

Teenage Boys' Leisure Reading Dispositions: juggling male youth culture and family cultural capital

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ABSTRACT *This paper draws on Rogoff's (1995) notions of guided participation and participatory appropriation and Bourdieu's (1991) notions of habitus and cultural capital to provide a more complex examination of boys and reading reluctance than is currently available. Drawing on questionnaire and interview data from teenage boys and their parents in a highly educated middle-class school community, we found that by mid-adolescence, boys identified as reluctant readers (those who can, but choose not to read) generally resist appropriating family reading dispositions which privilege selected print-based materials invested with a school approved form of cultural capital. Through the voices of these boys, a powerful sense of their agency emerges in their decisions to pursue specific types of print and electronic-based leisure reading which carry immediate pragmatic and social investment and which contribute to the construction of their masculine identities at this point in their lives. Through the voices of their parents, a sense of struggle emerges as they attempt to balance their sons' engagement with multi-modal forms of leisure reading with their investment in their sons' life trajectories, an investment conditioned by more traditional notions of literacy. Inserting notions of teenage boys as 'agentful' into existing models of social apprenticeship accounts for reciprocal social influences, where teenage boys shape family leisure reading practices as much as parents shape their sons'. The notion of boys as agents in their literacy choices also centralises concerns about how teachers and parents can negotiate pathways between traditionally valued print-based literacy practices and the increasingly more multi-modal literacy practices valued by teenage boys, practices whose status in both the home and the school is uncertain.*

Introduction

Boys' literacy performance has been a central theme of much current educational debate in English speaking countries such as Australia, the USA and UK. Embedded in this larger debate are considerations of how teenage boys are constructed and represented as readers, both in school and in the home. Research across these three countries suggests that as boys move into their teenage years, they are less likely than their female peers to be engaged in recreational and academic reading which does not have a clearly pragmatic function (Bunbury, 1995; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth 1995; Martino, 1995, 2001; Millard, 1997; Smith & Wilhelm, 2000).

Teenage boys have also been identified as less likely to succeed in school subjects which rely on print-based reading as the medium of cultural transmission (Campbell *et al.*, 1997) particularly the transmission of more general life skills and qualities such as communicative ability, empathy and citizenship (Teese *et al.*, 1995).

More recently, theorists such as Power (2001), Moss (1998), Teese (2000) and Smith and Wilhelm (2002) have been right to remind researchers of the need to foreground the highly contextualised nature of studies in the area of boys and reading, and to ask 'which boys' and 'which reading practices' are referred to when research is examined or designed. Power (2001) argues that some forms of recreational reading place different (and often no fewer) demands on teenagers when compared to academic reading and that it is important to identify the various forms of recreational reading, from comic books to digital multimedia of various genres. Moss (1998) reminds researchers of the importance of factoring in the reading ability of those being studied and provides a useful tripartite categorisation into: those who can't yet and don't read; those who can and don't read; and those who can and do read. Teese (2000) suggests that gender disadvantage as regards to reading is experienced unequally in Australia according to socio-economic status, with students from better educated households being least affected (Teese *et al.*, 1995). Wilhelm and Smith (2001) highlight significant discrepancies in attitudes towards reading between the teenage boys in their US study and those in Martino's (1995) Australian study, and caution that cultural differences must be accounted for, despite similarities in age and socio-economic background. Clearly, an explicitly situated approach (Barton *et al.*, 2000) is needed which locates such studies in terms of boys' age, reading ability, socioeconomic backgrounds, and the institutional and culture contexts in which their reading habits and attitudes are being studied.

The purpose of the study reported here is to examine how one group of teenage boys in one specifically situated context in Australia differentially 'take-up' (Heath, 1983) aspects of their family's leisure reading practices. This group of boys has been identified as 'reluctant readers' (those 'who have the ability to read without any problems of decoding print, but have little or no inclination to read except by way of work or normal everyday life', Chambers, 1969). The boys are all capable readers and generally academically successful, from educated middle class families who have chosen to send their sons to 'Hilltop', a high fee-paying private boys' school. Thus, the context of the study is a specifically situated one, where social disadvantage and reading disability (two factors which have been identified as contributing substantially to reading reluctance) are excluded as variables in boys' reading reluctance. 'Reading' in this situated context is specifically understood as leisure or recreational reading, a distinction having been made to all participants between 'academic' reading for explicit school purposes, and 'home' reading. This highly situated study of academically capable adolescent males' leisure reading habits and attitudes reveals that some boys, who present in school as 'reluctant readers' are in fact capable readers in domains of importance to themselves at a particular point of their lives.

Of particular interest to this study is the role that parents in this context continue to play in mediating reading as a cultural practice in the home, with their teenage sons. Research into family literacy practices in general has been extensively documented (see, among others, Spreadbury 1995; Cairney 1998; Reay, 1998; Barton *et al.*, 2000) with influential studies such as those conducted by Heath (1983) and Wells (1986) providing rich portraits of the varied apprenticeships that young children

undergo within their families as particular discourse communities. Yet there has been surprisingly little research into the family processes concerned with maintaining valued reading practices in older, more independent readers (Millard, 1997). Our study fills a gap in that research by examining which family practices may have worked to maintain teenage boys' interest in certain forms of leisure reading and which practices may have become ineffective in this endeavour. Given expanded definitions of reading to incorporate information technologies, visual texts, multi-media texts and other forms of reading available to boys in the contemporary digital culture, we are also interested in the nature and scope of the boys' multi-literate practices and in how boys and their families negotiate leisure reading practices across the various modes.

Reluctant Readers at 'Hilltop'

'I'm a very good reader, but I hardly read for leisure at all. I simply don't enjoy reading and the only time I read out of school would be something on a topic that interests me (sport, cars, mobile phones, games and electronics) whether it be on the internet, in a magazine or in the newspapers. Apart from these I believe reading is, although beneficiary, a waste of time for me. It bores me and leaves me tired. I am encouraged and advised by many people, mostly my parents, to read, yet I choose not to'.
(Tom)

Tom is a 15-year-old boy, representative of many of the sons of well-educated professional families who have chosen to send their sons to 'Hilltop College'. Tom's comments were elicited in a questionnaire about leisure reading habits, distributed to 75 teenage boys identified as reluctant readers (Chambers, 1969; Moss, 1998). Along with the vast majority of his peers, Tom could be considered as a 'screenager' (Luke & Luke, 2001, p. 40), his childhood having been electronically mediated through home computers, the internet, electronic games, VCRs and CD technology. The central role that such electronic texts play in their reading universes is represented in the comment below from Michael, another interviewee.

'I'm not a keen reader ... I use the internet often. I like playing computer games. I go into chat rooms, especially to check out the footy results and what kids are saying about the last games'.

Michael, like Tom above and all other 15-year-olds we interviewed, identifies himself as 'not a keen reader', but like them, fails to recognise that he is actively engaged in reading as he uses these electronic technologies for pleasure and for maintaining his social identity as a teenager. Many of these boys' parents too fail to recognise that reading electronic text, either for information or communication purposes, requires often complex decoding, semantic, pragmatic and critical engagement (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Like their sons, they presume that reading applies only to 'privileged' and 'privileging' (Bernstein, 1996) forms of print text (such as novels and newspapers), with only a small number of parents interviewed recognising that processing electronic text, either for information or communication purposes, is a form of reading.

'I guess these days with the internet, it's not so important to read books as such because you can rely on the internet. I probably forgot about that as

a form of reading. Even the chat lines are a form of communication'.
(Paul's father)

However, most parents were bewildered by the speed with which their sons transitioned across various modes of text ('one minute they're skimming through the paper, the next they are chatting on the computer, watching telly or doing homework'), perceiving this semiotic browsing to be a distraction from 'real reading'.

Thus, for both the teenage boys and their parents in this context, leisure reading is understood in its narrowest sense as engagement with selected print-based informational and fictional texts (see Love & Hamston, 2001 for a contrastive perspective from a cohort of committed readers), despite the availability of a range of multi-modal and digitally complex texts within the boys' home, school and wider community. The limitation of this view of leisure reading has repercussions for the ways in which boys position themselves as readers in their teenage years, for the ways in which parents position themselves to guide their sons into those forms of reading which are privileged academically and inter-generationally (Rogoff, 1995) and for the ways in which boys and their parents negotiate conflicts arising from these different positions. Boys' expertise with and preference for multi-modal texts, including digitally complex texts, appears to be a significant factor contributing to the tension between established family leisure reading dispositions and the boys' current leisure reading disposition. The guidance offered by the parents has typically privileged leisure reading around print texts, most prominently novels in the earlier years, and broadening out as the boys moved into high school to include biographies and broadsheet newspapers (see Hamston & Love, *in press*). As capable readers, many boys identified as reluctant readers have adopted these print-based leisure reading practices rather grudgingly till the early years of adolescence. However, as they reach the middle years of adolescence, their resistance to adopting their parents' print-based reading dispositions as a significant component of their own leisure reading practice becomes more pronounced. This preference for forms of print-based text that are not 'privileged' by their parents (texts such as magazines) and for certain forms of electronic text, results in many boys being labelled, by their teachers and parents, as 'reluctant readers'.

In the remainder of this article we draw on interview comments from teenage boys and their parents to construct three main arguments. Firstly we will argue that the notion of reading reluctance as a single deficit-oriented construct (e.g. Office for Standards in Education, 1993) requires closer examination when applied to teenage boys who are capable readers. 'Reading reluctance' as a singular construct obscures the complexity both of the social processes that contribute towards the construction of boys' reading identities (Wilhelm, 2001) and of the range of texts perceived to be 'read' (Power, 2001). Secondly, we argue for the value to parents of recognising the agency of teenage boys as they differentially 'take from' (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998) the range of leisure reading texts available to them in their social fields. We base this advice on our examination of: the practices reported by parents as they attempt to guide their teenage sons into adopting traditional forms of leisure reading perceived to reproduce existing cultural capital; and the boys' reporting of their decisions as they select from available texts. Thirdly, we argue that curriculum developers need to examine more closely and critically what constitutes 'valued leisure reading' in current times, in order to reconcile the role of traditionally valued practices and texts

TABLE 1. Rogoff's (1995) model of cultural activity as applied to the current study

Rogoff's plane	Site of activity	Features in this context
Apprenticeship	Community	'Hilltop', a highly educated, middle class school community
Guided participation	Family	Well-resourced families in terms of economic, linguistic and cultural capital
Participatory appropriation	Individual	Adolescent boys who are capable readers, but reluctant to adopt the family leisure reading dispositions

with the role in the school curriculum of the multi-modal and semiotically complex forms of reading typically preferred by 'screenage' boys.

Theoretical and Methodological Context

Each of our arguments is premised on the assumption that masculine identities are not static, but rather, as Connell (1995) proposes, developed dynamically through an individual's daily interaction with significant others, interactions whose features are themselves conditioned by broader social structures. Thus, our research has been framed by a socio-cultural theory of language that highlights how individuals develop a dialectic relationship with the social, cultural and historical contexts of their lives (for example, Wertsch 1995; Wells 1999). Socio-cultural theorists draw upon the work of Vygotsky, Bourdieu and Bakhtin (among others) to demonstrate how language and discourse mediates lived experience. Within this tradition of research, Barbara Rogoff (1995) offers a multi-dimensional framework that posits three planes of analysis: apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation, which relate respectively to community, interpersonal, and personal processes. These planes of analysis provide a powerful model for describing the community, family and personal processes involved in the formation of boys' leisure reading identities. Table 1 illustrates how these planes can be applied in the context of the present study.

Rogoff (1995; Rogoff *et al.*, 1993) centralises the plane of *guided participation* to illustrate the collaborative and structured relationship that develops between parents and children. An analysis of *guided participation* foregrounds both the particularities and traditions that feature in an individual's enculturation into family practices and the socially valued practices of the broader community. This focus on enculturative practices complements and sharpens Bourdieu's (1991) concept of 'habitus' which emphasises how particular social dispositions influence an individual's life trajectory. Rogoff (1995) also sees enculturation in terms of a life trajectory and frames this through the plane of participatory appropriation, whereby an individual's 'becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981) is realised through his or her active application of social practices learnt in the home to other contexts.

Using Rogoff's plane of *guided participation* to inform the theory and methodology of our research, we have worked from case studies of parents and boys to build up a portrait of the particular features of boys' enculturation into reading in the home. Such culturally structured activity includes the tacit (or collaborative) reading related strategies, as well as the explicit ones used by families to guide boys into

Guided participation

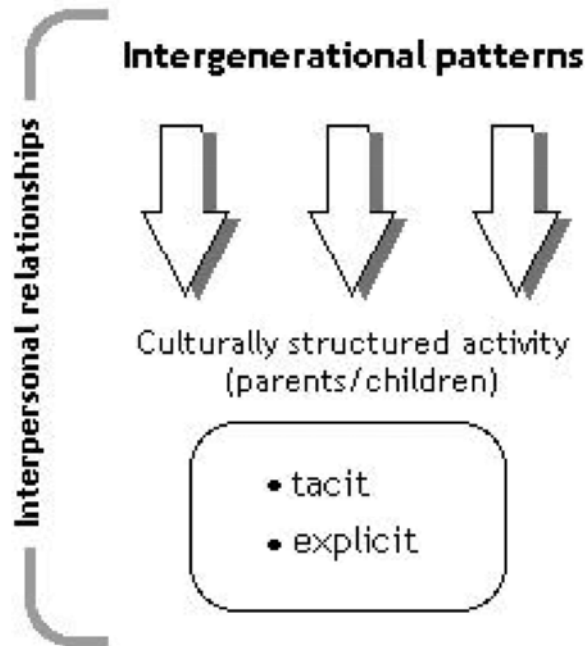


FIG. 1. Guided Participation: culturally structured activity (after Rogoff *et al.*, 1993; Rogoff, 1995).

appropriating intergenerationally valued modes of reading, and in doing so, shaping the interpersonal relationships between boys and their families. Figure 1 illustrates these features of Rogoff's (1995) model of guided participation which inform this research.

Insights into the enculturation practices of the parents and the boys' stances in relation to these practices were gained through interviews (indicated by 'I' after the quotations) with teenage boys and their parents and their written questionnaire responses (indicated by 'Q' after the quotations). From the 75 families surveyed, we selected seven for interviewing, these seven representing the range of 'voices' evidenced in the discursive questionnaire comments and the age range of the teenage boys. While all the parents we approached were keen to be involved in interviews, some boys were initially reluctant. We were able to persuade these boys that the interviews would not focus on their deficits as readers, but rather on what they had to tell us about their existing leisure reading. The interviews were conducted in the family home (boys being interviewed separately from their parents), audio-taped and transcribed, ensuring that pseudonyms were allocated. Semi-structured interview prompts for parents (see <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/LLAE>) were designed around key patterns emerging from the questionnaire responses and around the key constructs of Rogoff's model as identified in Figure 1. Questions to boys paralleled those to parents, but, concerned as we were not to elicit defensive responses from boys, we started the interviews with scenario prompts (see Appendix), a methodol-

ogy used successfully in other literacy-based interview studies with boys (Martino, 1995, 2001; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Recognising that the researchers were not viewing their reading behaviours within a deficit model, the boys were relaxed and frank with their comments.

We will focus in our analysis below on the comments of three of the boys we interviewed and their families. We selected Simon, Michael and Paul because they are all the same age (15) and because theirs and their families' questionnaire comments suggested something of the range of positions adopted, as families attempted, in different ways, to guide their sons into appropriating specific leisure reading practices and as boys, with varying senses of their own 'agency', appropriated or resisted these practices in different ways. By attending closely to the voices of individual boys and their families, we hope to avoid the generalisations about 'monolithic gendered categories' (Wilhelm & Smith, 2001, p. 24) that has unfortunately characterised much recent research on boys and reading.

First, we offer a cameo of these boys and their 'habitus' through the lens of family reading disposition. A remarkable consistency emerged from the interview transcripts, both between the perceptions of the two parents and between the boys' perceptions and those of their parents regarding the families' reading dispositions.

Simon, Michael and Paul: family reading dispositions

The family contexts in which Simon, Michael and Paul developed their leisure reading identities all share strong intergenerational print-based leisure reading practices. Simon's grandfather is a 'keen reader of things to do with the war and with wildlife' and regularly passes on books on these topics for Simon to read. His father regularly tells him that 'there's a good article in the newspaper you should read'. However, with his stepfather, Simon engages in more 'blended forms of textual and symbolic practice' (Luke & Luke, 2001, p. 36), combining print and electronic text in its various multi-modal forms.

'I really like reading the PC magazines with Tony. When there's a special edition, we sit down and read them together, and then go and play some of the games'. (Simon, I)

Simon clearly has access to a range of leisure reading positions and resources from which to choose within the family, in both print and digital modes.

Intergenerational leisure reading patterns are more fragmented in Michael's family, his mother having migrated from Malaysia and the family maintaining only irregular contact with grandparents 'who don't speak English, so we don't communicate much'. Until a few years ago, his sister 'used to read to me a lot, but now she's in Year 12 and has too much work to do'. Michael's mother, however, has been tenacious in encouraging him to read novels and newspapers, largely because:

'When I was brought up in Malaysia there was not even a library, just textbooks. I found because of that my English is not as good as other students in higher levels of schooling—this was a draw back for me—so as a result I always encourage my children to read and make sure reading material is available to them, take them to the library. Reading is the gateway to a lot of things, life, work, relationships'. (Michael's mother, I)

Michael's father is 'more laid back, he only reads the newspaper and doesn't mind

what I read, or even whether I read, as long as it agrees with mum'. In Paul's family, by contrast, it was the father who took the lead in attempting to establish family leisure reading dispositions.

'Often if I'm on computer Dad will tell me to stop. He'll ask me if I've read today and I'll try to say Yeh, in class. He will say I want you to read. If I argue, he would become firm—I want you to read now. Reading is very important ... He would prefer me not to read magazines—he would say ... I want you to read a newspaper or novel'. (Paul, I)

The cameos above represent something of the range of family leisure reading dispositions across the 75 families of reluctant readers surveyed, privileging as they do print-based texts perceived to be invested with certain ethical, academic, and career cachet. These families clearly possess considerable linguistic and 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1972), highlighted in the parents' own educational levels and the extent of their investment in their sons' academic futures. If, as Bourdieu (1991) argues, the family is an important site of social and cultural reproduction, boys like Simon, Michael and Paul, who are capable readers, have access to material and human resources that should encourage the reproduction of a particular 'privileged' reading disposition. Yet they choose to reject the practical and symbolic work of their parents in the field of the home that would position them to appropriate their family's leisure reading dispositions. In the remainder of this paper, we will examine how Simon, Michael and Paul, all capable readers, in their different ways, selectively choose or resist certain reading related positions privileged by their families, while appropriating other available reading-related positionings within their social fields. Accounting in this way for the individual adolescent boy as an agent who makes deliberate choices about his leisure reading identity avoids the determinism implied in Rogoff *et al.*'s (1993) model, a determinism which suggests that participatory appropriation of family reading dispositions is a direct result of the family's strategies of guided practice.

Appropriation of Family Reading Dispositions: Simon

Simon has, for at least a year before turning 15, strenuously rejected the print-based leisure reading position offered to him by his mother, despite her extensive explicit (and increasingly more tacit and collaborative) practices. His mother 'values reading fiction and has tried for many years to get Simon to read (novels)'.

'Until two years ago, I tried to get him to read at least five pages of a novel each night, but we ended up shouting at each other. I didn't want the situation to occur when he would stop wanting me to come in and "tuck him in". Now that I've stopped forcing him to read novels every night, he regularly asks for me to come in and say goodnight'. (Q)

Simon's clear choice not to appropriate his mother's leisure reading position as regards novels, has had initially negative consequences for their relationship, perhaps fuelled by the directiveness of her strategies with these texts. By the time he is 15, Simon's continued resistance to reading novels at home has re-shaped his subsequent relationship with his mother, who has traded her 'investment' in her vision of his academic future for harmony in their current relationship. While having abandoned the use of explicit strategies such as forcing him to read, his mother continues to use

more collaborative strategies with pragmatic outcomes, such as buying him a pet care book to learn how to look after a new litter of kittens. His father (who lives separately from him) also uses collaborative strategies to engage Simon, particularly in reading newspapers of the broadsheet, rather than pictorial variety.

'My dad sometimes encourages me to read newspapers but he doesn't force me. When we're on holidays and I do some work at his place, he will tell me there's a good article in the paper and I should read it. I often do'.
(Simon, I)

Simon's almost exclusive engagement with leisure reading that satisfies his immediate pragmatic needs is most evident in his reading relationship with his stepfather, with whom he reads PC magazines and consequently applies the knowledge gained on screen. His stepfather's strategies in this shared reading are, while tacit and collaborative, nevertheless quite deliberate, as reported in interview by Simon's mother. 'They will sit together and read bits of these and then Tony will leave Simon to read the rest by himself. If Simon has any trouble with words or things he doesn't understand, he'll ask Tony'. Significantly, it is Simon who directs much of the activity in this reading relationship, asking for clarification on a 'need to know' basis.

Simon has made deliberate choices from the leisure reading positions available to him within his habitus and, by the time he is 15, is clearly the agent deciding on which leisure reading materials and modes he will appropriate and which ones he will reject.

'I like to read magazines mostly, surfing, bike and computer magazines. My parents encourage me in my hobbies and help me with difficult words in the magazines. I don't like reading novels. My parents used to try to get me to read novels but they don't anymore'. (Simon, I)

In the family field Simon has appropriated the more pragmatically oriented reading position of his father and stepfather, regularly reading multi-modal texts such as newspapers, computer magazines and text-based computer games which satisfy immediate needs. He rejects the print-based fiction offered to him by his mother, conflating his understanding of this form of reading with the reading he has to do for school. Working with this narrow definition of reading, he says in response to the scenario with Jai (see Appendix)

'He sounds like me. He likes to read MSN and emails and thinks that reading is a waste of time. I agree with Jai that reading won't help get me a job or make me a better person ... I think I'm most like Jai, because I think that reading is a waste of time'. (Simon, I)

Like the adolescent boys in Smith and Wilhelm's study (2002), Simon associates the reading of novels with the procedural engagement (Nystrand, 1997) he endures at school, in contrast with his substantive engagement with pragmatically oriented texts. In the field of peers, Simon chooses to read surfing and bike magazines recommended by his predominantly male friends and regularly reads and writes emails to them on issues of shared importance in this social field. In a profound way, his leisure reading choices are both reflective of and constitutive of his various relationships with his mother, father, step-father and peers, such social relations collectively shaping his identity.

Appropriation of Family Reading Dispositions: Michael

As with Simon, Michael is offered a wide range of leisure reading positions from which to choose within a habitus characterised by considerable economic, linguistic and cultural capital. Michael's mother, like Simon's, has used an extensive combination of explicit and collaborative strategies to maintain her son's reading of print-based fiction as a privileged (and privileging) text. Explicit strategies included bribery of a fiscal nature (the reward per novel increasing from \$1 per novel in Michael's earlier years to \$10 when he was 14) and of a more emotional nature ('He will sometimes say mum you want me to read then rub my back'). Collaborative strategies included sitting with his mother as they both read ('We might sit together on the bed and read for an hour or two. Once he gets started he can keep going for a long time'). Michael's father

'... doesn't intervene much. He may mention "Michael go and read" but my husband doesn't really play a key role in education, I wish he could be a bit more supportive of what I do with the children. He feels one person doing it is enough'. (I)

His mother's role in offering Michael a range of leisure reading positions from which to choose is thus pivotal as she guides him into participating in reading practices which she believes will generate the desired cultural capital ('I want you to read to build a good vocabulary, to build a good base for English, because when you get to Year 12 it's too late'). In addition to reading novels, she also uses a variety of tacit and explicit strategies to guide Michael into reading newspapers, again specifically of the broadsheet variety.

'I leave the newspaper on the table over breakfast or ask him directly to read it ... What is happening is important socially and reading the business section is important ... I question him about things he doesn't know and try to show that if he read more he would know more'. (I)

Underpinning her determined attempts to guide Michael into participating in the reading of print-based fiction, broadsheet newspapers and information texts is her strong valuing of the long term pragmatic role of reading and her deep investment in Michael's future. For Michael, by contrast, 'friends are important' and electronic communication in its various forms (lists, email, chat rooms, SMS) provides an increasingly important vehicle for constructing relationships with peers in the present. In response to the scenario involving Josh (see Appendix), Michael says:

'He's keen on sport. I like his kind of music. I read the sports in the newspapers every day. I'm not a keen reader, but if I pick up a book, I'll read it a bit. I use the internet often. I like playing computer games and I often go into chat rooms, especially to check out the footy results and what kids are saying about the last games'. (Michael, I)

While the reading and writing demands required in effectively using the forms of communication valued by Michael were not considered by his mother as contributing to his cultural capital, they clearly contributed to his social cachet in his relationships with his peers and in the formation of his identity as a male teenager whose habitus involved regular participation in a range of sporting, cultural and social recreational activities.

However, unlike Simon, Michael as a 15-year-old does not reject his mother's attempts at guided participation outright, despite resisting some more strenuously than he has done in the past. In his response to the scenarios, he also says of Josh 'He's got a good range of reading, that would be good for him, give him a broad perspective' (I), and of Jai, 'I disagree that reading won't get you a job or make you a better person. It's definitely beneficial' (I). Michael clearly recognises the rationale behind his mother's strategies and the long term value in some of his mother's reading positions. However, he resists appropriating these leisure reading practices because they do not yet provide him with the immediate satisfactions he requires.

'I know reading is good for me, but if I'd rather be doing something else, I get a bit angry if I'm forced to read. Mum tries to get me to read the newspaper and novels, about the same as each other. She brings the paper home every day and so it's always there for me. I read the sport. The world news is so boring. I used to read the Xpress newspaper (a free paper) on the train to school. I like reading that—it's simple. I find the teenage novels boring. There's no real story line and they're not troubles I deal with. Most of them are about surfing, smoking, running away, kids on the street. I prefer reading Jeffrey Archer. That's got a real story, with turns and a good plot, twists and turns at every turn'. (Michael, I)

Michael's decision, when 'forced', to read adult novels that have a 'good story' rather than young adult novels, indicates something of his strategic approach to meeting his mother's demands. He knows that

'Mum often won't let me on the computer till I've done some reading. She says "You can't go on it till you've read for one hour". I do the reading just to get on the computer'. (Michael, I)

In choosing to read the Jeffrey Archer novel and selected sections of the newspaper, he is navigating a way that meets some of his mother's long term goals for his leisure reading activity while meeting his own need for more immediate satisfactions. He can engage in selections from various modes of print-based texts which his family, through the most determined agency of his mother, perceive as being invested with the best cultural capital, as a means of building up credit to 'get on the computer'.

In summary, Michael is in the process of strategically adopting aspects of the print-based leisure reading positions offered by his family (most tenaciously, his mother), as a means of choosing his own preferred leisure reading practices which, like Simon's, combine print and electronic text modes that achieve various information and communication purposes. Michael's interview comments, like Simon's, point to a distinction he makes between his self-selected leisure reading as 'substantively' engaging and the reading practices privileged by his mother as associated with the 'procedural' engagement of school reading (Nystrand, 1997). However, unlike Simon, Michael has engaged in a transaction with his family (most significantly his mother) whereby he can balance her desire for him to engage with the print-based fiction and informational texts perceived to achieve long term social and academic capital, while enjoying those print and electronic texts which are fundamental to his current social identity. The tenor of his interview comments suggest that he has only selectively appropriated elements of the guided participation structured by his mother, but that there is sufficient recognition of the value of the positionings she offers for him to make the necessary compromises.

Appropriation of Family Reading Dispositions: Paul

Like Simon's and Michael's, Paul's family values the reading of print-based fiction, non-fiction and newspapers as 'privileged' and 'privileging' (Bernstein, 1996) forms of leisure reading, and use a range of explicit and collaborative practices in guiding Paul to participate substantively in the reading of these texts. Paul reports that it is his father who takes a prominent role in such guided participation.

'Dad reads very often and always makes the statement that he would like to read more. He's always telling me how valuable reading is—any type is valuable but more so newspapers. Being up to date and being aware of what is going on is number one priority. Second would come fiction'. (Paul, I)

Paul's capacity to articulate so clearly his father's position about the long-term value of novel and newspaper reading as an intellectual investment is an indication of some transition in his own attitudes towards the long term value of certain types of leisure reading. Paul has previously resisted his father's attempts to appropriate newspapers and fiction as his substantively engaging leisure reading, but his stance is shifting.

'Nowadays I would probably go and grab a newspaper (if dad suggested I should read something). I'd say OK, just give me two minutes to finish off and I will read, partly because I know he'll get cross but partly because I think after how I value that now. I think I'm glad that I did read because I'm more aware of this or that. Previously I would make every excuse I could come up with and arguments would get a bit heated until he insisted and I couldn't argue any more. But now I can do it (reading newspapers) without having to feel I have given in'. (Paul, I)

Instead of rejecting his father's leisure reading position outright, we hear Paul at a point in his life where he is beginning to appropriate certain of his father's reading positions which he has previously resisted. Paul is beginning to genuinely internalise aspects of his father's position, the discourse of which is most clearly evident in Paul's responses to the scenarios.

'Josh reads a wide variety, from novels which might not improve your knowledge but improve your literacy skills, to newspapers which give you updated information; the internet which gives you information; comics and magazines information and leisure. He seems rather intelligent to be reading all that. He'll be able to talk about anything in conversation if he's got a lot of knowledge and in fairly wide areas'. (Paul, I)

As a 'bright and academically successful 15-year-old', Paul clearly recognises the intellectual, social and cultural capital that comes from being able to read the variety of print and electronically-based texts that his father values. At the same time, like Simon and Michael, he also articulates his preference for reading material that has an immediately instrumental or a purely relaxing purpose ('computer games are good to relax with and have fun'). Like Simon and Michael, he articulates that 'friends are really important to me', citing the importance of email, sports magazines and the internet in allowing him to 'stay up to date, modern, knowing the cool things that are out in music, on TV etc.'. Paul's interview comments indicate that he is seeking to combine leisure reading of the sort that his father prizes for its long term social and

academic benefits (despite finding reading novels 'a bit boring, often when I'm reading novels I drift off') with his own leisure reading that fulfils his more immediate social and instrumental purposes. He is attempting this balance, not as Michael does, strategically to placate his family in order to read the thing he prefers, but substantially as an internalised feature of a changing social identity (Connell, 1995), meeting his own needs in a variety of fields within his habitus.

Conclusions

This study has revealed the limitations implied in some key concepts that still frame much current research into boys and literacy, most notably the monolithic deficit-oriented concept of reading reluctance when applied to teenage boys who are capable readers. Through the questionnaire and interview comments of three boys and their families, a picture emerges of a range of reading 'reluctancies', situated as these are in complex patterns of social actions and shaped in interactions between individual boys, their families, peers and school. This notion of reading 'reluctancies' recognises the agency of teenage boys who, far from oppositionally substituting the textual universe of the family for the 'screenage' life, differentially choose from the range of positions made available within their habitus, often articulating their need for an intimate reading-related connection to be maintained with their families. Neither Paul nor Michael, for example, rejected print-based fiction as a 'feminised' form of leisure reading, articulating quite clearly their perceptions of the long term social value of such reading positions held by his mother (in Michael's case) and his father (in Paul's case). In this sense, our findings from this cohort of Australian male teenagers concur more with the findings of Wilhelm and Smith (2001) than with those of Martino (1995). Pluralising the notion of reluctance and inserting teenage boys as 'agents' also foregrounds the complex dialectic whereby boys like Paul and Michael negotiate with their parents to balance their reading autonomies and short-term goals with their family's longer term goals for them. Rogoff's (1995) model of guided participation offers a useful framework for examining this regularly occurring but highly variable dialectic as it is acted out in different contexts, and not just in the middle-class families of capable readers.

Our study has also revealed the limitations of 'leisure reading' as a singular concept, highlighting the dangers for education in privileging a limited range of traditional print-based texts for their perceived role in supporting the school's work of shaping the moral and intellectual development of 'young men in the making'. By ignoring the important (and not just 'seductive') role that the multi-modal and semiotically complex forms of reading typically preferred by 'screenage' boys have on their identity formation in the contemporary digital context, educators run the risk of alienating many young men from schooling. Not all young men approaching the years of post-compulsory schooling will be like Paul, able to identify some long term social benefits in the print-based leisure reading practices he has been guided into by his family, while continuing to engage with those texts made available through his male youth culture (and compartmentalised by him as 'not reading'). Many will be more like Simon, remaining preoccupied with leisure reading that satisfies immediate, pragmatic and social needs related to who they are now.

It might be argued that boys like Simon need 'more than the limited repertoire of texts made available through male youth culture, more than the restricted range of reading positions such texts offer and more than the stories made popular through

electronic game culture ... and sport journalism' (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, p. 203). Yet there is danger for Simon, his parents and his school in continuing to compartmentalise his reading of the PC magazines and the associated screen-based activities generated from this reading as 'not reading'. Just as Simon's mother's insistence that he read five pages of a novel every night resulted in a temporary alienation in their relationship, so too might his school's reluctance to recognise the significance to his identity of his leisure reading activities alienate Simon further from engaging productively with school oriented texts.

Returning to Rogoff's (1995) model (Figure 1), we have seen how, at the level of guided participation, parents are agents who mediate between the school and the textual practices it privileges in order to reproduce the family's existing linguistic, economic, social and cultural capital. We have seen how parents' long term goals in structuring guided practice around hegemonic leisure reading positions are still conditioned by their own generation's traditions, based as these are largely on print-based practice. At the level of participatory appropriation, we have seen how three teenage boys, all capable readers, have become 'agentful' in their decisions to differentially select from the range of leisure reading positions offered to them by their families. It remains for us to discuss the implications of these processes of guided participation and participatory appropriation for school curriculum planning, thus moving on to the plane of apprenticeship in Rogoff's model.

If, as suggested by Millard (1997) and Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) digital technology is increasingly seen as a masculine domain, and an area of high cultural currency for adolescent males, it is important that curriculum designers find ways of bringing a study of reading in this mode into the school. Particularly important for curriculum developers is the need to design programs that examine the forms of leisure reading valued by a range of adolescent males in the contemporary digital culture. In doing so, existing prejudices about the usefulness of such modes of reading can be evaluated more clear-sightedly, both by students and teachers. Such forms of reading have already been identified as enabling in some boys' access to the technological discourses that are so desirable in the current work place climate (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Power, 2000; Teese, 2000). Such texts also provide rich opportunities for teenage boys to explore how language, blended with other visual meaning-making systems, contributes to the making and re-making of their lives as masculine subjects (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Beavis, 2002).

Above all, it is important for future research in the area of boys, reading and education to ask the questions 'Which boys?' 'What reading?' and 'Who values this reading and why?'. Failure to ask these questions and to value the insights gained from a situated approach can lead to a 'one size fits all' approach to curriculum reform (Power, 2001, p. 51), effectively silencing the voices of those very students whose experiences and needs educators need to hear. If, as Gilbert and Gilbert (1997, p. 21) argue, the same phases of educational reform for girls are fundamental to educational reform for boys, the voices and experiences of many different cohorts of boys need to be heard and integrated into the curriculum.

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Appendix: Interview Scenarios

Josh

Josh is a keen cricketer and also plays guitar in a small band with some of his friends. Mostly in his spare time, Josh likes to read and he reads anything and everything from novels to newspapers, the internet, comics and magazines. Josh says that reading makes him feel good and that he learns a lot from reading. Josh borrows books from the local library. He chooses books to buy from the reviews on the Amazon.com website. He subscribes to the Star Trek fan club. Josh also loves reading magazines about cricket. He regularly visits chat rooms on the internet mainly to do with sport. Josh also loves CD-ROM games like King's Quest or Sim City where you have to solve problems and try to compete with yourself.

Alex

Alex is a skateboarder. He devotes a lot of his spare time to practicing and perfecting his technique. He has taught himself tricks by reading skateboarding magazines and keeps in contact with other skateboarders on the internet. As well as Skateboard magazines, Alex reads magazines about Surfing, Snowboarding and Mountain Biking. He really enjoys playing computer games such as 'Dave Mira' and 'Tony Hawk- Proskater'. He downloads a lot of information from the internet and he enjoys reading books that give information about other people's lives. However, Alex does not like to read novels at all. When his parents try to encourage him to read novels especially, Alex gets mad and tells them to leave him alone.

Jai

Jai has a lot of friends and his friends are really important to him. A lot of his spare time is spent with his friends watching TV, listening to music or on the Playstation. Jai hates reading. He refuses to read anything except emails from his friends and ICQ or MSN. Jai tells his parents that reading anything else is a waste of time. Jai cannot see the use in reading at all and says that it won't help him get a job or make him a better person. Reading is boring. Jai thinks guys who read ought to get a life.

Questions to Ask of Each Scenario

- In what ways are you similar to X?
- In what ways are you different to X?
- Think about the things that X prefers to read. Do you like to read any of these things yourself? Why? Why not the others?
- What do you think the benefits or disadvantages are about X reading the things he does?
- Could you imagine being best friends with X? Why?

Questions to Ask at the End of All Three Scenarios

Who are you most like? Why?

Or

Who is most likely to be your friend

Questions, Prompts and the Constructs Underlying Them

Question	Prompt	Underlying construct
In what ways are you similar to X?	Consider similarities and differences in recreational activity, specifically in terms of playing sport, music, computers, TV, hanging out with friends	Recreational use of time as a key to personality and leisure preferences
In what ways are you different to X?		
Think about the things that X prefers to read. Do you like to read any of these things yourself? Why? Why not the others?	Consider the range of materials that are read and the attitudes of respondents to the things he reads/doesn't read Prompt each respondent to consider reading in its widest sense	The <i>range</i> of reading as a recreational activity
What do you think the benefits or disadvantages are about X reading the things he does?	Specify each of the types of reading materials and question respondent to think about his own attitude to these Boy to consider X's reading in relation to X's future	The attitudes of the respondents to the <i>value</i> of various forms of reading: both in terms of shaping their masculine identities and in terms of the long term future
Could you imagine being best friends with X? Why?	Try to draw out respondents' feelings about how reading influences social relationships. In particular, prompt for insight into any stereotypes that might exist about various types of readers	Further prompts to stimulate insight specifically about identity formation
At the end of all three scenarios Who are you most like? Why? Or Who is most likely to be your friend	Boy to consider whether there may be some differences that would make a friendship difficult	

