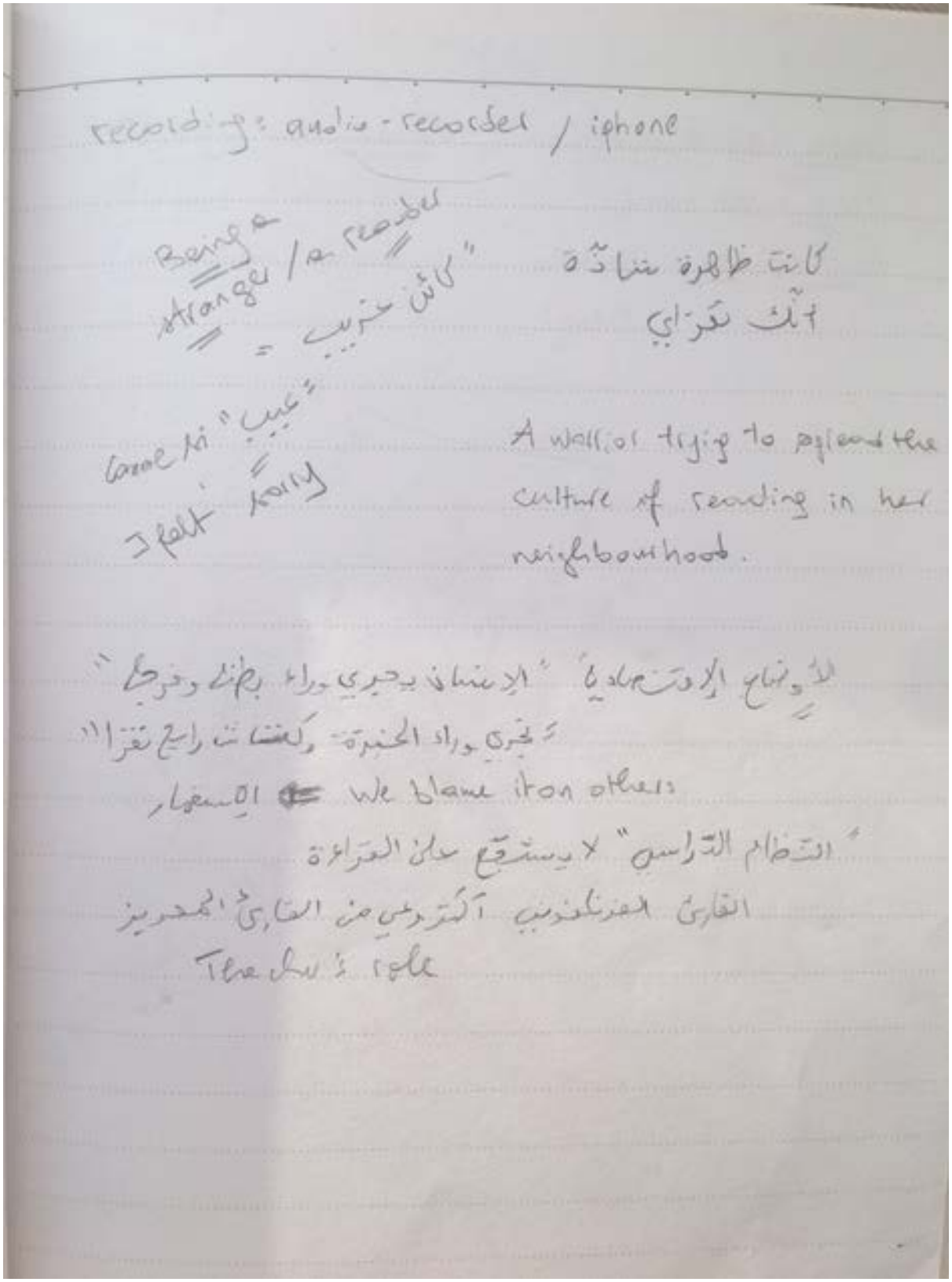
إسم الباحثة: ..... التاريخ: ..... التوقيع:

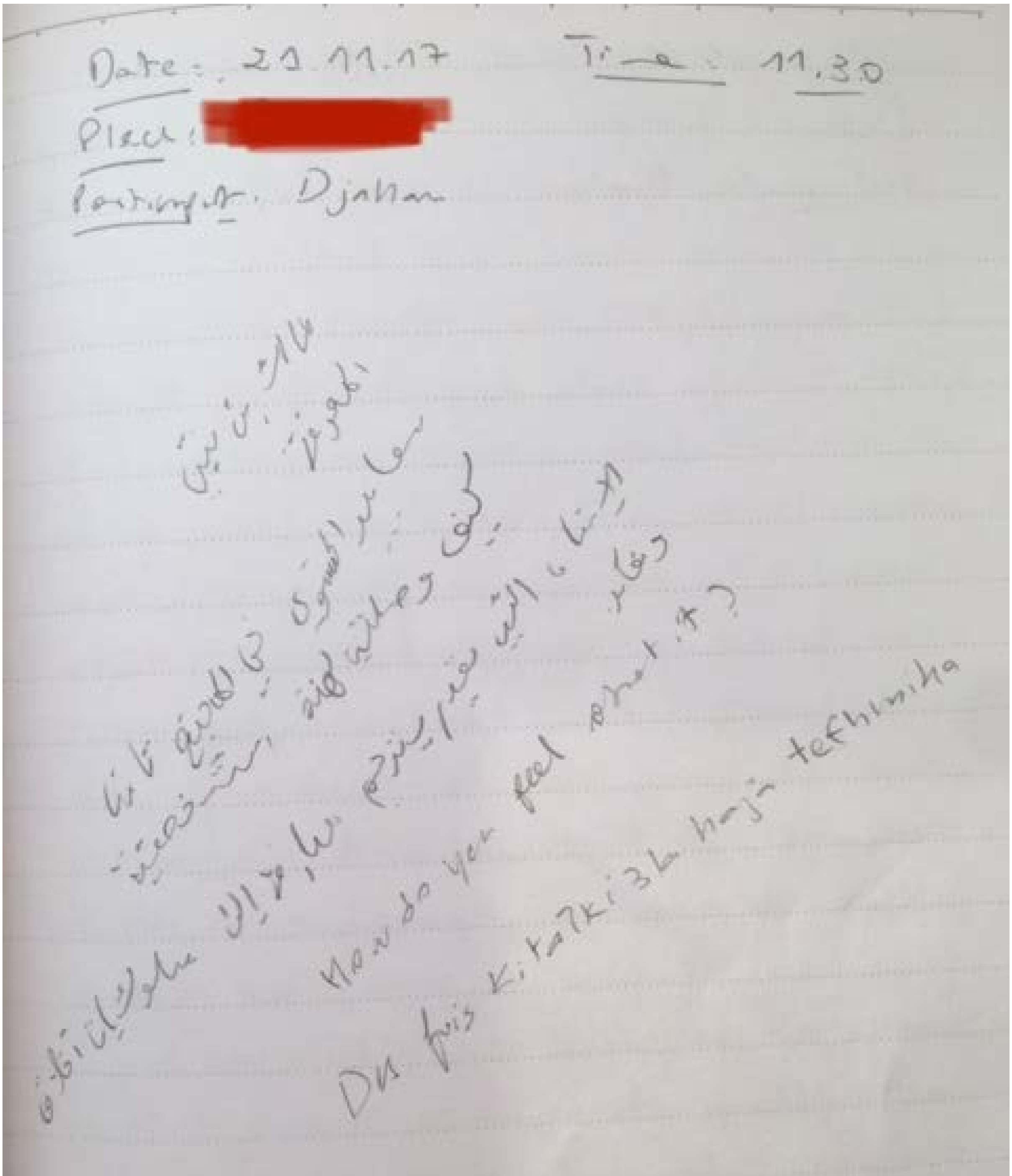
النسخ: 1 للمشترك

1 للباحث

Appendix J

Examples of notes taken during interviews or focus group discussions




Date: 21.11.17
Time: 11.30
Place: [redacted]
Participant: Djallan
كانت من نيتي
How do you feel about it?
Du fuis ki ta7ki 3la haja tefhmiha