Attitudes to Reading: An Investigation Across the Primary Years

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ABSTRACT

Students' attitudes to reading and the texts they choose to read impact on literacy achievement and willingness to engage with literacy-related activities in the primary years of schooling. This study was conducted in an urban Catholic school in Queensland in Years 1 to 7. Students' developing attitudes to reading and the perceptions of these attitudes held by their teachers were examined. An adapted version of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) was utilized.

Results from the study indicate older students' attitudes towards recreational reading (in primary school) are not significantly different to younger students' attitudes. Female students however, show more positive attitudes to recreational reading than male students. Older students' attitudes towards academic reading are more negative overall and female students showed significantly more positive attitudes than their male peers. Students' choice of texts varied across the year levels with the most preferred reading materials being chapter books, children's magazines and comics.

Teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of reading in class correlated significantly with students' own perceived level of reading achievement. Teachers perceive that as students' level of reading enjoyment increases, their level of academic reading achievement also increases.

Five recommendations are made from the findings of this study. First, recreational reading engagement needs to be publicly promoted and positively celebrated within the school community. It was found that for students to be motivated and see the value of engaging in reading they must be immersed in a school classroom environment that offers a range of recreational activities and opportunities. Second, a structured approach to literacy sessions (literacy block) needs to be established and implemented with students across all primary year levels. This enables students to be scaffolded in their literacy learning and so develop positive attitudes towards themselves as academic readers. Third, it is recommended that guided reading occur

as a key instructional approach to the teaching of reading across all primary year levels. This may serve to increase students' motivation and interest in reading a range of text types and may provide a source of information for the teacher in relation to students' engagement with reading.

Fourth, a range of text types need to be purchased and made available for students to read independently and for teachers to use in class shared reading activities across all primary year levels. Students should be exposed to various text types throughout their primary years of schooling. Finally, the teaching of reading needs to be 'data-driven' rather than based on teachers' perceptions of students' reading needs. Periodic assessments of students' reading achievement should occur to provide these data for teachers.

The recommendations from this study align with priorities and recommendations included in current Commonwealth and State documents. Directions for future research also are suggested especially for qualitative data collection. This methodology, if included, would glean more in-depth data concerning students' attitudes to reading and the perceptions held by their teachers. Investigating students' attitude towards and use of digital literacies also would provide a greater understanding of primary-age students' attitudes towards reading in the 21st century.

<u>DECLARATION</u>

This thesis has not previously been submitted for the award for any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics and Safety Committees.

Signature: ………………………….
Date: ………………………………

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"Teachers, no matter what grade level or subject they teach, know that nothing is more crucial (or rewarding) than helping a student become a better reader".

(Sandra Feldman)

I would like to express my genuine thanks to my teaching partners over the past four and a half years for your continued support and unending words of encouragement. I thank you for your patience and understanding. Thank you in particular to Peta Hamilton. We have been 'companions on the journey' studying and working together. Through regular discussions with me about my progress and findings you have helped encourage me to continue on the long journey towards completion. Thank you for always being there as a listening ear and for sharing with me the highs and lows of research.

"Kind words are like the seats in an airplane. You'll still get to your destination without them, but the journey is a whole lot more comfortable with them".

(Anonymous)

I am truly grateful to the parents/guardians of the target school. Thank you for your willingness to consent to participate in this study. Without your participation, I could not have achieved my goal. Your honesty in responding to the questions has enabled a very accurate picture of reading attitudes to be gathered. Also to the students who completed the surveys, I offer my thanks. Your enthusiasm to participate and your honesty in responding to each question provided me with valuable data on which to base my conclusions and recommendations.

"Great things are achieved through the power of co-operation."

(Anonymous)

I would like to offer my thanks to those who offered constructive ideas and suggestions along the way. Furthermore, my sincere appreciation goes to those who proof read my thesis – in particular my co-supervisor Dr. Pam Hanifin. Your willingness to give hours of your time to read, edit and offer constructive

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THE RESEARCH DEFINED

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

This study of primary school students' attitudes to reading stems from a concern of the perceived decline in interest for reading after the early years of schooling. Despite current advances in information technology and the development of a range of communication tools in the modern world, learning to read and maintaining an interest in reading remain important. Students' attitudes to reading have been found to have an effect on both engagement and achievement in reading (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Those students with more negative attitudes engage less often with texts and generally achieve at levels lower than their age peers (McKenna et al., 1995). This study is important at a time where Statewide testing shows that 3% of Year 3 students, 16.6% of Year 5 students and 5.5% of Year 7 students in the State of Queensland are achieving below the benchmark for reading (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005c). Students need to read in school for academic purposes, but they also may engage in reading for pleasure. This research investigates the relationship of students' attitudes to reading in school and reading outside of school.

The study was conducted in a large Catholic primary school where class teachers and students from Years 1 to 7 participated. Data were gathered from students concerning their attitudes to recreational and academic reading and their preferences for reading different types of texts. Teachers provided data of their perceptions of students' behaviour in class and their attitudes to and achievement in reading.

Each chapter in this thesis provides a piece of the jigsaw which collectively joins to provide a detailed understanding of reading attitudes of students and their teachers' perceptions of them. In this chapter of the thesis, introductory details relating to the research such as the problem, purpose and research questions that guide the study are presented. A cross-sectional correlational design was utilized and data on reading were collected using surveys completed by teachers and students. The researcher's teaching experiences are outlined and details relating to the context of the study are presented. An overview of Chapter 1 is presented in Figure 1.1.

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                    │    CHAPTER ONE:     │
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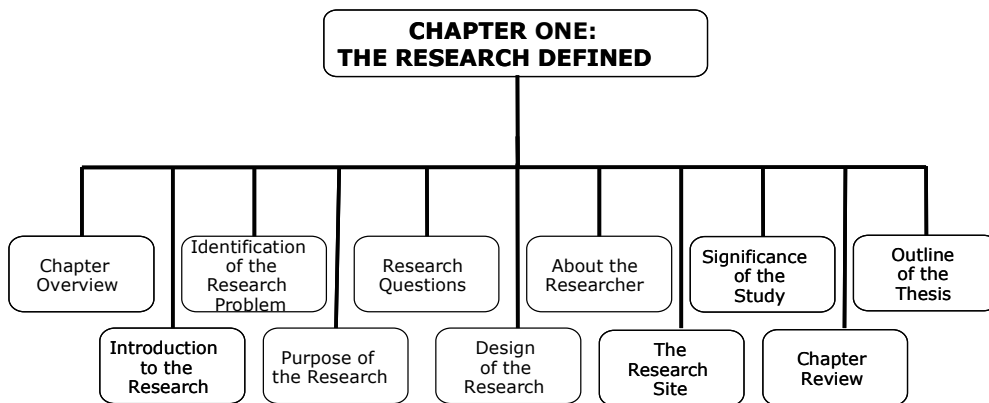
Figure 1.1 Overview of Chapter 1

1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The ability to read was traditionally a skill confined only to the noble and clergy (Levine, 2002). The introduction of Guttenberg's printing press in 1453 heralded a new era whereby printed texts became widely available (Levine, 2002). Over the centuries societal and cultural environments in which individuals lived and learned influenced the way reading was viewed and taught. Huey's (1908) landmark study of reading investigated the way society shaped student reading development and highlighted how reading was influenced significantly by the place in which it occurred.

In today's society, reading permeates all practices encountered in daily life and is believed to be more than the acquisition of a discrete set of skills, it is an active, dynamic and interactive practice of meaning making that occurs between individuals, their world and their text (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Reading is not a static act, but constantly changes and adapts to the social environment in which it is practised. Students extract sequences of cues from printed texts to make meaning (Clay, 1972). The extent to which students positively or negatively engage in reading at home and at school is influenced greatly by the attitude they have towards reading.

Students' attitudes significantly influence their level of engagement with reading. Attitude has been described as "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable" (Kush & Watkins, 2001, p. 315). Students' attitudes are "perceived to be a function of the effect associated with the beliefs a person holds about the object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1972, p. 507). Reading attitudes are learnt characteristics that influence whether students engage in or avoid reading activities and they can be influenced by societal, familial, and school-based factors (Baker, 2003; Cole, 2002; McKenna et al., 1995; Miller, 2003; Willis, 2002).

Societal factors influence students' developing sense of identity and attitudes of themselves as readers. Reading is a socio-cultural practice that has its roots in the relationships and interactions of parents/guardians and children even from an early age (Morrow & Young, 1997). At a young age boys and girls begin to position themselves into masculine and feminine mindsets as they observe significant adults in their immediate world interacting in daily activities (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). Through their own experiences young students construct an understanding of gender – thus often dividing people and activities into two distinct categories male and female (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). Stereotypical gendered behaviours can be reinforced by television and other popular media, books and everyday discourse. Students' developing notion of gender influences the extent to and purpose for which they engage in reading activities at home and in school contexts.

The social and cultural beliefs of families defines children's attitudes of themselves as readers. Parents/guardians expose their children to real-life reading practices, and so influence their attitudes towards reading through example and by the texts they choose to read (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997; Power, 2001). Types of texts read by parents/guardians are often influenced by gender with males showing a marked preference for non-fiction or information texts and females preferring fictional texts (Levine & Turner, 2001; Power, 2001). Males assert functional reasons for reading engagement while females often indicate they seek pleasure and relaxation when reading (Power, 2001). These findings reflect general trends in parent/guardian reading behaviour, but do not reflect practices of all families. Parents/guardians convey text type preferences consciously and unconsciously and as such influence

their children's reading habits, attitudes and text choices. These factors impact upon the extent to which students may engage in reading activities at school.

The diversity of students' needs is acknowledged in National, State, System and school documents (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2006; Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs MCEETYA, 1999; Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a). Teachers cannot assume all students approach reading with the same social and cultural understandings as "there is no one set of literacy practices common to all communities" (Anstey & Bull, 1996, p. 158). A 'one size fits all' classroom reading program cannot guarantee reading success for all students because students of today are motivated by a number of very different types of texts and activities (Cazden et al., 1996; Cole, 2002). Each student has his/her own reading personality to be catered for in class reading programs (Cole, 2002). Consequently, teachers today must plan and implement reading activities which meet students' varying levels of reading ability whilst using texts that are both socially and culturally appropriate.

Students' level of academic achievement in primary school influences their education and employment choices in the future. Young students may avoid reading and the associated reading tasks in school because they lack the necessary skills and conceptual knowledge to effectively engage with a broad range of texts. As students get older and move through the primary years, task avoidance strategies are often employed by struggling students as their self-efficacy, beliefs and general attitudes to reading may become increasingly negative (Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005; Pajares, 2003). This decline in students' academic reading achievement levels was reflected in National Literacy figures whereby 92.4% of Year 3 students, compared to 89.4% of Year 7 students achieved the National Reading Benchmark (Davies, 2005). This data has caused concern at the National level as students' low academic reading achievement and negative attitudes can impact directly on society and the workforce of the future (Allum, 2005).

Students' motivation and level of engagement in recreational reading can change over time. Students who are motivated to read for pleasure typically do so for about 20 minutes longer per day than students who are less motivated to read (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Fifty-four percent of 9 year old students read for pleasure, although by

13 years of age only 28% of students read for pleasure each day (Campbell, Hombo & Mazzeo, 2000). Data highlights that as students get older they engage in less recreational reading on a daily basis. Sporting and employment constraints may impact upon students' recreational time, and also their sense of personal identity and the social pressures from influential peers impacts on recreational reading engagement (Pajares, 2003). These later constraints powerfully influence students' attitudes and account for 80% of students preferring to read recreationally at home, rather than at school (Davies & Brember, 1993).

The research problem centres on students' attitudes to recreational and academic reading. During primary school years students develop reading skills and attitudes towards engaging in reading and these may impact upon life choices in adulthood. The way various texts and reading activities are presented to students reflects the perceptions teachers have of their students as readers and learners (Sweet, Guthrie & Ng, 1998). Though teachers agree students' reading attitudes are important, limited class time appears to be devoted towards fostering positive reading attitudes (Kush & Watkins, 2001). If students are taught to read, but have limited desire to do so, then teachers will have only partially succeeded in their role as a teacher of reading (Morrow, 2004). Those students who can read but choose not to are a significant concern for educators.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to investigate attitudes to recreational and academic reading of students throughout the primary school years. The types of texts preferred by primary students are also examined to supplement the attitudinal data. Having an understanding of students' attitudes and text preferences enables teachers to design and teach reading activities that are relevant to the needs and interests of each student. By doing this, students' level of engagement with reading may be positively enhanced. Teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes towards reading also are investigated as these perceptions impact upon how teachers plan and teach reading.

Current National and System documents validate the need for research into the area of reading. Achieving positive student reading outcomes is reflected in the Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century (MCEETYA, 1999). This declaration indicates all students should attain English

literacy skills to read at an appropriate standard and communicate effectively (MCEETYA, 1999). The setting for this study was a Brisbane Catholic Education primary school. The Strategic Renewal Framework has been developed by Brisbane Catholic Education and it focuses on establishing improved student learning outcomes (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005). Teachers within Brisbane Catholic Education schools are expected to draw on literacy data to inform their planning and pedagogical practice (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005). This study provides data which helps teachers understand more clearly students' attitudes to reading, their preferred types of texts and also how teachers' perceptions impact on students' learning. Teachers can use these data to guide their planning and so provide relevant class reading strategies and activities that more accurately meet the learning needs of today's students.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given the research problem and purpose for the study, the following four research questions guide the study.

1. How do students' attitudes to reading develop in primary school?

Students' attitudes to reading can be influenced by their recreational and academic experiences. These experiences can change over the primary school years and may differ for female students and male students. This study will identify students' attitudes to recreational and academic reading in each primary year level, age and for gender.

2. How do students' preferences for reading different text types develop in primary school?

There are a myriad of narrative and non-narrative texts available for students to read today. However the type of texts students choose to read depends on their topic of interest, reading ability, and purpose for engagement. This study will indicate the types of texts that are more preferred by students in each primary year level, age and for gender.

3. What perceptions do teachers have of their students' classroom behaviour and attitudes to reading?

Teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading are often based on the behaviour displayed by students in class activities and their level of academic reading achievement. This study will identify teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading, classroom behaviour and overall reading achievement. Variations in teachers' perceptions in each student year level, age and for gender will be stated.

4. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading for enjoyment and their overall achievement in reading?

Teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading for enjoyment and students' level of overall reading achievement may correlate. Teachers' perceptions of these influence the way reading is planned, taught and assessed in classrooms. This study will highlight the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of reading and their reading achievement in each year level, age and for gender.

1.5 DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

A cross-sectional correlational design was utilized to enable an investigation of the research questions. For this study a quantitative paradigm was chosen, and objective epistemology and a positivistic framework guide the study. Data were collected from a cross-section of student participants, in Years 1 to 7, within a large Catholic primary school. Student participants completed a modified version of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) where data concerning student attitudes to recreational and academic reading as well as their preferred text types for reading were collected. Teachers also participated in this study by completing a Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) providing data on their perceptions of each student's behaviour in class and their attitudes to reading. Both instruments were scored on a four point Likert scale. Student and family demographic data were collected from parents/guardians on the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey (Young, 2003).

1.6 ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

I am currently a primary school teacher employed by Brisbane Catholic Education. My first teaching position, as a graduate teacher, was in a small Brisbane Archdiocesan Catholic primary school. I began teaching Year 1 students and was overwhelmed with the enthusiasm students at this young age possessed towards

reading. These students were eager to read and had an insatiable appetite for any printed text. However, as these students moved through the year levels I observed a change in their reading attitudes. Some students who were once very keen readers did not seem to maintain this desire over time. When changing year levels from Year 1 to Year 3 in my fourth year of teaching, I was fortunate to teach a class I had previously taught. Even in this short space of time I noticed a great variation in the reading attitudes of many students. Overall, female students still seemed to enjoy reading and regularly borrowed home readers from the classroom and library. Male students, however, did not seem to show as positive an attitude towards reading and did not borrow home readers or library books as regularly. The home readers available for students at the school at the time were predominantly fiction-based, leveled texts but the school library collection included a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. My perception was that female students in Year 3 tended to show more positive child behaviour characteristics and more positive attitudes to reading than male students in Year 3.

In an attempt to enhance the reading attitudes of male students in my class, I conducted a number of reading observations and noticed there were many male students who did not engage in class recreational daily reading opportunities. When I examined the texts available for students to select from, I realised most were fiction texts. I gathered an assortment of text types (fiction, non-fiction information books, catalogues, magazines etc) and offered these for daily reading. I observed a marked improvement in the level of reading engagement of male students with the non-fiction text types. This experience highlighted to me how providing a range of stimulating text types in a primary classroom impacts upon students' attitude towards engaging in reading.

From my classroom teaching experience, I noticed a decline in reading attitudes of students as they moved through the primary year levels. I also witnessed a difference in students' engagement with different text types. These observations, from my own classroom experience, prompted this research as I wanted to examine in more depth the extent to which reading attitudes and text type preferences impacted upon student reading engagement. I also was interested in the perceptions teachers have of students' attitudes and behaviour in class, as I noticed from my own experience that

my perceptions of students' attitude towards reading influenced my curriculum planning, classroom organisation and lesson management.

1.7 THE RESEARCH SITE

The school selected for the study was administered by Brisbane Catholic Education. It was opened in 1951 as a day school for primary students and was under the direction of the Sisters of St. Joseph until mid 2002 when the school's first non-religious Principal was appointed. The current administration team is comprised of two other full time non-teaching personnel – one male assistant to the principal (administration), and one female assistant to the principal (religious education). The teaching staff is comprised of both males and females of varying ages and with differing levels of teaching experience. The student population of the school has grown significantly over the years and currently has 585 students. This study was conducted with a student population of 351 students (drawn from Year 1 to Year 7) and twenty-one classroom teachers. The mission statement of the school highlights the strong Josephite tradition and this is also reflected in the school's five primary goals which are detailed in Table 1.1. The research site will be further detailed in Chapter 2.

Table 1.1

School Goals

Goal	Description
Christian living	To nurture Catholic faith and tradition through education and by encouraging a loving relationship with God and respect for ourselves and others.
Learning	To encourage individuals to reach their full potential in key learning areas and to pursue excellence through curriculum support programs.
Safety	To ensure all students and staff feel safe at all times by providing a school environment that is safe and without risks to health.
Community	To develop a sense of community by the interaction of staff, students, parents/guardians and parishioners to foster friendship, co-operation and support.
Social Justice	To ensure equality and justice for all in our school community.

(School, 2005, p. 5)

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.8.1 For Educational Research

Data from this study are relevant for all primary school educators as there is a focus on reading attitudes of students in each of the primary years. A large body of reading attitude research focused on students in the upper primary year levels (Davies & Brember, 1993). Studying the reading attitudes and preferences of students in the early years of schooling was considered crucially important in order to establish where negative trends in reading attitudes begin to emerge (Davies & Brember, 1993). Students' attitudes towards reading change throughout the primary years and are influenced by their home experiences and various modifications of actions and practices at school (Saracho, 1983). Gathering data on attitudes to reading and text type preferences of primary school students from Year 1 to Year 7 enables a detailed understanding of reading attitudes and preferred text types of students to be made and identifies significant changes in attitude in the different year levels. This data highlights the need for proactive curriculum adjustments to be made by all classroom teachers.

This study contributes significantly to the wider field of educational research. Firstly, teachers' perceptions of students as readers and learners are identified as an area lacking in current research (Sweet et al., 1998). This study highlights teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour in class and their attitudes to engaging in reading. In addition, teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment and overall achievement in reading are correlated. Furthermore, although reading attitudes and text type preferences of primary students have been studied, there are a limited number of studies exploring reading attitudes and text type preferences of Australian primary students across Years 1 to 7. This study will extend upon and contribute further to current literature on students' attitudes to reading and text preferences, and teachers' perceptions.

Findings and conclusions from this study can contribute to a review of the way reading is understood by teachers and practised in primary school classrooms in Australia. Recommendations highlight innovative reading strategies and practices that can be employed to make reading more engaging for students today. Enhancing students' reading engagement is of importance in light of the current National agenda

which strongly emphasizes the need for schools to improve students' level of reading engagement and achievement (Allen, 2005; Allum, 2005; Davies, 2005; Doherty, 2005).

1.8.2 For the Participating School

This study is also significant for the school in which it was conducted. Findings may enable teachers to have a clearer understanding of the reading attitudes and text type preferences of students. This may allow them to make more informed decisions when designing classroom curriculum programs and activities and when identifying appropriate teaching strategies. Teachers can use this information to nurture students' reading attitudes and enhance their positive engagement in reading activities. School administration personnel and literacy key mentor teachers will find value in these findings as they plan and formally document a school literacy program that is relevant to the needs of today's students.

These findings can be used by Administration personnel and teachers at the school to complement existing data available on reading from the Year 2 Diagnostic Net (Department of Education & the Arts, 1998) and Year 3, 5 and 7 statewide tests (Queensland Studies Authority, 2004a). Rather than simply focusing on students in particular year levels who do not meet the relevant benchmarks after the Diagnostic Net and State tests, teachers will be more aware of students' attitudes and can be proactive in enhancing reading attitudes and engagement prior to these tests or assessments.

Promoting reading achievement is seen as a priority in light of the school's Year 3, 5 and 7 Queensland Statewide test results. Data, for students at the school, highlighted Year 3 students were reading below the Queensland state average, Year 5 students' were slightly above the state average and Year 7 students' were aligned with the State average (School, 2005). Reading achievement data were not regarded as being as positive as it could be and therefore, school reading pedagogy and practices impacting on students' engagement and achievement requires attention. This study enables a clear, comprehensive picture of students' reading attitudes and teachers' perceptions to be gained so curriculum and pedagogical innovations and modifications can be research-informed and year level or gender specific.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THESIS

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The study is defined in Chapter 1 and the research questions that guide the study, the problem, purpose and significance are outlined. National, State and local system initiatives, projects and documents impact directly upon the teaching of reading and these are presented in Chapter 2. Literature is reviewed in Chapter 3, and theories and influences on students' reading attitudes and text type preferences are outlined. Findings from previous studies of students' attitudes to reading also are detailed. The design and methodology of the study and theoretical framework are outlined in Chapter 4. Participants, setting, instruments and research procedures also are detailed in this chapter. Descriptive analyses were conducted on student and teacher data and these are displayed in Chapter 5. Results are presented in Chapter 6. Conclusions gleaned from data analyses for students' attitudes, text type preferences and teachers' perceptions also are presented in Chapter 6 along with recommendations based on the study findings. Implications for parents/guardians and teachers are articulated and directions for future research are suggested. Copies of all instruments used and letters for this study are included as Appendices.

The research has been defined in this Chapter. The six chapters of this thesis are presented in Figure 1.2. National, State and System reports, agendas and documents will be discussed in Chapter 2 to provide an overarching educational context for this study.
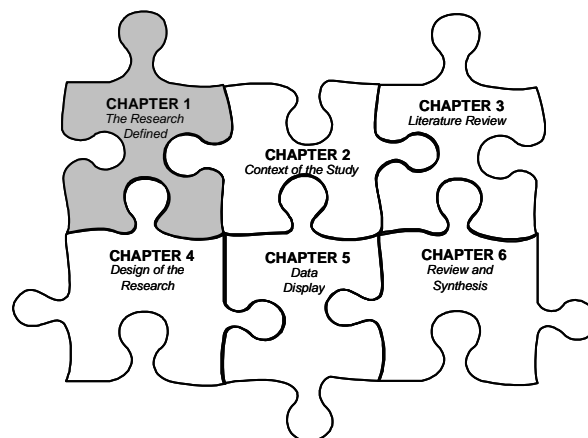
Figure 1.2 Thesis overview

CHAPTER 2
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

National, State and System educational agendas and documents are discussed in this chapter in order to effectively situate this study within the Australian context. National educational documents such as The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (MCEETYA, 1999) and the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005b) clearly articulate for teachers the overarching skills and competencies education aims to instill in students during their formal schooling years in Australia. National policy documents and initiatives, and Ministerial agendas impact on how reading is planned and taught, and how students' reading achievement is assessed and reported. Students' achievement levels have been compared to National reading benchmark standards and these have been publicly presented. The figures have caused concern with National education ministers – most notably by the former Commonwealth minister for Education Science and Training, Dr. Brendan Nelson. Various educational reforms have been outlined to improve the test results/data which indicate the perceived poor reading standards of Australian primary students. These will be discussed in this chapter.

At the Queensland State level, the teaching of reading content and skills are predominantly influenced by three documents – the new Years 1 to 10 English Syllabus (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a), the existing Year 2 Diagnostic Net (Department of Education & the Arts, 1998) and Literate Futures (Department of Education, 2000). Syllabus and Net documents outline reading outcomes or milestones Queensland students should be achieving at certain developmental levels and phases and Literate Futures focuses on the importance of relevant and innovative literacy pedagogy (Department of Education, 2000; Department of Education & the Arts, 1998; Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a). State Government projects have been conducted, exploring various aspects of the reading curriculum. These projects highlight the influence students' environment has on reading development and also that planning and curriculum innovation is needed so reading activities become socially relevant for all learners in today's classrooms. Data from the Queensland

State Year 3, 5 and 7 tests enable teachers to plan and implement a reading curriculum that is academically relevant to the needs of students (Queensland Studies Authority, 2003, 2004a). The Strategic Renewal Framework (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005) explicitly documents expectations of teachers and learners in Brisbane Catholic Education Archdiocesan schools. Creating high quality activities that bring about improved student learning outcomes is a priority for teachers. Family and school demographic data are presented to contextualise the study. An overview of Chapter 2 is presented in Figure 2.1.
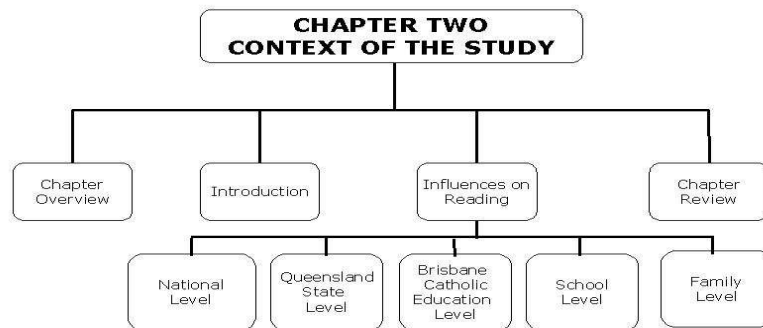
Figure 2.1 Overview of Chapter 2

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Studying students' attitudes to reading is significant for education and the future workforce of Australian citizens. Students' level of engagement in recreational and academic activities is influenced by their attitudes to reading and this impacts directly on their achievement as those students who engage more regularly with reading achieve significantly higher results (Worthy, 2002). In light of the current National reading agenda, which argues for an improvement in students' reading achievement levels, teachers must actively seek to enhance students' attitudes to reading and engagement by finding out about their attitudes and text preferences and then providing them with a range of stimulating reading texts and activities. Students must see reading as valuable and enjoyable if they are to engage in both recreational and academic reading (McKenna et al., 1995).

Attitudes to reading begin to develop in the prior-to-school period and continue to be refined as students' move throughout the primary school years. Even at a young age students are aware that with literacy comes power to exercise increased control over one's life (Connell, 1985). It is important students learn to read effectively at an early age as difficulties may impede upon self-concept and self-esteem in later years when peer relations and pressures become more evident (Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002; Westen, 1996). The ability to read successfully is essential for an effective level of participation in society as texts are embedded in everyday social, educational and employment related contexts (Connell, 1985; Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). Being able to read effectively impacts on adult social life and work choices and often relates to economic security (Adams & Henry, 1997; Beecher & Arthur, 2001; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

2.3 NATIONAL INFLUENCES ON READING

The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (MCEETYA, 1999) overarches State and Territory educational documents and emphasises the significant role of teachers in shaping reading attitudes and skills for engagement of all students. The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005b) provides recommendations for teachers. However, these have not yet been actioned due to the change of Federal Education Minister in late 2005.

The National Agenda for Early Childhood (Department of Family & Community Services, 2003) acknowledges the early years of children's lives are influential for their future educational growth. National research highlights a discrepancy between the reading achievement of male and female students in the early years compared to those in middle and upper primary years (Department of Family & Community Services, 2003). It is argued the gender imbalance of the current teaching profession impacts on students' understanding of how reading is embraced in today's social world (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997; Department of Education Science & Training, 2005a). Furthermore, the lack of personal literacy proficiency of graduate teachers also is of concern as it directly affects how students are taught and to what academic standard (Davies, 2005). In order to receive educational funding, schools often must comply with Federal Government conditions and there has been much debate recently

over these conditions. The political influences and National reports and agendas have impacted on the teaching of reading. These National influences on reading are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.1 Reports and Agendas

2.3.1.1 Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century

The Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) met in Adelaide in 1999 and educational issues were discussed by State, Territory and Commonwealth ministers. At this meeting the Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st century was endorsed (MCEETYA, 1999). Educational considerations and challenges for teachers as they plan and implement the curriculum in this new century were highlighted in this document (MCEETYA, 1999). National Goals relevant to this study are outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century

1. Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. In particular, when students leave schools they should:
1.1 Have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organize activities and to collaborate with others.   1.2 Have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members.
2. In terms of curriculum, students should have:
2.2 Attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; such that, every student should be numerate, able to read, write, and spell and communicate at an appropriate level.
3. Schooling should be socially just, so that:
3.2 The learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students.   3.5 All students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community.

<div align="right">(MCEETYA, 1999, p. 2)</div>

2.3.1.2 The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy

The Australian Government's National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005b) was instigated in November 2004 in response to the perceived unacceptable literacy standards of Australian students. The former state chairman of the Australian Council for Educational Standards argues students of today are being 'dumbed down' and lack basic literacy skills and knowledge standards compared to students 50 years ago (Davies, 2005). This Inquiry highlighted the Australian Government's strong position that all students must achieve a high standard of reading ability to achieve at school and beyond. It was designed to be a "broad, independent examination of reading research, teacher preparation and practices for the teaching of literacy, particularly reading" (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005b, p. 1). Teachers today should use data from inquiries to inform their practice as they must produce "literate, numerate and technologically able students" who are better equipped to actively participate in Australia's social, economic and political future" (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005b, p. 1).

Findings from the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy are of importance for today's educators (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005c). Six key elements were identified as being evident in schools with highly effective literacy teaching and these are:

1. a belief that each child can learn to read and write regardless of background;
2. an early and systematic emphasis on the explicit teaching of phonics;
3. a subsequent focus on direct teaching;
4. a rich print environment with many resources, including whole-school approaches to the teaching of reading and writing;
5. strong leadership and management practices, involving whole-school approaches to the teaching of reading and writing and;
6. an expectation that teachers will engage in evidence-based professional learning and learn from each other (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005c, p. 9).

Further recommendations are made with regard to ongoing assessment and tracking of literacy to inform planning and teaching, and also the appointment of literacy specialists in each school (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005c).

2.3.1.3 National Agenda for Early Childhood

The early years of child development have been identified as important by the Australian Government and this is reflected in the National Agenda for Early Childhood (Department of Family & Community Services, 2003). The Agenda aims to establish a more consistent and coordinated approach to areas of early child health, care and learning in order to promote the total well-being of children (Department of Family & Community Services, 2003). A consultation paper, titled *Towards the development of a National agenda for Early Childhood*, was launched in 2003 and data from this would be used to develop national approaches for early intervention and prevention of health and learning issues (Department of Family & Community Services, 2003). Today's children are regarded as "our country's most important future economic resources…they are our future parents, workers, consumers and taxpayers" and therefore it is imperative that a National Agenda for Early Childhood be developed to maximise their learning potential (Department of Family & Community Services, 2003).

The Government's recognition of the importance of learning in early childhood was reflected in the endorsement of the 'Whoever you are, wherever you are, Read Aloud Summit' (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d). This summit was held during National Literacy and Numeracy Week in 2005 and highlighted the current and future value of reading aloud to children. The Federal education minister fully endorsed this summit as it "was an ideal occasion for all participants to explore the many facets of early literacy, the latest research, and the different programmes encouraging reading aloud to our very young children" (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d, p. 4). Targeting this age group was regarded essential as contemporary brain research indicates that 75% of brain development occurs in the first five years of life and so children's early experiences directly impact on future physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d, p. 3).

2.3.2 Reading Standards

Student benchmark reading results differ across year levels and for male and female students. Thirty-four percent of male students and 23% of female students in Year 3 and Year 5 had a reading achievement level below the National benchmark

(Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs, 1997). National literacy data indicate one in ten Australian Year 7 students fail to meet the National reading benchmark and for indigenous students the figure is one in three eight year olds (Davies, 2005). The percentage of Australian students achieving the National reading benchmark declines from Year 3 to Year 7. However, when examining data for each State, Victoria's percentage of students achieving the reading benchmark remains stable across year levels, and South Australia's and Northern Territory's figures improve (Davies, 2005). Data for each State and Territory and for Australia are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Australian Students Achieving the National Reading Benchmark

STATE/TERRITORY	% REACHING BENCHMARK	
	Year 3	Year 7
New South Wales	93.0%	88.9%
Victoria	90.4%	90.3%
Queensland	93.8%	89.3%
South Australia	89.7%	92.9%
Western Australia	95.2%	88.9%
Tasmania	96.4%	88.3%
Northern Territory	71.5%	77.7%
ACT	96.2%	91.4%
Australia	92.4%	89.4%

(Davies, 2005, p. 2)

In response to the number of students failing to reach National reading benchmarks, the Commonwealth Minister at the time, Dr. Nelson, proposed a solution to this problem in his campaign package in the lead up to the federal election in 2004. The Government committed $20.3 million towards the provision of a national tutorial voucher scheme (Davies, 2005). Year 3 students who failed to meet the Year 3 National reading benchmark on the 2003 statewide tests were eligible for $700 in Government funded reading assistance through one on one reading tutoring. Of the 24,000 students eligible for this assistance (based on the 2003 test results), only 5,000

students received reading tutorial support (Davies, 2005). The minister accused the Labor States and territories of "deliberately sabotaging the voucher scheme by failing to inform parents/guardians of their child's eligibility and thus depriving them of the help on offer" (Davies, 2005, p. 2). Wriedt, the Tasmanian Education Minister, was a vocal critic of this plan and argued the $700 voucher for ten weeks tuition (in isolation of the classroom) was not going to solve the Nation's literacy problems (Davies, 2005). The voucher system will again be implemented in 2007 for an estimated 17,000 students nationwide who do not meet the National reading benchmark on their 2006 Statewide tests (Odgers, 2006). The Australian Government has committed $20.6 million for this two year literacy initiative (Odgers, 2006).

The decline in reading achievement across year levels (especially for male students) was publicly discussed by the former federal Education Minister, Dr. Nelson, in an on-line opinion e-journal. He strongly argued male students deserve a better chance at school as well as in life and suggested poor academic results of male students is attributed to the lack of male role models in schools (Nelson, 2004). Primary school teaching is a highly feminised profession with only one in five primary teachers being male and consequently, students may not be taught by many, if any, male teachers throughout their years of schooling (Biddulph, 1997; Smith, 1999). These figures greatly reduce the number of positive male role models for students. For those students who do not have male role models at home, this becomes more of an issue (Biddulph, 1997; Department of Education Science & Training, 2005a). Primary students' (especially boys) attitudes towards recreational and academic reading are influenced by the example of influential role models at home and at school and this includes both male and female role models (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). Therefore, schools need to address the lack of males in the teaching profession in order to improve the educational standards of students – especially male students.

The standard of teachers' personal literacy skills can contribute to the poor reading achievement standards of primary students and graduate teachers of today have been accused of not having an acceptable level of English skills themselves (Davies, 2005). Approximately 20% of University students enrolled in primary education courses demonstrate serious difficulties with literacy skills, and an additional 10% of these students just manage to grasp basic skills (Norris, 2005). A recommendation from The

National Literacy Inquiry (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005a) is all graduate teachers should be required to demonstrate personal proficiency in literacy skills prior to being accredited and placed in classrooms.

University teacher education courses also are being targeted as contributing to the reading standards of school students. The former Education Minister, Dr. Nelson, argued Australian universities do not teach pre-service teachers key literacy skills and best instructional practice and hence, when moving into the classroom many graduate teachers struggle to teach basic reading content and skills to their students (Norris, 2005; Swan & Lyon, 2005). The Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research recommends "tertiary institutions increase the time for reading instruction and improve the content of teacher education courses and school practice arrangements" in order to have teachers who are personally literate and confident to teach students to be literate (Davies, 2005, p. 1).

2.3.3 Conditions for School Funding

In 2005 the Commonwealth minister proposed schools should be subject to certain conditions in order to acquire federal funding. One condition was teachers needed to rank students' performance against others in their class and document this on student reports (Brennan, 2006). Ranking would be presented in quartiles – from the top 25% through to the bottom 25% (Doherty, 2005). Quartile rankings would be labeled alphabetically and used for each subject from kindergarten through to Year 12 (Allum, 2005). Quartile rankings on report cards would provide parents/guardians with a definite picture of where their child was placed in relation to other students in the class and early remediation for reading problems could be initiated before any difficulty escalated (Allum, 2005; Doherty, 2005). Dr. Nelson argued quartile rankings were necessary as a "well-meaning and misguided culture had emerged in education, which frowns upon teachers honestly presenting information to parents/guardians about the progress of children" (Doherty, 2005, p. 1).

The announcement of quartile ranking of students caused a groundswell of disapproval from teachers, principals and parent/guardian groups primarily because quartile rankings would not be linked to any standard or benchmark, but rather would compare students in school year level groupings. The academic ability composition of each class differs from school to school, which would result in inaccurate and

meaningless student quartile rankings (Doherty, 2005). The Queensland Education Minister and the Queensland Association of Independent Schools Executive Director both argue it is nonsensical to report student performance by comparing all students' performance in one class as this is educationally unsound (Allen, 2005; Allum, 2005). Quartile ranking would "depict the child as a failure to itself" and would damage the "dignity and self-esteem of the students" (Doherty, 2005, p. 1). It is considered more important to highlight what students can do well, and how they can improve in the areas they are experiencing difficulty (Allen, 2005; Allum, 2005).

New South Wales' premier Iemma and Education Minister Tebbutt announced the introduction of quartile ranking in August 2005. A $3 billion funding agreement was signed with the Commonwealth because New South Wales agreed to publish student quartile rankings on report cards, however by mid October 2005 Tebbutt reneged on this agreement. Quartile rankings of New South Wales students would not be published on student report cards, but rather would be available on parent/guardian request (Doherty, 2005). This back down paved the way for other Australian state education systems to provide student rankings only upon parent/guardian request. Director of Queensland Catholic Education Commission supported the move not to publicly document quartile rankings as "we don't want a mark on the card that the child had to live with for life" (Allen, 2005, p. 1). The current education literacy emphasis is on each individual student's achievement of outcomes and not on measuring one child against another. However, despite this, Government reporting requirements become effective in Semester 2, 2006 (Brennan, 2006; Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a). Teachers are required to use a five point rating scale to document (on students' report cards) the extent to which primary and secondary aged students are meeting syllabus outcomes for all key learning areas (Brennan, 2006).

2.4 QUEENSLAND STATE INFLUENCES ON READING
Queensland State Government educational projects highlight best educational practice for teachers in this new century. Three significant projects conducted this decade impact upon Queensland school reading policies, programs and classroom activities and these studies were the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Lingard et al., 2001), the Literate Futures project (Department of Education, 2000), and the New Basics Project (Department of Education & the Arts, 2004). Issues of literacy access

and power in increasingly diverse school populations and improvement in the teaching of reading for the new century were highlighted in these projects (Anstey & Bull, 2004). The new Years 1 to 10 English Syllabus (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a) and Year 2 Diagnostic Net (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005b) identify learning outcomes and student milestones for the teaching of reading. In addition to these projects and documents, the annual Queensland Year 3, 5 and 7 statewide tests provide valuable insights into the achievement levels of students at a State and school level. These projects, documents and assessment methods warrant further discussion.

2.4.1 Literacy Projects

2.4.1.1 Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study

The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: A strategy for shared curriculum leadership (QSRLS) identified the notion of productive pedagogies (Lingard et al., 2001). Twenty key elements that could improve social and academic learning outcomes for students in Queensland schools were identified and grouped into four dimensions – intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment and recognition of difference (Lingard et al., 2001). These dimensions and elements are presented in Table 2.3. The impetus for the Literate Futures (Department of Education, 2000) and New Basics Projects (Department of Education & the Arts, 2004) came from this School Reform Study.

Table 2.3

Productive Pedagogies

Dimension	Elements
Intellectual Quality	Higher order thinking, deep knowledge, deep understanding, substantive conversation, knowledge as problematic, metalanguage.
Connectedness	Knowledge integration, background knowledge, connectedness to the world, problem-based curriculum.
Supportive Classroom Environment	Student direction, social support, academic engagement, explicit quality performance criteria, self-regulation.
Recognition of Difference	Cultural knowledge, inclusivity, narrative, group identity, active citizenship.

(Anstey & Bull, 2004, p. 49)

2.4.1.2 Literate Futures

The Literate Futures project was conducted to enable Queensland schools to lead the nation in productive and innovative literacy approaches and practices (Department of Education, 2000). Teacher professionalism, local flexibility and innovative programming emerged as key elements. Ensuring the curriculum is relevant to the needs of the community of learners was highlighted in Literate Futures (Department of Education, 2000). The Queensland Literacy Strategy was formulated and refocused attention to classroom literacy teaching and learning, highlighted literacy practices occur in all classrooms daily, and identified and documented effective literacy approaches (Department of Education, 2000). Literate Futures centres on the Four Resource Model presented by Freebody and Luke (1990). This model focuses on the teaching of reading and how texts used shape students' reading skills, level of comprehension and critical awareness of underlying textual values and assumptions (Department of Education, 2000). The Four Resource Model is presented in Figure 2.2.
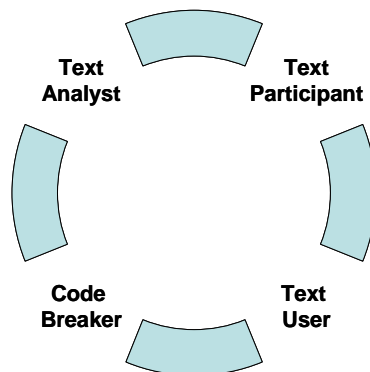
Figure 2.2 Four Resource Model From Freebody, 2004, p. 1.

The Four Resource Model practices are not developmental or hierarchical, but are inter-related with each one having equitable literacy value (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000). As a code breaker students make sense of alphabetic marks on the page using three cueing systems – graphophonic, syntactic and semantic (Anstey & Bull, 2004). As a meaning maker students are required to draw on their social, cultural and previous reading experiences to make literal and inferential textual meaning (Freebody, 2004). As a text user students see reading is pragmatic as they use authentic texts in real-life situations (Anstey & Bull, 2004). As a text analyst students

critically analyse texts to gain an understanding of how and why they were constructed (Freebody, 2004). Students come to realise no text is neutral, all texts contain social and cultural influences as well as attitudes and beliefs of the writer (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Shaping of identity, knowledge and power is prevalent in each choice one makes about what to include and what to omit in all texts (Anstey & Bull, 2004). By developing this repertoire of reading resources, students "move beyond decoding and encoding print to understanding and using texts on several levels for a variety of purposes in a range of technologies" (Ludwig, 2003, p. 2).

2.4.1.3 New Basics

The New Basics Project was a future-oriented initiative for Education Queensland (Department of Education & the Arts, 2004). This project centred on improving the richness and relevance of the academic curriculum and social dimension for today's students. This project connected with the productive pedagogies identified by Lingard et al. (2001) and rich task demonstrations, as presented in Figure 2.3. Rich tasks are real-world activities students complete (to showcase their outcome learning) in a format that prepares them for real-world challenges (Friend & Kelly, 2005).
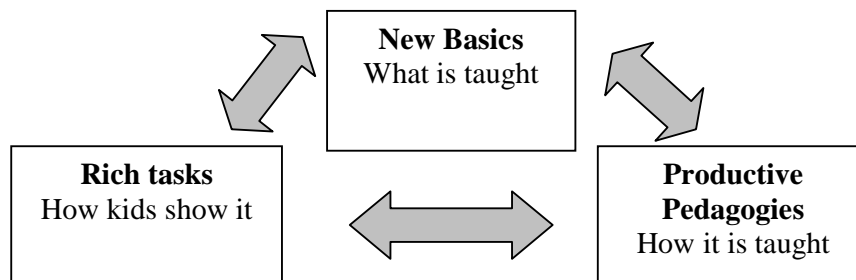
Figure 2.3 The New Basics Project from Department of Education & the Arts, 2004.

2.4.2 English Syllabus

The relevant English Syllabus guides the English curriculum in Queensland State, Catholic and independent schools (Department of Education, 1994). The English syllabus used in schools for the last decade was approved for revision by the Queensland School Curriculum Council in October 1999. Selected Queensland schools worked closely with Queensland Studies Authority personnel trialing the draft English Year 1 to 10 Syllabus and it has been released to schools for open trial in Semester 2, 2005 and Semester 1, 2006 (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a). This syllabus aligns with other Key Learning Area syllabi as it is outcomes-based and

content is presented in levels from foundational through to level 6. The point of difference is that key content is divided into three strands (cultural, operational, critical). These strands reflect the three literacy dimensions presented by Green (1988). The cultural, operational and critical strands of literacy provide a "complimentary and mutually informing relationship between the language system, the meaning system and transforming practice" (Ludwig, 2003, p. 4). The new English Syllabus reinforces the importance of the four resource literacy model in planning and teaching reading and enhances reading attitudes of students as it expands the notion of reading from the word level to include using and analyzing real texts.

2.4.3 Assessment of Reading

2.4.3.1 Year 2 Diagnostic Net

Education Queensland is committed to the provision of the highest literacy and numeracy standards for Queensland students and so in 1996, the Year 2 Diagnostic Net (Department of Education & the Arts, 1998) was designed and implemented in schools as a way to monitor and assess students' literacy and numeracy development in the early years. Early identification of students' literacy difficulties is regarded crucial for improving literacy standards. There are four key steps in this diagnostic process:

1. observe and map students' progress using developmental continua for literacy and numeracy;
2. involve identification of Year 2 students in specifically designed assessment tasks and identify students who require intervention;
3. provide support to students requiring additional assistance and;
4. report to parents/guardians about their child's development in literacy and numeracy (Department of Education & the Arts, 1998, p. 2).

Key indicators (milestones) are grouped into phases of development to highlight students' development in reading, writing and number. Parents/guardians receive a written report identifying the phase their child is currently operating in along with key behaviours typical of each phase. The Year 2 Diagnostic Net reflects content of the previous English syllabus and therefore will need to be revised to align it more closely with new syllabi (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005b). Teachers at trial schools will receive draft Net materials in 2006. All other Queensland teachers will use the current

Diagnostic Net until at least 2008 to inform their literacy and numeracy teaching (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005b).

2.4.3.2 Year 3, 5 and 7 Test

The Year 3, 5 and 7 statewide tests occur in August every year. These are standardised tests (administered under strict test conditions) that focus on students' academic achievement in mathematics and literacy (Queensland Studies Authority, 2004b). Parents/guardians and schools receive test data outlining individual student mathematics and literacy results. Data enable teachers to make comparisons about year level achievements across years, and also between school results and statewide averages. Data trends exist for students' reading results across year levels and for gender. In the reading and viewing strand, mean scores of Queensland students substantially increases as they move from Year 3, to Year 5 to Year 7 and also female students have higher mean scores than male students (Queensland Studies Authority, 2003; 2004a).

2.5 BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION INFLUENCES ON READING

Over 137 primary schools are owned and administered by Brisbane Catholic Education and subject to Queensland State Education policies, and curriculum pedagogy is influenced by various Queensland State projects. In Brisbane Archdiocesan schools learning is regarded as an active, social construction of meaning and is not only a school based activity, but rather something spanning the total life of an individual (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2004, p. 4). The Brisbane Catholic Education Learning Framework (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2004) highlights this belief as it centres on the philosophy that learning is life-long and as such teachers are called to plan reading activities, focusing on the roles of life-long learners "consistently, explicitly and creatively" (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2004, p. 4).

2.5.1 Strategic Renewal Framework

The Strategic Renewal Framework highlights Brisbane Catholic Education's values, priorities and intentions for the period 2002-2006. This document provides guidance for teaching activities, shapes school resourcing and promotes a partnership with local communities, parents/guardians and clergy (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005). Eight overarching key values are documented, relevant to this study

are values four (high quality learning) and eight (creativity). Teachers employed by Brisbane Catholic Education are called to provide a high quality of learning that "shall impart in the learner a zest for life, the courage to tackle it, and a desire by students to use and extend what they learn" (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005, p. 13). In addition, teachers must "look for creative, flexible and future oriented responses that best address the needs of students, the local community, system and government" (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005, p. 13).

The Strategic Renewal Framework (2002-2006) is divided into nine priorities and these are embraced by all Archdiocesan schools so students experience high quality innovative education (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005). Each priority has a list of intentions and expectations schools will have addressed by 2006. Priorities, intentions and expectations outlined in The Strategic Renewal Framework (2002-2006) are shaped by the community of teachers and learners in each Catholic primary school and so the curriculum planned is affected by the way this framework's priorities are applied to each school context. Priority 1 is pertinent to this study and is outlined in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4

Strategic Renewal Framework (2002-2006): Priority One

Enhance and resource a curriculum in which teaching and learning in our schools establishes improved student learning outcomes.		
	1.2	Develop our inclusive response to students with needs arising from language, culture, disability or socio-economic factors.
Intentions	1.3	Enhance school-based curriculum focused on improving learning outcomes for all students of varying needs and abilities.
Expectations by 2006	1.2	Student data on literacy will inform planning, pedagogy and assessment in all schools.
	1.4	Literacy outcomes of all students, especially those identified "at risk" will be improved through the implementation of inclusive school programs.
(Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005, p.19)		

2.6 SCHOOL INFLUENCES ON READING

The context of the school can influence students' attitudes and beliefs towards reading. Within this study, a primary school was chosen for its location and population size and was deemed large enough to draw a significant cohort of primary aged students. Details of the research site were presented in Chapter 1. Descriptive data relating to the school, its shire/suburb, and parish were gathered from the school Administration, Parish Office, and Local Council department publications.

Students in the study attend a low to middle class, co-educational primary school catering for students from Preschool to Year 7. There are three streams of each year level that are heterogeneously grouped and there are no composite or multi-age class groupings. The school is situated in a Shire North of Brisbane which has over 120,000 residents. The shire's population is experiencing growth due to an influx of families from both within Queensland and from interstate (Caboolture Shire Council, 2004). At the time of the study (2004), the unemployment rate of the shire was recorded below 8% in the June Quarter (Caboolture Shire Council, 2004). However, the suburb where the school is located was experiencing the highest unemployment rate of the shire. The labour force of the shire is approximately 51,000 and the parish in which the Catholic primary school is situated has approximately 72,000 residents of which over 15,000 (21.2%) are Catholic (Caboolture Shire Council, 2004). Fourteen percent of Parish Catholics are aged 65 and over and 23.1% are aged between 0 and 14 years with a median age for Catholics of 36.9 years. The percentage of primary students in the parish who attend the Catholic school is 28.0%. Six percent of parishioners speak a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

2.7 FAMILY INFLUENCES ON READING

The context of the family can influence students' attitudes and beliefs towards reading (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). Parent/guardian occupation, educational level, age and language spoken at home are presented to contextualise the findings of this study.

2.7.1 Parent/guardian Occupations

Parent/guardian occupational data were gathered on the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey and the results are shown in Figures 2.4 and 2.5.
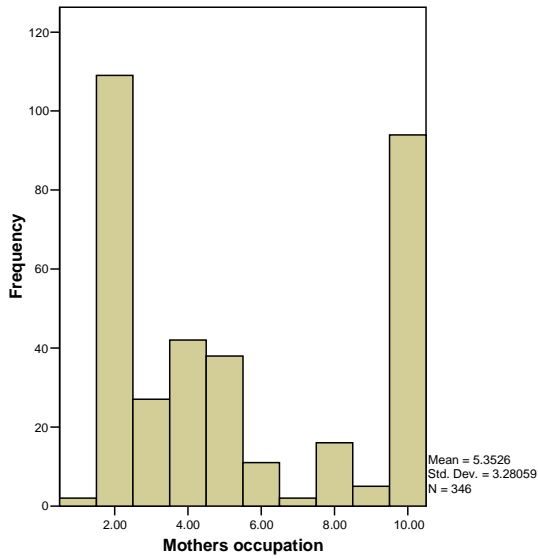
Figure 2.4 Occupation of Mothers/female Guardians

Thirty-one percent of mothers/female guardians of students at this school are employed in professional occupations (category 2) and 26.7% are not in paid employment (category 10).
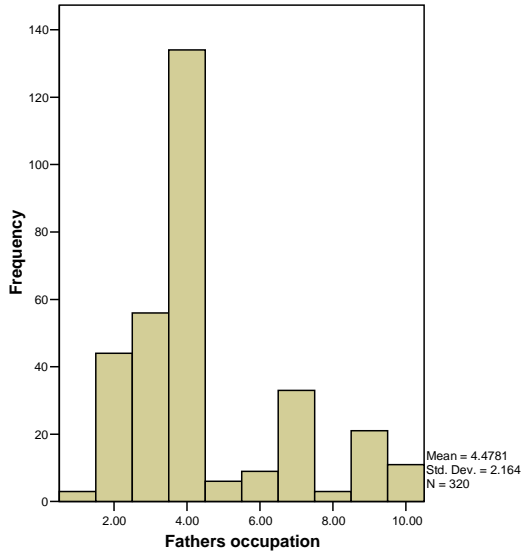
Figure 2.5 Occupation of Fathers/male Guardians

Thirty-eight percent of fathers/male guardians of students at this school are employed in trade related work (category 4).

2.7.2 Parent/guardian Education Level

The highest educational level of mothers/female guardians and fathers/male guardians was gathered on the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey and the results are shown in Figures 2.6 and 2.7.
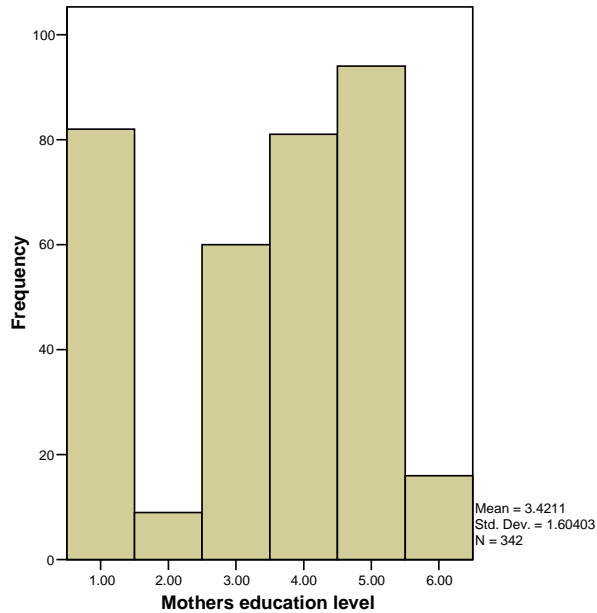
Figure 2.6 Educational Level of Mothers/female Guardians
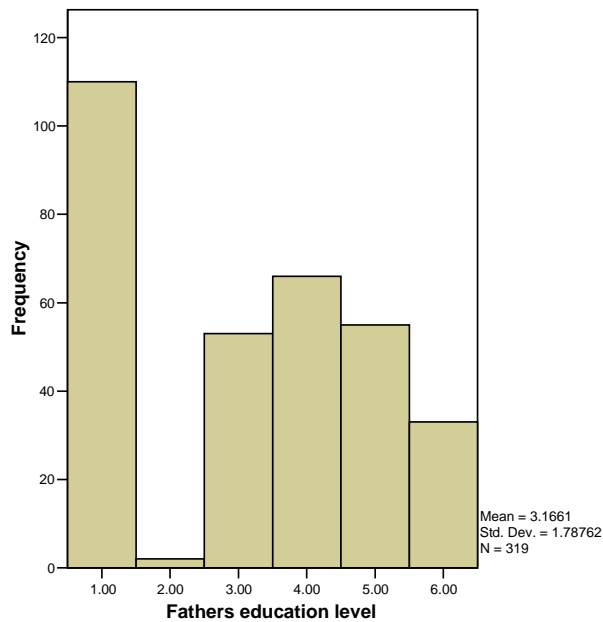
Figure 2.7 Educational Level of Fathers/male Guardians

Mothers/female guardians of students at this school had higher educational levels (mean 3.42) than fathers/male guardians (mean 3.17). A higher percentage of

mothers/female guardians than fathers/male guardians had acquired a Year 12 certificate (category 3), a TAFE certificate (category 4) or a University degree (category 5). More fathers/male guardians than mothers/female guardians had completed their compulsory schooling at Year 10 (category 1) and gone on to complete apprenticeships and other associated trade certificates (category 6). Data for parent/guardian educational level were not stated on all surveys and information for fathers/male guardians was not provided on 9.1% of surveys and not provided for mothers/female guardians on 2.6% of surveys.

2.7.3 Parent/guardian Ages

The ages of mothers/female guardians and fathers/male guardians were gathered on the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey (Young, 2003) and the results are shown in Figure 2.8 and 2.9.

Mean = 5.1257
Std. Dev. = 1.13281
N = 342
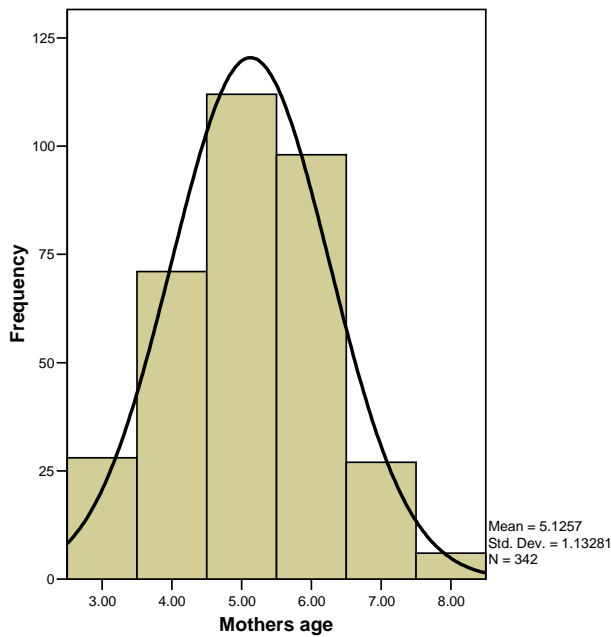
Figure 2.8 Age of Mothers/female Guardians
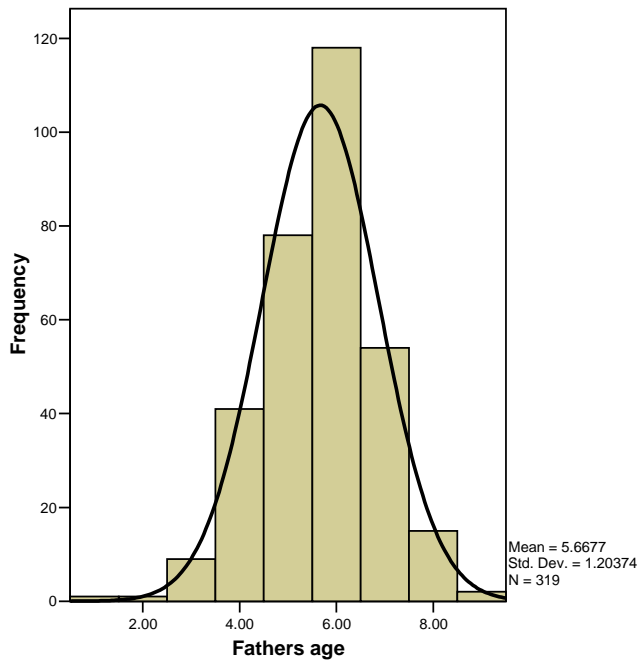
Figure 2.9 Age of Fathers/male Guardians

The mean age category of fathers/male guardians (mean 5.67) was higher than the mean age category of mothers/female guardians (mean 5.13). In the 26-40 years age group (category 3, 4 and 5), mothers/female guardians accounted for 60.1% of respondents and fathers/male guardians accounted for 36.5%, and in the 41-55 years age group (category 6, 7 and 8), 37.3% of mothers/female guardians and 53.3% of fathers/male guardians completed the survey. There were 0.6% of fathers/male guardians in the under 25 years (category 1 and 2) and above 55 years age groups (category 9) whereas there were no mothers/female guardians reported in either of these age groups. Information for fathers/male guardians was not provided on 9.1% of surveys and not provided for mothers/female guardians on 2.6% of surveys. The age of mothers/female guardians and fathers/male guardians reflected a normal distribution and was reflected in Figures 2.8 and 2.9.

2.7.4 Languages other than English spoken at home

A total of 5.1% of families spoke a language other than English at home. However, only 4.3% of children spoke a language other than English at home. The languages other than English spoken by children at this school were: Chinese (1.1%), Vietnamese (0.9%), Maori (0.6%), Spanish (0.3%), Filipino (0.3%), Hindi (0.3%), Tongan (0.3%) and Thai (0.3%). Thus, the greater majority (95.7%) of children

involved in the study had English (Australian) as their first language. Two percent of respondents reported their child was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

2.8 CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter it has been highlighted that the teaching of reading does not exist in isolation but rather is influenced by National, State and System level factors. Demographics of the family and school setting also were presented. National reports and policy were reported and they provide an overarching direction for the teaching of reading today. Projects, documents and assessment practices at the Queensland State level were documented and these provide teachers with frameworks and guidelines on how to reach reading, what to teach about reading and also how students should be achieving as readers. The Strategic Renewal Framework (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005) highlights the value placed on reading in schools and the priority of planning and implementing a curriculum that leads to improved student learning outcomes in reading. National, State and System influences impact directly upon how teachers should view reading, select texts, and implement school-based recreational and academic reading activities in this decade.

In Chapter 2 the study has been contextualized in the Australian educational climate. Information in this chapter contributes one part to the overall understanding of reading, and this is shown in Figure 2.10. In Chapter 3 a review of literature related to reading and attitudes is presented.
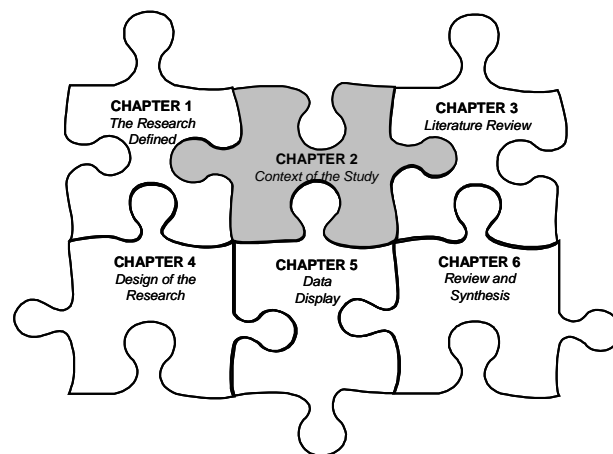
Figure 2.10 Thesis Overview

CHAPTER 3
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

A review of literature relating to reading attitudes and engagement of students is presented in this chapter of the thesis. This chapter begins by defining reading and situating practices in students' home and school contexts. The history of reading theories is presented in terms of the key beliefs and influential theorists are identified. Innate, family and school influences on reading engagement and achievement are presented and studies of students' motivation and attitudes are described. Research instruments utilized in previous studies and the features of each are explained. Finally, findings from research using the key motivation and attitude instruments are presented. Figure 3.1 displays an overview of Chapter 3.
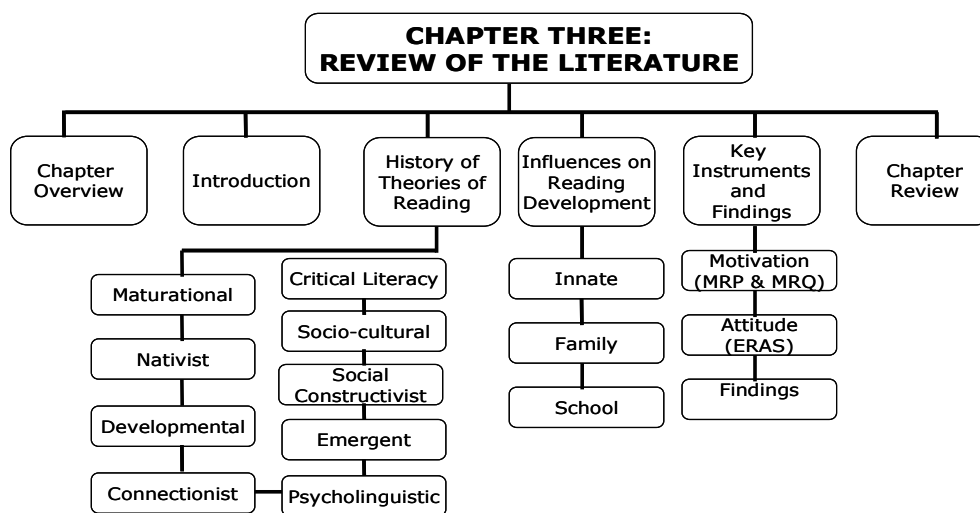
Figure 3.1 Overview of Chapter 3

3.2 INTRODUCTION

Reading does not occur at a fixed point in time, but rather is a gradual process beginning in the early childhood years when students first begin to engage with language, print and significant others. As students engage in the complex act of reading they actively construct meaning to better understand themselves, others, and their world (National Council of Teachers of English, 2005). Students use their own "understanding of spoken language, knowledge of the world, and experiences to make sense of what they read" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, p. 1).

Information students gain from reading texts affects them and impacts directly on the way they interact with their world. Through interactions about text, with parents/guardians, siblings, teachers, and friends students learn of the reading abilities, ideas, values and attitudes of significant people in their lives (National Council of Teachers of English, 2005). Students' attitudes towards reading are influenced by their social and cultural interactions.

Reading is a complex human behaviour that if mastered provides a student with a strong foundation for success in school (Aunola, Nurmi, Niemi, Lerkkanen & Rasku-Puttonen, 2002; Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000). The physical act of reading is only one aspect of the complete reading experience. Reading behaviour, affect (feelings) and cognition interrelate (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1972; Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000). Behaviour provides a teacher with concrete insights into what a student is thinking and feeling about reading. Affect refers to a student's interest in or response to texts and teachers can infer student affect by observing consistent patterns when students engage in reading different types of texts. Cognition refers to the thinking and knowing processes a student engages when reading. Teachers can examine student reading behaviour and affect using focused observations and can assess cognition as students respond to the meanings within texts.

Reading attitude was influenced by the feelings students had about reading, their readiness to read, and the beliefs they held about reading and this was reflected in the Mathewson model (1991). Cornerstone concepts (personal values, goals, and self-concepts) and persuasive communications (affecting the reader through a central or peripheral route) were two major factors influencing students' engagement in reading. Cognitive and affective feedback regarding reading skill and engagement were similarly believed to impact on reading attitudes. Students' intention or motivation to read was believed to be influenced by external motivators (e.g. incentives) and the internal emotional state of students as they came to the reading experience.

Based on the values and beliefs students internalize about reading, they respond emotionally and cognitively, positively or negatively, to any given text. Reading can not effectively occur without emotion and as such teachers need to understand students read something, they do not simply read (Deford, 2004; Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000). The emotional connection students have when reading is the "primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read" (McKenna & Kear, 1990, p. 626). Texts are not static items, but rather

come to life as the reader encounters them and links experiences of characters with their own feelings and experience. As students read they transform printed texts while at the same time emotionally transform themselves (Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000). Without an emotional connection to texts, students will not positively engage in reading and consequently their academic achievement levels will suffer. Teachers need to make reading irresistibly attractive to students to enhance their positive reading attitudes (Deford, 2004).

Learning to read is considered, by some researchers, to naturally occur through immersion in a literacy-rich environment. However, others assert learning to read is "not only unnatural, it is one of the most unnatural things humans do" (Wren, 2002, p. 3). This later assertion is supported by Wren (2003) who stated over 40 million American adults struggled with learning to read as students and are now functionally illiterate, and that 40% of fourth grade students do not possess basic reading skills. Developing the ability to read by Year 4 is pivotal as the odds of students developing effective reading skills after this time is considered small (Wren, 2002). After this time the teaching of reading skills is difficult as teachers are working against declining student motivation and increasing peer pressure factors. Promoting positive attitudes becomes very challenging for teachers when students' level of academic achievement begins to impact on their level of reading engagement.

Engaging students in reading is important for developing their positive attitude towards academic reading. When students engage in reading they are practising "holding a purpose, seeking to understand, believing in one's own capability, and taking responsibility for learning" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 403). Four key characteristics of engaged student readers were presented by Guthrie, McGough, Bennett and Rice (1996). Engaged readers were believed to:

- Be motivated to read by personal goals;

- Use a range of effective reading strategies to comprehend text;

- Be knowledgeable about how they construct new meaning from text and;

- Be socially interactive in how they approach literacy (Guthrie, McGough, Bennett & Rice, 1996, p. 178).

Students who are engaged readers are motivated, strategic, knowledgeable, socially interactive and they also seek to conceptually understand textual content. Engaged readers "coordinate their strategies and knowledge (cognition) within a community of literacy (social) in order to fulfill their personal goals, desires, and intentions (motivation)" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 404). The more highly engaged readers are the greater their level of reading achievement, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Worthy, 2002). Reading engagement is of educational importance and therefore, schools must deliberately and thoughtfully attract students to reading throughout all primary year levels (Strickland & Morrow, 1991).

Students' level of reading engagement can be influenced and can change over time based on their experiences and attitudes towards reading. Class activities must explicitly highlight the value of reading and the enjoyment that can be gained from engaging with texts. A positive regard for reading (confidence, enthusiasm) can be instilled in students by teachers and parents/guardians and students' reading engagement can be influenced by a careful mix of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Students who are motivated to read by extrinsic factors may not engage for extended periods of time and may complete reading tasks for compliance, recognition and grade reasons. Intrinsically motivated students engage in reading activities for longer periods of time and show greater levels of persistence. Specific classroom teaching and learning practices influence students' level of reading engagement and their attitude.

3.3 HISTORY OF THEORIES OF READING

Over the past century theorists have developed new theories of reading and each of these has influenced pedagogy. A timeline of when these theories dominated how reading was taught is presented in Figure 3.2.
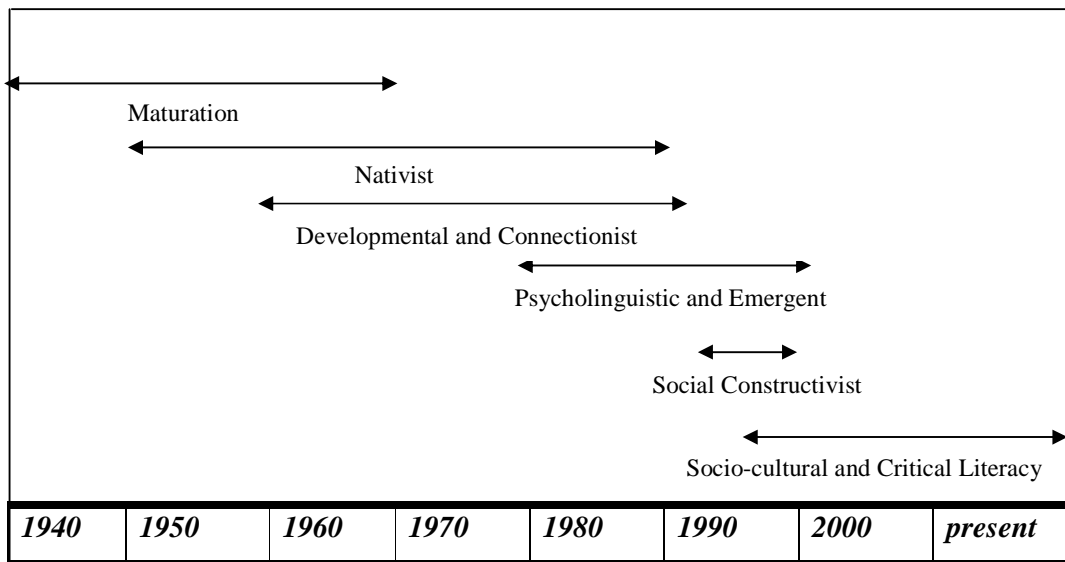
Figure 3.2 Reading Perspectives 1940 to present

Reading perspectives have evolved over time as research has highlighted more fully how innate characteristics and environment (home and school) shape reading development. The way reading has been taught, over the last century, is influenced by these reading perspectives. Each perspective reflects and yet extends upon beliefs and practices of previous perspectives (Singer & Ruddell, 1985). Key beliefs and influential theorists for each perspective are presented in this section and outlined in Figure 3.3.
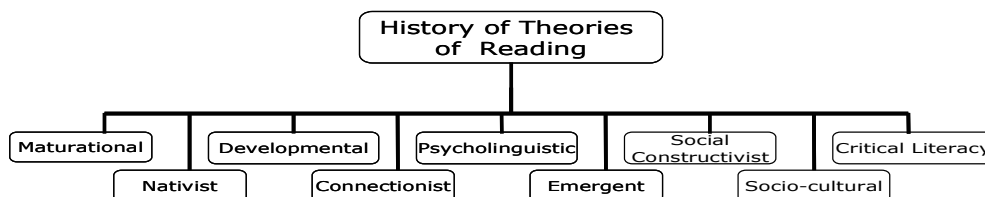
Figure 3.3 Theoretical influences on reading: Reading perspectives

3.3.1 Maturational Perspective

A maturational reading perspective was prominent during the period 1940s to 1960s. "Young children were thought to need time to mature and to develop knowledge of the self before beginning formal reading instruction" (Crawford, 1995, p. 72). Students needed to reach certain maturational milestones before they were ready to acquire knowledge and skills and therefore they were seen as having limited concepts of reading prior to school (Gesell, 1965). Students were thought to be ready to read when they were old enough to attend formal schooling and this readiness was ascertained using readiness tests (Singer & Ruddell, 1985). Rushing students into reading was believed to cause them cognitive damage (Gesell, 1971). Gesell (1965) influenced key beliefs of the maturational perspective.

3.3.2 Nativist Perspective

A nativist reading perspective was prominent during the period 1950s to 1980s. Humans were believed to be born into the world with the innate skills needed to acquire language (Chomsky, 1957). Students' development was believed to move through innate continuous and cumulative stages and so it was important to allow students to grow at an individual pace as rushing them through stages could result in key experiences being missed. Innate operating principles provided students with a set of "rules to listen by" and directed their attention to crucial features of language (Bee, 1995, p. 246). There was a strong belief that students were innately programmed to acquire the language of their social and cultural group. Froebel (1897) and Chomsky (1957) influenced the key beliefs of the nativist perspective.

3.3.3 Developmental Perspective

A developmental perspective was prominent during the period 1960s to 1980s. This perspective reflected maturational beliefs as it maintained students needed to be 'ready' to read. However it emphasized the significance of environmental pre-reading activities (Singer & Ruddell, 1985). Behaviours were understood to be learnt through trial and error (using rewards and punishments) as students made connections between experiences and consequences (Thorndike, 1917). Readiness to read could be influenced by students' positive or negative experiences and direct instruction in the early years (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Department of Education, 2005). Standardised tests were used by teachers to gauge students' readiness to read (Department of Education, 2005). Readiness programs were provided for pre-primary aged students and were very structured in their organization, were sequential and

emphasized skill learning through drill practice and completion of prescribed workbook exercises (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000). It was believed the more students learnt to read, the more they would want to read (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Crawford, 1995). Thorndike (1917) and Skinner, Wellborn and Connell (1990) influenced the key beliefs of the developmental perspective.

3.3.4 Connectionist Perspective

A connectionist perspective was evident during the phonics-based movement of the period 1960s to 1980s. Teachers were encouraged to establish a print-rich classroom environment, However immersion was not regarded as sufficient for students to learn key reading skills (Crawford, 1995). A connectionist perspective viewed reading from a 'bottom-up' model which emphasised teaching students (through direct instruction) in a fixed, sequential, hierarchical way, from letters and sounds (parts of words), to words, to meaning (Adams & Henry, 1997; Turner, 1995). Students initially learnt to read small amounts of text and this progressively grew into larger amounts of text (Turner & Paris, 1995). It was argued "once a child learns the code, s/he can read by sounding out each of the words – a process called decoding" (DeMoulin, Loye, Swan, Block & Schnabel, 1999, p. 40). Direct instruction in 'the code' became the way reading was taught. By learning letter forms, grapheme-phoneme associations and print conventions students grasped fundamental reading skills. Flesch (1955) and Adams (1990) influenced the key beliefs of the Connectionist perspective.

3.3.5 Psycholinguistic Perspective

A psycholinguistic reading perspective was prominent during the period 1980s to 1990s. Students were regarded as active participants in the process of learning to read and comprehend because they were expert users of their social and cultural language (Turner, 1995). Reading activities were seen as a purposeful extension of life relationships as they present students "with real problems that have tangible consequences" (Hiebert & Fisher, 1990, p. 90). The use of real-life learning activities and texts were promoted so reading became meaningful and child-centred and not just a decoding process (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Department of Education, 2005; Gambrell, 1996; Goodman, 1986; Turner & Paris, 1995). A 'top down' approach to reading was emphasized and so skills were taught as part of the whole experience, not in isolated direct-teaching episodes focusing predominantly on high frequency word/texts (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Hiebert & Fisher, 1990; Turner & Paris, 1995). This approach highlighted graphophonic skills, and also semantic (meaning)

and syntactic cues (grammatical or sentence sense) (Department of Education, 2005; Goodman, 1986). The term "whole language" was used to describe the ideology of this perspective and it was believed students needed an understanding of purposes and functions of print before they could engage in manipulating smaller components of print (Turner & Paris, 1995). Goodman (1986) influenced the key beliefs of the psycholinguistic perspective.

3.3.6 Emergent Perspective

An emergent reading perspective was prominent during the period 1980s to 1990s. Beliefs associated with this perspective indicate concepts of print and reading skills begin at birth and continue to emerge as students get older and participate in real-life reading activities (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Crawford, 1995). Students entering their first year of school had differing understandings about reading due to their participation in prior-to-school experiences. The initial point in the learning to read process was not students' entry into the first year of school. Rather many believed this point coincided with a sense of student reading readiness (Clay, 1972). All students were thought to be able to learn to read when they were cognitively ready, providing they had sufficient support and scaffolding to grasp concepts about print and skills. Piaget (1952) and Clay (1972) influenced key beliefs of the emergent perspective.

3.3.7 Social Constructivist Perspective

A social constructivist reading perspective was prominent in the 1990s (Department of Education, 2005). Reading development was regarded as a cyclic process that began at birth and continued, to varying degrees, throughout one's life through active interaction with other language users (Crawford, 1995). Students acquired new reading skills and became aware, consciously and unconsciously, of the role and function of reading by observing it being used by adults in their immediate family and community social and cultural environments (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997; Anstey & Bull, 2004; Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). Providing students with assistance enables them to complete reading activities they would be unable to do alone (Vygotsky, 1978). Students move through the Zone of Proximal Development progressing from needing assistance to complete reading activities, to being able to complete them independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Social interaction with texts and more competent readers helps students learn the complexities of their social language system (Turner & Paris, 1995; Searfoss, Readence, & Mallette, 2001; Stahl, 2003). Hence, by the time students entered formal schooling many had developed a solid

knowledge base of key reading skills. Vygotsky (1978) influenced the key beliefs of the social constructivist perspective.

3.3.8 Socio-cultural Perspective

A socio-cultural reading perspective was prominent during the late 1990s and is still influential today. Access to language is unequal as some students have more access than others and it is this access to home social and cultural experiences that influences how readily students engage in class reading activities (Comber, 2004). Literate ability is developed through active engagement in social and cultural contexts as students are "embodied, situated and social" individuals (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Cazden et al., 1996; Crawford, 1995; Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a). Each social and cultural context has its own specific literate forms and practices and so students' family histories and cultural practices shape the way they engage in classroom activities (Comber, 2004; Freebody & Luke, 1990).

Habitus refers to the embodiment of a student's cultural background (it is who they are, their values from past and present situations) that predisposes them to think and behave in particular ways (Comber, Thomson & Wells, 2001). A habitus that matches classroom practices better positions students to access reading knowledge and skills. However a habitus, incongruent to classroom reading practices, makes reading engagement and achievement difficult (Comber, 2004). Incongruency is becoming more prevalent today as home and school reading activities are changing due to increasing parental time constraints and technological (ICT) developments.

To effectively participate in society and school, children today need to be multiliterate – a term that was coined by the New London Group to highlight two changes in literacy (Cazden et al., 1996; Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a). Firstly, literacy today relies on the emergence of a number of modes of communication (requiring processing of multiple semiotic systems) and not just on print-based traditional text types (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Secondly, social and cultural influences on literacy are multiple in today's globalised society (Anstey & Bull, 2004). A multiliterate view of teaching reading focuses on modes of representations varying both culturally and contextually (Cazden et al., 1996; Freebody & Luke, 1990). Due to the ever changing dynamics of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), today there cannot be one way of teaching reading skills as was the case in past decades. Bourdieu (1997), Freebody and Luke (1990) and Freire (1973) influenced the key beliefs of the socio-cultural perspective.

3.3.9 Critical Literacy Perspective

A critical literacy reading perspective emerged in the late 1990s and presently impacts on classroom reading pedagogy. Society is rapidly changing into a "hi-tech globalised world" and schools must acknowledge and cater for this (Department of Education, 2005, p. 1). Today schools are not considered places where knowledge is simply transmitted ('empty jug' mentality), but rather where students learn key skills and competencies for independent and efficient interaction in an ever-increasingly technological society. Students need to learn skills to make sense of the array of multimedia, complex visual imagery, music and sound, and even virtual worlds that are becoming part of every day life (Freebody & Luke, 1990). They also need to be multiliterate – using print-based texts, in addition to the modes of representation currently available.

Literacy is not only about codes and skills, but also about ideologies, identities and values (Luke, 1993). All texts are social constructs and represent the values, beliefs and ideals of those who wrote them, so certain texts will highlight people or groups and silence others (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Green, 1988). Students are called to become critical analysts from early childhood years and examine how authors position readers (using the texts, pictures and graphics) to convey a particular message (Freebody & Luke, 1990). In society, students "need to be able to use language to compose creatively and comprehend critically" (Department of Education, 2005, p. 8). Students need practice identifying and challenging the way non-verbal, spoken, visual and print texts are written and presented to convey a particular purpose or point of view. Bourdieu (1997), Luke and Freebody (1990), and Green (1988) influenced the key beliefs of the Critical Literacy perspective.

The nine reading perspectives have distinct key beliefs influenced by researchers over the past century. These perspectives have shaped the way reading has been theoretically viewed and pedagogically taught. Teachers today are challenged to re-evaluate their practice to make reading activities relevant for today's students (Cazden et al., 1996). Students live in a society where there are vast disparities in social, cultural and communication media and consequently reading perspectives and pedagogy needs to reflect this (Cazden et al., 1996). Teachers need to acknowledge how the social and cultural community, in which a child lives, experiences, and learns influences their level of engagement in reading, and how this affects the reading skills they develop and bring with them to class reading activities (Anstey & Bull, 2004).

Reading activities must enhance students' reading skills whilst also affirming their socially and culturally acquired literate skills.

3.4 INFLUENCES ON READING DEVELOPMENT

The context in which students live and learn influences the way they develop reading skills. Students' reading attitudes are positively and/or negatively shaped by innate, family and school factors. These factors influence the way students perceive themselves as readers and the degree to which they are motivated to engage in reading. The contextual influences on reading are outlined in Figure 3.4.

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                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │  INFLUENCES ON READING    │
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            ┌───────────────┼───────────────────────┐
      ┌───────────┐   ┌───────────┐          ┌───────────┐
      │   Innate   │   │  Family   │          │  School   │
      │ Influences │   │ Influences│          │ Influences│
      └───────────┘   └───────────┘          └───────────┘
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 ┌──────────┐ ┌────────────┐       ┌───────────┐ ┌────────┐ ┌──────┐
 │Motivation│ │Self-efficacy│       │Recreational│ │Academic│ │ Text │
 └──────────┘ └────────────┘       └───────────┘ └────────┘ │Types │
        ┌──────────┐                                          └──────┘
        │ Curiosity │
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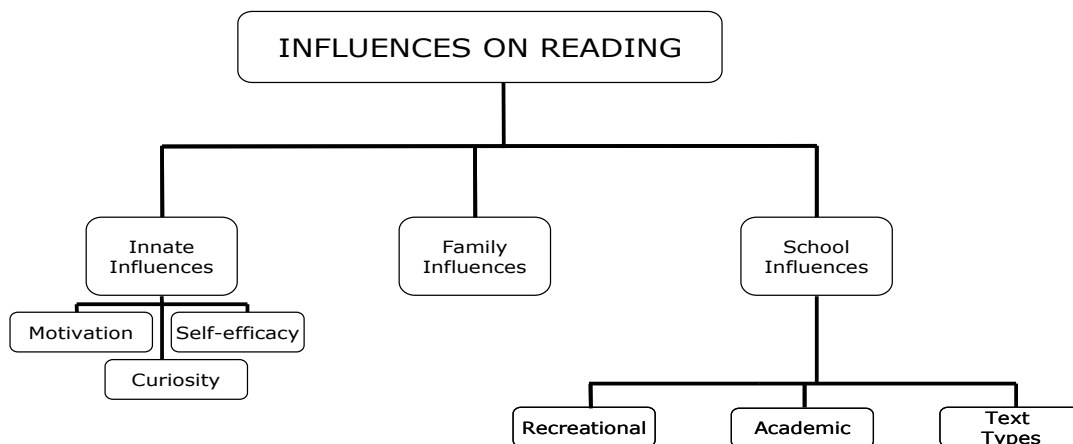
Figure 3.4 Contextual Influences on Reading

3.4.1 Innate Influences on Reading

Innate influences are crucial determinants of students' level of reading engagement and their type of attitudes. Students' motivation to read, individual self-efficacy, and curiosity can be internally and externally influenced.

3.4.1.1 Motivation

Motivation influences students' engagement in reading. It is multifaceted and is regarded as one's desire to actively participate in a task for a period of time in order to learn and grow (Cole, 2002; Schiefele, 1999; Young, Mathews, Kietzmann & Westerfield, 1997). Motivation is an internal influence "that activates, guides, and maintains or directs behaviour" and must be instigated and sustained over time (Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005, p. 438; Oakley, 2006). Students' motivation is influenced by their goals, values and beliefs about reading activities. Therefore, all

students must develop not only the skill, but also the emotional will (attitude and motivation) to engage in reading activities as students who are more motivated to read become better readers (Gambrell, 1996, 2004; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

Students' motivation to read is enhanced by being read to regularly and experiencing the pleasurable dimension of reading (Neuman, 2004a). Teachers cannot instill students' motivation, but rather only provide activities where students' desire to learn is enhanced (Young et al., 1997). Motivation gives behaviour its direction, it can be internal or external and it energises behaviour (Waugh, 2002; Westen, 1996; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005). Motivation is not a fixed characteristic. It is domain or subject specific where a student's motivation can be altered by the task, content, text or school/societal/cultural environmental factors (Guthrie et al., 1996; McInerney, Roche, McInerney & Marsh, 1997).

Meaningful learning requires students to be personally willing (motivated) to invest time, effort and cognitive attention to the activity (Worthy, Moorman & Turner, 1999). Students' motivation towards activities makes the difference between learning being superficial or internalized (Gambrell, 1996). Instrinsic motivational factors are more strongly aligned with reading activity engagement than extrinsic factors (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Raison, 2002; Waugh, 2002). Intrinsic motivation and mastery goals decline across the primary year levels, however extrinsic motivation and performance goals increase (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The most significant decreases in intrinsic motivation occur during the early to middle primary years, and again into the middle years of high school (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Intrinsic Motivation

Motivation is influenced by intrinsic personal factors and these include goals, beliefs and attitudes. Intrinsic motivation is the desire to engage in an activity for enjoyment or personal pleasure or to satisfy curiosity (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Oakley, 2006; Westen, 1996; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005). Intrinsically motivated students have a clear purpose, take responsibility for their learning and see themselves as a reader (Raison, 2002, p. 1). They engage in reading activities because the experience itself is rewarding and their concentration level is high (O'Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham & Motoike, 2001; Schiefele, 1999; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005). Rewards or punishments are not required to complete reading

tasks, and their learning is far superior to extrinsically motivated students (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is critical for long-term engagement in reading activities as students are more prepared to read widely and frequently (Sweet et al., 1998).

Mastery goals are set by intrinsically motivated students as the emphasis is on the learning process (Guthrie, 2001; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; McInerney, et al., 1997; Meece & Miller, 1999; Young et al., 1997). Goals are instigated and sustained by the reader (Oakley, 2006). Intrinsically motivated students have high perceptions of their abilities and embrace challenges as opportunities to develop new skills and to improve their competence level (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala & Cox, 1999; Raison, 2002; Schraw & Bruning, 1999). These students display persistence in reading activities when encountering difficulties and believe exerting effort promotes successful reading outcomes (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; McInerney et al., 1997). Students are task focused and show little interest in how their performance compares to others (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Miller & Meece, 1997). Intrinsically motivated students tend to have a high level of school reading achievement and by ten years of age they typically engage in independent recreational reading for more than thirty minutes per day (Aunola et al., 2002; Guthrie, 1999; Sweet et al., 1998).

Extrinsic motivation

Motivation also can be influenced by extrinsic factors. Extrinsically motivated students complete activities to earn grades or in return for rewards (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Schiefele, 1999; Westen, 1996; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005). Extrinsically motivated students complete activities to comply with social group pressures or to avoid punishment and do not complete reading tasks for personal enjoyment or pleasure (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; O'Cokley et al., 2001; Westen, 1996; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005). By providing extrinsic rewards and incentives for participation in reading activities students come to view reading as a chore not worth engaging in unless there is an offer of a significant reward (Brassell, 2003; Worthy, 2002).

Performance (ego) goals are set by extrinsically motivated students as they are ego-involved and are focused on self-performance in learning situations (Guthrie, 2001; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; McInerney et al., 1997). Goals are instigated and sustained by influential people, rather than the reader (Oakley, 2006). Gaining others'

approval, acquiring external rewards and good grades, and avoiding punishment are important for extrinsically motivated students (Guthrie et al., 1999; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Miller & Meece, 1997). The priority for performance-orientated students is to be superior and to outperform their peers in learning tasks and so they often complete reading activities that do not academically challenge and extend them in order to avoid the risk of publicly failing (Meece & Miller, 1999; McInerney et al., 1997; Schraw & Bruning, 1999; Westen, 1996; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005). Task avoidance strategies may be adopted by these students to mask their lack of reading competence or comprehension (Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005).

Performance-orientated students may exercise learned helplessness or self-handicapping strategies because they do not believe in their ability to control reading activities and come to expect failure (Aunola et al., 2002; Stahl, 2003; Young et al., 1997). These students believe achieving a good standard of reading is the result of innate talent rather than effort that has been exerted over time (Stahl, 2003). They become passive in reading activities and expend significant effort providing excuses for their behaviour (Aunola et al., 2002). Performance-orientated students, who present with task-avoidance learning strategies, do a minimal amount of school work and have lower levels of reading achievement than mastery-orientated students (Aunola et al., 2002; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Students who are extrinsically motivated typically engage in less than 10 minutes of recreational reading per day (Guthrie, 1999). Even as early as the second half of Year 1 students may have already developed the idea they cannot succeed at reading activities and begin to demonstrate learned helplessness or self-handicapping reading strategies (Stahl, 2003).

3.4.1.2 Curiosity

Curiosity influences students' motivation to read and is a complex trait that motivates them to seek and explore a wide variety of unique stimuli (Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005). Curiosity is an internal factor that guides students to want to know more about a given topic, to fulfill an innate desire to learn about and understand their world (Guthrie, 1999; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Being curious and wanting to investigate (read) something to gain personal understanding enhances task enjoyment and engagement and affects the attitude students have towards reading (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). A number of conditions required for curiosity to be channeled into intrinsic

reading motivation is presented by Glasser (1993). To achieve these conditions, teachers must create classrooms where:

1. there are positive genuine interpersonal connections made between teacher and student;
2. skills and knowledge are relevant to student life experiences and;
3. standards for achievement are explicit (Glasser, 1993, p. 67).

If students feel comfortable with their teacher and their classroom they more willingly engage in discussion and critically question things (Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005). Consequently, curiosity is fostered, students feel more positive about reading for meaning, and reading becomes a purposeful activity, rather than a boring repetitive one (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). By linking class activities explicitly with purposeful 'real world' activities, students' natural curiosity about their world can be expressed and they see learning as a relevant and necessary part of their lives. Classroom conditions influence students' internal curiosity and affect the extent to which they are motivated to read.

3.4.1.3 Self-efficacy

Being intrinsically motivated is necessary for students to be engaged readers. However it is not sufficient in itself as students must possess self-efficacy for reading (Oakley, 2006). Self-efficacy influences students' motivation to read and is the internal judgments and beliefs people have regarding their capabilities to perform actions required to achieve a confident and designated level of achievement (Bandura, 1986; Guthrie et al., 1999). Students' self-beliefs about reading can be affected by the environment in which they live and learn and both past and present experiences can have an effect (Cole, 2002).

Students' self-efficacy influences academic motivation (task choice, effort, persistence, achievement) and promotes or hinders reading engagement (Cole, 2002; Schunk, 2003). Efficacious students are hard-working persistent learners who employ metacognitive strategies to solve challenging reading situations (Cole, 2002; Guthrie, 2001; Schunk, 2003). As these students experience success with reading, they are motivated to engage in further reading activities (Walker, 2003). Positive self-efficacy relates to cognitive engagement and performance (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Less efficacious students often give up on challenging reading tasks as they believe success is not within their grasp (Cole, 2002; Walker, 2003). Self-efficacy does not have to be very high for students to achieve positive learning outcomes (Walker, 2003).

However it does need to be at a level that maintains sustained task engagement. Self-efficacy is positively enhanced by successful engagement in reading activities where students can develop competence, which in turn develops their confidence (Walker, 2003).

Self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by others. Self-efficacy can be influenced as students make social comparisons between their own reading performance and that of others in their learning environment (Pajares, 2003; Schunk, 2003). Over the years, students become more skilled in gauging how their own reading performance compares to others, and may realise they are more or less capable of reading than others (Guthrie, 2001). Students' perceived beliefs about their own reading competence are as significant an indicator of student reading attitude as measures of actual reading competence (Pajares, 2003).

Students' self-efficacy impacts upon engagement in reading activities. Students who believe they are competent readers participate more actively in class reading activities (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Those who struggle with reading generally read simpler and fewer texts per year, their miscues are corrected more often and they tend to have lower reading expectations from adults (Stahl, 2003). The gap in reading skill and expectations of high efficacious and low efficacious students progressively widens as students move throughout year levels. This highlights the Matthew effect proposed by Stanovich (1986). Positive verbal communication from teachers and parents/guardians enhances students' sense of self-efficacy and motivates students to engage in reading activities (Pajares, 2003; Walker, 2003).

Learning goal orientations of students influence self-efficacy. Students can be task or performance orientated to read. Highly efficacious students set themselves task goals as they are focused on learning (mastering) a desired concept or skill. Low efficacious students are concerned primarily with receiving sound grades and performing well in front of others (Walker, 2003). Teachers who encourage students to believe understanding content is the most significant goal for reading engagement, have students with more positive self-efficacy beliefs. Conversely teachers who emphasise that the goal of reading engagement is to outperform others and achieve good grades have students with lower self-efficacy beliefs (Guthrie, 2001). Learning goals students adopt influence their level of reading engagement and the beliefs they hold regarding themselves as readers.

3.4.2 Family Influences on Reading

Social class and family culture impact upon students' identity and in turn their attitude towards and engagement in reading activities (McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Roth, Speece, & Cooper, 2002). Literacy discourses, ways in which people know, do, believe, act and read are inherently linked to cultural and social models available to them (Collerson, 1995). Reading involves using a set of practices embedded in social relationships of a particular family and their community culture (Freebody, 2004; Love & Hamston, 2001; Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). As students develop their literate ability, they also develop their attitudes and identities as members of a cultural and social group (McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Roth et al., 2002). Identities are constructed from the range of experiences and relationships people have over their lifetime. Reading attitudes and identities change over time as they are defined by one's perceptions, in conjunction with those of a cultural and social group. Therefore, a student's identity as a reader is regarded as relational and hybrid (McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

Parent/guardian beliefs influence children's home experiences. Day to day family routines impact upon children's reading development, their attitudes and their motivation to engage in reading activities (Morrow & Young, 1997). Parents/guardians are powerful role models as their daily routines provide children with an understanding of what, how, when and why their family engages in certain reading practices (Arzubiaga, Rueda & Monzo, 2002; Millard, 1997). Parents/guardians often do not recognize their significant role in shaping their child's reading attitudes and engagement as they often believe reading and attitude development only occurs at school and not in the home (Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002).

Parents/guardians who have confidence in their child's academic ability include them more frequently and meaningfully in social literacy experiences and provide more positive feedback (Aunola et al., 2002; Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). Consequently, children see literacy activities as an integral part of daily life, access rich literacy experiences and succeed as good school readers (Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). Positive parent/guardian beliefs promote children's self perception of ability, expectations of success, intrinsic motivation and task-focused achievement strategies (Aunola et al., 2002). Conversely, parents/guardians who show limited confidence in their child's reading ability are more likely to see their child have low

self-efficacy beliefs, be extrinsically motivated and performance-orientated and adopt task-avoidance achievement strategies (Aunola et al., 2002). No notable distinction is evident between parent/guardian reading beliefs and expectations of male and female children (Aunola et al., 2002). Reading attitudes of children are influenced over time as they internalize their parents/guardians beliefs and expectations about engaging in reading.

3.4.3 School Influences on Reading

Both home and school equitably contribute to shaping students' reading attitudes (Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). Continuity and consistency between teachers and parents/guardians' approach to literacy empowers students as literacy learners (Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). Students see their home and school reading experiences are valued and supported by the significant adults in their life. They understand reading is valued, has a purpose and is relevant in today's society (Aunola et al., 2002).

In the prior-to-school period children become successful users of family and community literacies. Children bring their family and community cultural values, beliefs and literate behaviours with them as they begin formal schooling (Thomson, 2002). Students bring to learning activities a 'backpack' of accumulated life (social and cultural) experiences (Comber, 2004; Thomson, 2002). Certain social and cultural literacy practices are reinforced and validated, consciously and/or unconsciously, in mainstream Australian classrooms (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000). Schools reinforce a particular cultural capital - knowledge and competence that can be converted into status, power, wealth and mobility (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000). Particular students are empowered or disempowered because schools provide unequal access to literacy and reinforce the cultural capital of certain social and cultural groups. The capital some students gather into their 'backpack' and bring to school is more valid in certain contexts than others.

Some students experience reading difficulties in school because their 'backpack' of literate abilities is incongruent with that of the classroom. Students whose social and cultural literate practices are not promoted and valued in schools are significantly disadvantaged because they are unable to fully engage in the activities and typically present as struggling readers (Barrett-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Crawford, 1995; Thomson, 2002). Teachers must reflect critically on how class reading practices position

students as either achievers or those who will fail. A curriculum needs to be planned and implemented that addresses social, cultural and learning needs of all students.

School-based recreational and academic reading activities promote and challenge students' identity as a reader and their attitude towards reading (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). Activities students engage in influence what they regard as reading, the importance of reading, and the impact of reading in their life (Turner & Paris, 1995). Students often reject class texts because they are unable to relate to the content that reflects certain cultural and economic experiences that may not be familiar to them (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). Class texts should reflect the hybridity of students and promote connections for those from different backgrounds and life experiences. Adjusting reading activities so they relate to students' home and cultural experiences, promotes a more positive attitude towards and sustained engagement with reading (Baker, 2003). Teachers must be aware of how activities convey to students what it means to be a literate person in a particular social and cultural environment. Recreational, academic and text type preferences of students are influenced by classroom reading practices. These practices are outlined in Figure 3.5.
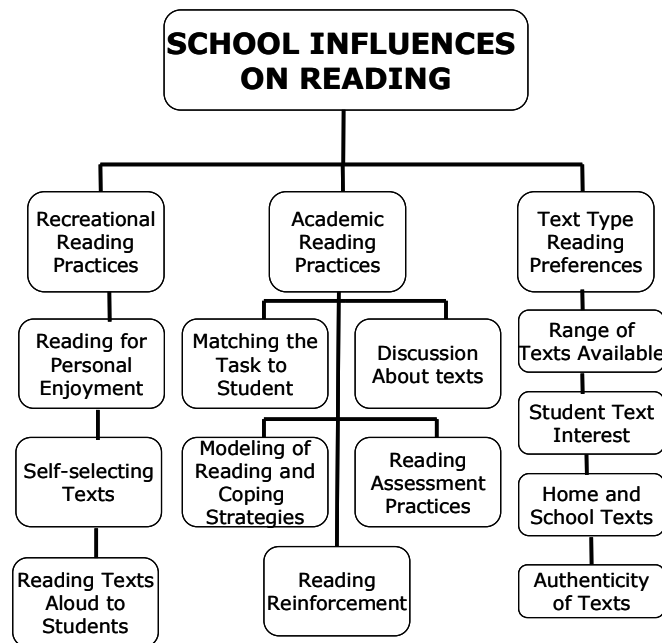
Figure 3.5 School influences on reading

3.4.3.1 Influence of recreational classroom reading practices

Classroom practices influence students' recreational reading attitudes and activity engagement. Self-selecting recreational texts has a positive impact on students' reading skills and attitudes and so there should be a range of texts available, in class, for students to read. By recreationally reading aloud to students, teachers highlight that reading is an enjoyable and valid activity that is part of adult daily life.

Reading for personal enjoyment

Allowing students time to read recreationally shapes positive attitudes and increases student self-efficacy. A strong relationship exists between the amount of time students are given to read for enjoyment and their level of reading competence (Gambrell, 2004; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999; Worthy, 2002). Regular recreational reading is important as the more students read, the more proficient they become in reading skills such as fluency, comprehension and vocabulary development (Neuman, 2004b; Worthy, 2002; Yopp & Yopp, 2003). Furthermore, engaging in recreational reading enables students to extend their imagination, creative and critical thinking skills, and empathy (Gambrell, 2004).

A vibrant classroom library is critical as it provides students with an array of easily accessible books for recreational reading (Dreher, 2003). Classroom libraries are more prevalent in lower year level classrooms than in middle and upper year level classrooms (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez & Teale, 1993). Classrooms where texts are available for students to recreationally read tend to have predominantly stories (Dreher, 2003). In order to motivate all students to recreationally read, classroom libraries need to have various text types covering a diverse range of topics.

Self-selecting texts

Self-selecting texts enhances students' recreational reading motivation and attitudes as they are able to choose their own texts to match personal reading tastes and interest topics (Worthy, 2002). Reading is meaningful when texts are self-selected and serve "personal goals, enabling young readers to expand their knowledge and experience according to their own tastes" (Guthrie, 1999, p. 156). Having a classroom library (with a range of text types, topics and ability levels) available for students to self-select texts from helps students define themselves as literate individuals (Gambrell, 1996; Walker, 2003). By making independent reading choices students develop responsibility, reading skills and increase their motivation to learn (Gambrell, Codling, Palmer & Mazzoni, 1996; Guthrie, 2001; Turner & Paris, 1995; Young et

al., 1997). Self-selecting texts gives students a sense of control over and power in their environment and leads to a higher degree of sustained reading engagement (Guthrie, 2001). Students must learn how to make reading text choices, and then exercise these choices in order for them to feel confident as readers and to be intrinsically motivated to read (Dreher, 2003; Guthrie & Alao, 1997; Turner & Paris, 1995). Texts students enjoy most are those they have self-selected and with these they were more likely to expend a higher degree of effort to understand or grasp textual or concept material (Turner & Paris, 1995). Students who read texts of personal interest read more words and read for longer than those who are not interested in the text or topic (Guthrie & Alao, 1997).

Reading texts aloud to students

Reading aloud to students and discussing key ideas contained in the text, may promote positive reading attitudes and enhances motivation (Dreher, 2003). Sharing texts aloud with students enables teachers to explicitly model their value for reading (Gambrell, 1996; Worthy, 2002). Students who are read to often value books as a source of enjoyment, have an extensive vocabulary base and are learning effective reading strategies (Brassell, 2003; Myoungsoon & Heekyoung, 2002). Struggling readers can enjoy books (that they would not be able to read independently) during read aloud experiences (Dreher, 2003). These experiences tend to be more common in the early years of school than in the middle and upper year levels (Hoffman, Rosser & Battle, 1993). Reading aloud to students is not only powerful with lower year levels, but also with students in higher year levels (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Students are more likely to independently self-select books to read if someone has told them about the characters, plot etc (Dreher, 2003; Gambrell, 1996). This highlights the importance of teachers regularly reading texts aloud to students throughout all primary year levels.

3.4.3.2 Influence of academic classroom reading practices

Reading attitudes and task engagement are shaped not only by recreational reading, but also by academic reading. Classroom practices influence students' academic reading attitudes and the extent to which they engage in reading activities. Motivation to read is enhanced by students experiencing individually challenging reading activities. Students need explicit modeling of strategic tools they can employ in various academic reading situations. Academic reading assessment practices promote in students either a mastery or a grade performance learning orientation. How teachers engage students in reading activities impacts on whether they are motivated to read

academically on a short or long term basis. Through discussions about texts students come to understand other students may have interpretations similar to or different from themselves.

Matching the task to the student

Reading activities can positively or negatively influence students' reading motivation (Kush & Watkins, 1996; Miller & Meece, 1997; Turner & Paris, 1995). Texts must be carefully matched to cognitive ability levels of all students as there will be students for whom reading year level texts is not academically appropriate (Csikszenmihalyi, 1990; Hornsby, 2000; Stahl, 2003). Students must be given texts they can read so they can effectively participate in academic activities and perceive themselves as readers. Those who struggle with reading experience lower intrinsic motivation than competent readers so, by providing texts that match students reading levels teachers can promote students' positive academic reading attitudes and enhance their motivation to read (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Lau & Chan, 2003).

When there is a large gap between students' skill ability and the degree of challenge texts pose students' attitude towards reading becomes increasingly negative (Guthrie & Alao, 1997). Students who find reading tasks too difficult experience heightened levels of anxiety, and those who find reading tasks unchallenging experience disinterest in reading (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Miller & Meece, 1997). High-challenge academic reading tasks motivate students to engage more with reading than repetitive, routine tasks (Miller, 2003). Reading activities closely matched to students' reading ability, enhance their attitude, motivation and degree of cognitive application (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Miller & Meece, 1999).

Discussion about texts

Collaborative discussion about texts, with teachers and peers, enables students to articulate their cognitive textual understandings, promotes a positive sense of self as a reader, and increases their reading attitudes (Gambrell, 1996; Sweet et al., 1998; Guthrie, 2001; Neuman, 2004b). Classroom reading activities that allow for teacher and peer reading support promote intrinsic motivation more than those promoting individual non-communicative means (Sweet et al., 1998). Furthermore, discussing ideas presented in the text enables students to operate at a higher level of cognition as they can share their own ideas, perceptions and feelings and hear those of others (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie & Alao, 1997). Students with a high level of reading

motivation indicate they often talk with someone about books they have read (Guthrie & Alao, 1997).

Modeling of strategic reading and coping strategies
Students need to be explicitly taught strategic tools - reading and coping strategies. Students must learn effective ways to read texts in order to increase their intrinsic motivation (Guthrie et al., 1996; Walker, 2003). Students, especially low efficacious ones, need teachers to model various effective reading and coping strategies that can be employed when reading mistakes are made (Walker, 2003). Students also need to know when/where they can successfully use reading and coping strategies (Guthrie & Alao, 1997). Through explicit modeling of strategies, students learn that successful academic reading is not an innate uncontrollable ability, but is based on the successful execution of various reading strategies in a range of reading contexts (Stahl, 2003). By providing this level of support students' attitudes, self-efficacy and positive engagement with text is enhanced (Guthrie, 2001).

Reading assessment practices
Academic reading assessment practices used in many Australian primary schools can influence students' motivation to read in a positive or negative way. Teachers can adopt a recitation format (lecture, read, test, grade) for classroom assessment that is centred on a performance orientation and is not highly conducive to increased reading motivation. This orientation highlights that if students do not perform well on reading assessments they are not good readers (Walker, 2003). Teachers should use a learning (mastery) orientation assessment format that is more student-centred. This format enables students to focus positively on learning tasks, using knowledge they have, and consequently feel more comfortable taking risks to learn information needed to successfully complete activities (Walker, 2003). Motivation, self-efficacy and positive attitudes of students are enhanced by a learning-centred orientation format. Students see they are capable of completing activities using their ability to recall and acquire relevant knowledge (Guthrie, 2001). Learning-centred assessment activities are more time consuming in nature than recitation tasks as students are given time to "think, plan, write, and revise" (Guthrie, 2001, p. 7). However, they are more likely to enhance students' self-beliefs and positive academic reading attitudes.

Reading reinforcement
Intrinsic or extrinsic reinforcement can influence students' attitude towards reading academically. Extrinsic reinforcement is used by teachers to praise students' effort

and attention as they believe it positively motivates students to read (Guthrie, 1999). A range of incentives, including points, grades or favours can be used to encourage students to read (Wigfield, 2000). Consequently, students may choose easy tasks to obtain rewards rather than choosing challenging tasks that would academically extend them (Guthrie, 1999). A competitive reading environment, that promotes extrinsic incentives and rewards, stifles struggling readers' enthusiasm and participation as they are often competing against more competent readers, and consequently lose often (Stahl, 2003). Extrinsic reinforcement highlights to students the act of reading is a chore with limited worth, unless it is rewarded (Worthy, 2002). This way of thinking does not enhance positive long-term academic learning attitudes (Sweet et al., 1998).

Incentives provided must relate to individual reading performance and behaviours if they are to be effective. Rewarding reading behaviour using books, bookmarks, reading related praise and other text incentives increases intrinsic motivation more than using lolly or sticker rewards (Gambrell, 1996). Teachers' genuine praise and compliments about students' reading helps them to feel proud of their individual learning performance and this praise should be "sincere, specific, sufficient, and properly given for praiseworthy success in the manner preferred by the learner (Guthrie, 2001, p. 7). Providing extrinsic "reward" reinforcement undermines the intrinsic motivational development of students as they see that the power in the classroom lies with the teacher who controls and manipulates them in reading activities (Guthrie & Alao, 1997; Worthy, 2002). Conversely, students who are intrinsically rewarded for reading see themselves as having power and control over academic reading activities. Students need to become intrinsically motivated to read if their attitude towards reading is to remain positive throughout the years. Students need to engage in academic reading tasks "for kicks – not kickbacks" (Brassell, 2003, p. 146).

3.4.3.3 Influence of reading text type preferences

Texts available in classrooms influence students' recreational and academic reading attitudes and motivation. Certain types of texts are more popular with students and there is often a disparity between the text types available for students to read at home and at school. Incongruency between students' preferred and available text types affects students' attitudes towards reading.

Range of texts available

Availability and range of classroom reading texts influences students reading attitudes and task motivation. The top three choices for student reading material are magazines, adventure books and mysteries (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Martino, 2001). Information books and series books are also popular as well as scary stories, cartoon and comics (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Martino, 2001). Moreover, sports and drawing books ranked highly along with joke books and books with humorous stories (Worthy, 2002; Worthy et al., 1999). Types of texts students prefer to read are influenced by their gender and age. Younger students like to read picture books that have a level of text they are capable of reading (Worthy, 2002). Reluctant male readers like to read the internet and magazines (Hamston, 2002).

Students have a marked preference for non-fictional types of texts because they are not as distinctly "graded" as fictional texts and they relate more closely to topics of personal interest (Barrs, 2001). These types of texts allow students to self-direct and self-pace their reading, therefore enabling them to exercise power over their reading (Hamston, 2002). Non-fictional text types are identified for inclusion in the English curriculum. However fictional texts are far more prominent in classroom teaching programs (Department of Education, 1994; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a). Thus, there appears to be a mismatch between students' preferred reading text types and those available in many primary classrooms. To encourage students to engage in reading, teachers must gather their reading text preferences and provide an array of texts to reflect this (Guthrie, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999; Worthy, 2002). Having a large range of interesting texts available for reading enhances students' motivation to read at school (Perry, Nordby & VandeKamp, 2003).

Students' text interest

Having a personal interest in texts enhances students' attitude to reading and activity engagement. Often teachers believe they must exercise control over texts their students read to ensure material is relevant, of high quality and conceptually appropriate (Worthy, 2002). Texts should not be primarily chosen because they highlight abstract principles but because they are of personal interest to students. Students will not be motivated to willingly engage in library and class recreational and academic reading activities if text types available do not match their interests (Hamston, 2002; Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005; Worthy, 2002). When texts match

students' interests they see more meaning in reading and their level of motivation is enhanced (DeMoulin, 2003). Interest in texts increases students' desire to read for a longer period of time, even if the text level is difficult (Turner & Paris, 1995). Teachers must make a shift away from a 'one size fits all' classroom reading program by ascertaining students' interests and selecting texts that align with these for reading activities (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Power, 2001). Reading attitudes improve when academic textual content is personally relevant to students and when there is recreational access to an interesting range of texts (Turner & Paris, 1995; Worthy et al., 1999).

Home and school texts

Students' motivation to read particular types of texts at home can differ from those at school. Reading in primary school is predominantly a fiction-based act and for those students who do not enjoy reading fiction texts independently they may not develop a positive attitude towards reading or demonstrate a high level of reading motivation in school (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999). Students may however willingly read various texts at home as there are different purposes for reading inside and outside school (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999). Resistant school readers often can and do read certain text types purposefully at home for pleasure (Perry et al., 2003). Connecting classroom reading with real-life and life-like activities and areas of personal interest promotes positive reading attitudes in students and may encourage them to engage purposefully in school reading activities (Guthrie & Davies, 2003; Kush & Watkins, 1996). This reiterates "productive research may highlight at-risk situational contexts rather than at-risk students" (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 26).

Authenticity of texts

Classrooms should be print rich and provide opportunities for students to interact purposefully with texts. A heightened sense of reading motivation and engagement can be achieved by providing students with authentic text types because these have use and meaning in real-life contexts (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie & Alao, 1997; Neuman, 2004b). They are "ordinary practices of culture pursued in actual, rather than simulated situations" (Turner & Paris, 1995, p. 416). Authentic texts provide situational interest because they are immediately exciting and relevant (Guthrie & Alao, 1997). Encouraging students to regularly read authentic texts helps increase their level of reading engagement.

Summary of school influences

Primary aged students constantly engage in a wide range of activities requiring the effective execution of reading skills. Teachers' perception of students influences the choices they make about daily lesson content, learning strategies and management techniques.

Students who regularly read for enjoyment, and not just to comply with activities provided for school assignments/exercises, develop a positive view of readings' purpose in today's society. When recreationally reading students are positioned as subjects in the learning process as they have the power to choose, manipulate and interact with texts. In some academic skill-based reading situations students can be positioned as objects as the teacher decides when reading will occur, how it begins, what it's about and when it ends (Turner & Paris, 1995). These students have limited power in their learning environment and do not see reading as meaningful or authentic. For students to develop reading skills and interest, teachers need to know how school-based influences affect students' reading attitudes and engagement with various types of texts.

Teachers must consciously attract students to read because when they lack reading skills and/or motivation they exclude themselves from learning about their world, themselves and others (Gambrell, 2004; Worthy, 2002). Frequently engaging in reading is the strongest predictor students will become competent readers (Guthrie, 1999). By focusing on intrinsic rewards and also the enjoyment, entertainment, and social aspects of reading students' motivation can be enhanced (Perry et al., 2003). Being mindful of reading assessment practices, student ability, and the relevance of texts provided helps promote a learning environment that enhances students' reading attitudes.

Teachers must make every effort to positively and enthusiastically draw students into reading engagement (Guthrie, 2001; Worthy, 2002). Reading is more than simply a part of the curriculum to be taught or passively modeled (e.g. in silent reading), it is something that needs to be enthusiastically and explicitly modeled as part of daily life (Gambrell, 1996; Worthy, 2002). Presenting reading in a positive and enthusiastic manner promotes increased student effort, prolonged cognitive engagement, positive attitudes and increased self-efficacy.

3.5 KEY INSTRUMENTS AND FINDINGS

Students' attitudes towards recreational and academic reading are influenced by a number of factors. A number of instruments have been created over the last two decades that identify students' affective aspects about reading. Key motivation and attitude instruments will be presented along with their findings on reading.

3.5.1 Motivation Instruments

Two key motivation instruments and one attitudinal instrument have been used often with various groups of primary aged students. The Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell et al., 1996), Motivation to Read Questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) instruments will be detailed.

3.5.1.1 Motivation to Read Profile (MRP)

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP), developed by Gambrell et al. (1996), is one instrument that assesses the different areas of reading motivation. Reading motivation instruments were reviewed and it was identified that none of these instruments contained both qualitative and quantitative components for assessing reading motivation. Gambrell et al.'s (1996) aim "was to develop a public domain instrument that would provide teachers with an efficient and reliable way to quantitatively and qualitatively assess reading motivation by evaluating students' self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading" (p. 519).

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) instrument contains two components – a reading survey and a conversational interview (Gambrell et al., 1996). The reading survey is administered with a group of participants whereas the interview is conducted with individual participants. The survey has 20 items and explores students' self-concept as a reader and the value they place on reading. The conversational interview has 14 questions that gather information relating to narrative and informational texts, student preferred reading texts and authors, and more general questions relating to reading motivation. Quantitative survey responses are scored on a four point Likert scale.

The Motivation to Read Profile instrument was field tested to enhance its validity and reliability (Gambrell et al., 1996). More than 100 test items were critiqued for their construct validity relating to self-concept or reading value and one hundred percent agreement was reached. Items were then sorted into categories measuring self-concept

and value of reading and only those items that received one hundred percent teacher agreement were included in the instrument. Two administrations of this version of the instrument (reading survey component) occurred during a school year with 330 third and fifth year students in 27 classrooms from four schools. Analyses of the reading survey data were conducted and only items showing clean loading on the two reading survey traits were included in the final version of the instrument. The instrument had a moderately high reliability for both the reading survey subscales.

The conversational interview component of the Motivation to Read Profile instrument also was developed and field tested (Gambrell et al., 1996). There were 60 open-ended questions initially covering the topics narrative/informational reading, reading experiences and home/school reading practices and these were used with a stratified random sample of 48 students (from third and fifth year levels). Analyses identified 14 of the most informative questions and these were selected for the final question list of the Motivation to Read Profile conversational interview (Gambrell et al., 1996).

3.5.1.2 Motivation to Read Questionnaire (MRQ)

The Motivation to Read Questionnaire (MRQ), constructed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), assesses constructs related to students' motivation to read. Eleven dimensions of reading motivation were identified and grouped into three categories – individuals' beliefs about achievement efficacy, purposes for engaging in tasks, and social motivation aspects (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). A previous study by Guthrie et al. (1996) and a review of motivational theory helped formulate these dimensions. Fifty-four quantitative questions were used in a pilot study with ten fourth year students, and as a result of this some questions were revised (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

Two administrations of the revised MRQ instrument occurred throughout the school year with small groups of students (10 to 15) and one hundred fourth and fifth year students were involved. The instrument was scored on a four point Likert scale ranging from *very different to me* to *a lot like me* (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Internal consistency reliabilities of dimensions were presented and it was found that the self-efficacy, challenge, curiosity, involvement, social, competition, work avoidance, and recognition dimensions had stronger internal consistency reliability scores than the other dimensions (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Twenty-seven items were deleted from the instrument and analyses on the modified instrument indicated more reliable theoretical scales (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

Guthrie et al. (1999) studied the motivational and cognitive predictors of text comprehension and reading amount with 271 students in third and fourth year levels using the Motivation to Read Questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). For this study, 31 of the 54 items in the Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) instrument were used covering the reading motivation dimensions – challenge, curiosity, involvement, recognition, competition, and reading efficacy and these motivation aspects showed a moderate correlation. Guthrie et al. (1999) combined dimensions challenge, curiosity and involvement to develop an intrinsic motivation-mastery goal category and recognition and competition were combined to develop an extrinsic motivation-performance goal category. Correlations and factor analyses were conducted on the constructs and these indicated their reliability and strength.

Baker and Wigfield (1999) studied the dimensions of students' motivation for reading, using the Motivation to Read Questionnaire, with 371 students in fifth and sixth year levels. These students were older than those in the Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) and Guthrie et al. (1999) studies. Baker and Wigfield (1999) investigated student motivation over a three-year period, unlike the Guthrie et al. (1999) and Baker and Wigfield (1997) studies. Descriptive analyses on the Motivation to Read Questionnaire indicated the univariate distributions were satisfactory and item-total correlations for all scales (bar compliance) yielded moderate and highly positive correlations.

Lau and Chan (2003) examined Chinese students' reading motivation with 83 good readers and 76 poor readers. The Chinese Reading Motivation Questionnaire's scales were taken from the MRQ instrument constructed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997). Internal consistency reliabilities presented with satisfactory scores and descriptive analyses and multiple analyses of variance were conducted.

3.5.2 Attitude Instrument

3.5.2.1 Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS)

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, by McKenna and Kear (1990), was constructed before the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell et al., 1996) and the Motivation to Read Questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey is a 20-item scale instrument that focuses on both recreational and academic reading attitudes of primary aged students (McKenna & Kear, 1990). A four point Likert pictorial rating scale is used (showing the Garfield character with four different facial expressions). The value of reading component in

the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell et al., 1996) and the curiosity and involvement dimensions of the Motivation to Read Questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) are conceptually evident in McKenna and Kear's (1990) Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

McKenna and Kear's (1990) Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered to 18,138 students across the primary year levels (1 to 6) and this sample was stratified so that it was valid and representative of the larger American student population. Students were drawn from 95 school districts across 38 United States areas, the number of female students compared to male students participating in the study differed by only five, and ethnicity reflected the American population (McKenna & Kear, 1990).

The validity and reliability of the Elementary Reading Attitude instrument was established using statistical analyses. To examine whether the instrument measured the two traits (recreational and academic reading), factor analyses were conducted. The unweighted least squares method of extraction followed by a varimax rotation was conducted (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Analyses established the instruments' construct validity as two discrete subscales of reading attitude were highlighted. Cronbach's alpha was used for each year level for recreational and academic reading to establish the internal consistency of the scales. Recreational subscale alpha coefficients of McKenna and Kear's (1990) instrument ranged from .74 to .87, and academic subscale alpha coefficients ranged from .81 to .83. These coefficients indicate acceptable levels of internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) has been used in various attitude studies. Kush and Watkins (1996) examined the stability of reading attitudes over time by administering the instrument twice with 189 Year 1 to 4 students with a three-year interval separating administrations. Intersubscale correlations for the test and retest administrations were reported as .62 which aligned with the normative samples' intersubscale correlations of .64 (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna et al., 1995). The 426 students in Worthy et al.'s (1999) study were older than Kush and Watkin's (1996) sample as they were in Year 6. Reliability data for Worthy et al.'s (1999) study were not presented.

Lazarus and Callahan (2000) explored the reading attitudes of 522 learning disabled students, in Year 1 to Year 5. Cronbach alpha coefficients calculated for Lazarus and

Callahan's (2000) data align with McKenna et al.'s (1995) reliability coefficients. Kazelskis, Thames and Reeves (2004) examined factor invariance across gender and race with students in Years 4 to 6 using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Kazelskis et al.'s (2004) confirmatory factor analyses supported a two factor solution. Findings from the abovementioned studies reinforced the validity of McKenna and Kear's (1990) instrument that gathered data on student recreational and academic reading attitudes.

3.5.3 Findings from Existing Motivation and Attitude Studies

Existing studies have highlighted primary students' level of motivation to engage in reading and their attitude towards reading recreationally and academically. The McKenna Model suggests that reading attitudes begin to decline from the onset of instruction (McKenna et al., 1995). This model indicates students' reading attitudes are linked closely to their beliefs about reading outcomes. Students who experience difficulty with reading would therefore be expected to have more negative reading attitudes than students for whom reading comes easily (McKenna et al., 1995). Lazarus and Callahan (2000) found learning disabled students showed reading attitudes equal to or in excess of non-disabled students. Furthermore, the reading attitudes of these disabled students were found to remain more stable across the primary school years compared to non-disabled students. Reading attitudes can change in a short period depending on students' actual or perceived success or failure in reading related activities (Kazelskis et al., 2005).

3.5.3.1 Effects of year level

Attitudes can vary throughout the primary school years. Sainsbury and Schagen (2004) gathered recreational reading attitudes of Year 4 and Year 6 students, and then again five years later. Declines in reading attitudes were noted as students moved up the year levels and this aligns with McKenna et al.'s (1995) findings. Attitudes towards recreational and academic reading were found to be more negative when comparing data of students in lower to higher year levels (McKenna et al., 1995). The reading attitudes from Kush and Watkins' (1996) sample were comparable to the McKenna et al. (1995) sample. Following a second administration of the instrument three years later a decline in both recreational and academic reading attitudes were observed (Kush & Watkins, 1996).

Nonsignificant year level attitudinal differences were found in students from Years 1 to 4 (Kush & Watkins, 1996). Parker and Paradis (1986) also identified no significant

attitudinal differences amongst Year 1 to Year 3 students and no changes between fifth and sixth year level students' attitudes. This later finding reflected Wallbrown, Levine and Engin's (1981) findings. However it contrasted those from Neale and Proshek (1967). Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) indicated students in fourth and fifth year levels showed significant differences in their reading motivation across time, as students in Year 4 scored higher on self-efficacy, recognition, and social scales than Year 5 students. Parker and Paradis (1986) identified Year 5 students as having more positive recreational reading attitudes than Year 4 students (Parker & Paradis, 1986). The reading attitude and level of engagement of male and female students in Years 6 and 7 significantly declines (Worthy et al., 1999). Students in the middle and upper primary year levels (Years 4 to 7) are exploring their interests and are forming their identity as a person and a learner (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). This developing sense of identity influences students' attitude towards and engagement in reading in both home and school contexts.

3.5.3.2 Effects of gender

Reading attitudes of males and females vary throughout the primary school year levels. A gendered attitudinal decline exists in students' recreational and academic reading (Davies & Brember, 1993; Kush & Watkins, 1996). From the first year level of school female students express more positive recreational reading attitudes than male students in both home and school settings (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Brozo & Schmelzer, 1997; Fielding, 1998; Kush & Watkins, 1996; Parker & Paradis, 1986). Female students have stronger beliefs that they can be competent readers. They tend to demonstrate higher levels on the self-efficacy and importance motivation dimensions, and they have a clear understanding of the social reasons for reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

Reading attitudes of male students appear to decline as they progress through primary school (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna et al., 1995; Power, 2001). In Years 1 to 3 male students often begin to abandon academic reading as it conflicts with their developing stereotype of what masculinity means in their cultural and social world (Brozo & Schmelzer, 1997; Fielding, 1998; McCarthy & Moje, 2002). A slight brief increase in male students' reading attitude was noted in Years 4 and 5 (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Male students may still tend to engage in recreational reading throughout the years to gather personally relevant information,

and they score high on competitive sections of reading assessments (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Power, 2001).

3.5.3.3 Text type preferences

Variations in text type preferences exist across year levels and gender. When a comparative study was made between first year and sixth year literacy tasks, it was found that most texts used were narrative (Hiebert & Fisher, 1990). Reading instruction in schools has been almost exclusively a narrative/fiction-based activity, with up to 90% of class instruction centred on narrative texts, and this practice leads students to believe reading is only a fiction-based act (Trabasso, 1994; Venezky, 2000). By the time students reach Year 6 over 75% of text incidentally encountered in daily school life is not fiction-based, but instead non-narrative and non-fictional texts and this should be supported in classroom literacy activities (Venezky, 2000).

Davies and Brember (1993) indicate 94% of students rated fiction as their preferred recreational reading material. Non-literary texts are seldom selected for class reading activities (Duke, 2000; Hoffman et al., 1993; Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996). An over reliance on narrative texts, especially in the early years, can be a "barrier to full access to literacy" (Pappas, 1991, p. 461). Of the texts typically read aloud to primary students (by teachers), only 14% are an informational text type (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Teachers, especially those in the early years, steer away from informational texts as it is commonly believed that narratives are easier for young students (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Pappas (1991) argued young students are equitably capable of understanding information text, however if they are constantly denied the opportunity to engage with these text types their ability to interact with them will not develop effectively. Students' preference for reading informational reference texts declines as students get older and move through the year levels (Davies & Brember, 1993). Ensuring students have significant exposure to and experience with not just fiction, but also non-fiction texts throughout the primary years is essential for effective participation in an increasingly technological non-narrative textual society (Yopp & Yopp, 2000).

Students' text type reading preferences vary. Comics (and cartoons) increased in preference for students as they moved from Year 4 through to Year 6 (Parker and Paradis, 1986; Worthy et al., 1999). Davies and Brember (1993) indicated that Year 6 students in their study preferred magazines more than comics, and also stories were found to be the more preferred text type for all year levels/age groups. Campbell, Kampinus and Beatty (1995) interviewed fourth year level students about their

reading text type preferences and found they preferred stories more than information books and magazines. This finding was replicated in Worthy et al.'s (1999) study. Students' preference for reading certain texts is very context specific.

Incorporating a range of text types into classroom reading activities enhances students' motivation as content can align with their interests. Various types of texts increase students' knowledge seeking skills and therefore promote their curiosity to learn. Curiosity is a powerful motivator for reading engagement as interest promotes cognitive effort (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). The more interested male and female students are about reading the more likely they are to positively engage in reading across the primary year levels.

3.6 CHAPTER REVIEW

The history of reading theories was presented and influential theorists stated. Motivation, curiosity and self-efficacy were discussed and these innate influences were shown to impact on students' attitude towards reading and their level of reading engagement. Social and cultural practices of the family and school also were shown to influence students' recreational and academic reading attitudes and engagement. Instruments from previous motivation and attitudinal research are regarded as reliable and valid and these instruments, along with key findings, were presented to frame this study in a research context.

This study measures recreational and academic reading attitudes of primary students, and the types of texts they prefer to read and variances for year level, age and gender will be detailed. Perceptions teachers have of their students' behaviour in class and their attitudes to read will be presented. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of and achievement in reading will be correlated. Four research questions guide this study. These are:

1. How do students' attitudes to reading develop in primary school?
2. How do students' preferences for reading different text types develop in primary school?
3. What perceptions do teachers have of their students' classroom behaviour and attitudes to reading?
4. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading for enjoyment and their overall achievement in reading?

This study is significant as it enables teachers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes to reading and the type of texts they prefer to read. This study extends upon previous studies as it gathers teachers' perceptions of their students' attitudes to reading and general classroom behaviour and also documents teachers' perceptions of the relationship between students' level of recreational and academic reading. Teachers can use this knowledge to realize how their perceptions influence what reading activities they plan and the type of pedagogical approaches chosen for reading activities. When teachers' perceptions align closely with students' measured attitudes, reading activities are motivating and relevant for students' and their level of reading engagement is sustained.

Promoting students' level of reading engagement is important as it is linked closely to reading achievement (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). National reports indicate the significance of improving Australian students' level of achievement (Davies, 2005; Department of Education Science & Training, 2005c). Students "ability to read, write, speak, listen and think in English" can stand as an obstacle as they grow to become contributing educational and societal members (DeMoulin et al., 1999, p. 40). Economic stability and growth in this millennium relies on citizens possessing a high standard of literacy skills and abilities (Odgers, 2006).

In Chapter 3 literature relating to this study has been reviewed. Information in this chapter contributes one part to the overall understanding of reading, and this is shown in Figure 3.6. The next chapter will detail the design of the research.
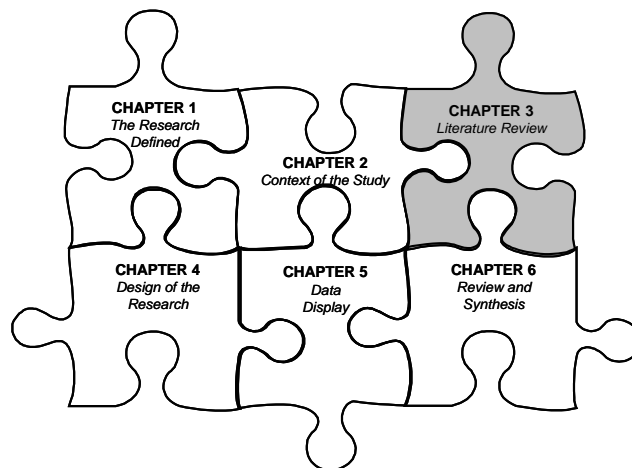
Figure 3.6 Thesis overview

CHAPTER 4

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter details methodological considerations and justifies this study's design. A quantitative paradigm and objective epistemology guide the study as the three instruments administered gather numerical data on external behaviour for statistical analyses. A positivistic framework underpins the study as reading engagement is an area of human behaviour that can be studied. A cross-section of students, teachers and parents/guardians from one Catholic primary school participated in the study and data on attitudes to reading, text type preference and teacher perceptions were gathered at one point in time. A survey data collection technique was chosen so the researcher can be positioned objectively while providing a snapshot in time about students' attitudes to reading. Quantitative data on reading were gathered using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Parent/guardian Demographic Survey (Young, 2003) and Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003). Analyzing survey data and then presenting it in graphic and tabular form highlights patterns and regularities of the social world. Research limitations and ethical considerations are explained as they influence the conduct of educational research. An overview of Chapter 4 is presented in Figure 4.1.
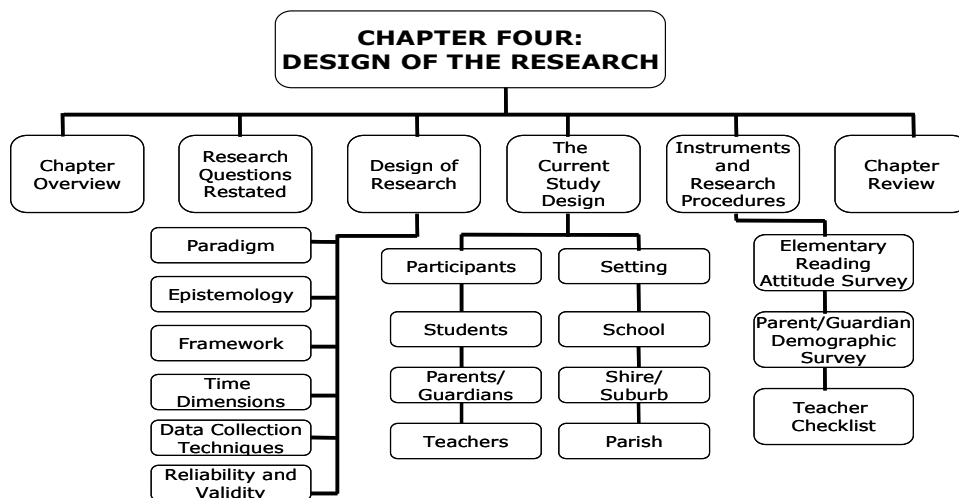
Figure 4.1 Overview of Chapter 4

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESTATED

Research questions may be interpretive, descriptive or explanatory in nature (Sumner & Tribe, 2004). This study of primary students' recreational and academic attitudes to reading, their preferred reading texts, and teacher perceptions of students' attitudes to reading is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do students' attitudes to reading develop in primary school?
2. How do students' preferences for reading different text types develop in primary school?
3. What perceptions do teachers have of their students' classroom behaviour and attitudes to reading?
4. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading for enjoyment and their overall achievement in reading?

4.3 DESIGN OF RESEARCH

Research questions provide a framework for the study and the research design provides a means by which the research questions can be addressed. In designing this study, the paradigm, epistemology, framework, time dimension, data collection techniques and instrumentation must be carefully selected. The research design is outlined in Figure 4.2.
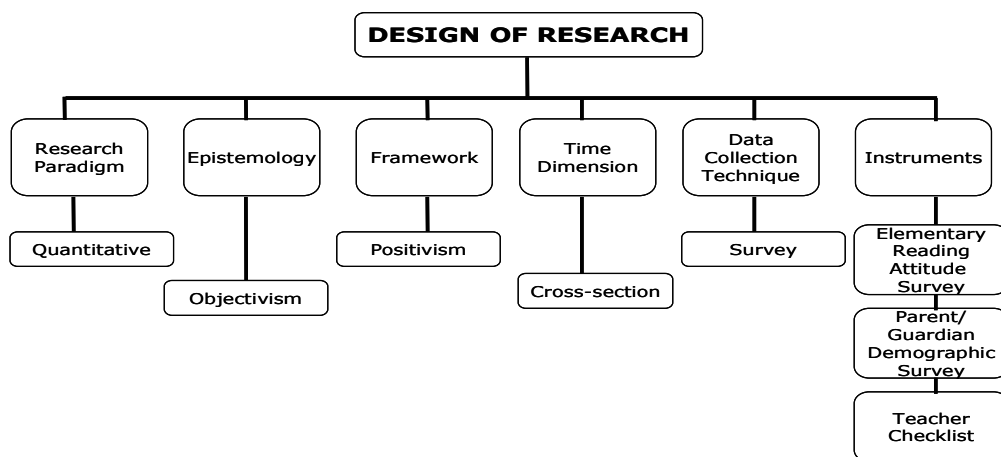
Figure 4.2 Design of research

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The research paradigm chosen influences the researcher's design. Moreover, the research questions and the topic/area of study influence the chosen paradigm. A quantitative paradigm gathers data that can be converted into numerical form for mathematical statistical analyses (Williams, 2003). The quantitative researcher is positioned objectively, and data are not manipulated or influenced by the presence of the researcher (Sumner & Tribe, 2004). The reality being studied is "independent of the researcher and instruments" and so cohort variation can be examined (Cresswell, 1994; Sumner & Tribe, 2004, p. 5). Relationships between variables can be highlighted, however causal influences cannot be established from quantitative research.

The epistemological position influences the design of the research. Epistemology is "the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature, origin, scope and knowledge and how we know what we know" (Sumner & Tribe, 2004, p. 3). Objective research epistemology was modeled on the natural sciences and centres on the existence of one truth, rather than exploring many truths (Neuman, 2000; Sumner & Tribe, 2004). During the 1920s, objective epistemology became more prominent than the epistemological approach of many action-based qualitative studies (Neuman, 2000). Objective researchers create "careful measures of the external behaviour of individuals to produce quantitative data that could be subjected to statistical analysis" (Neuman, 2000, p. 70).

The framework of the study guides the research design. Positivism is the dominant philosophical social research approach and is influenced by Schlick, Carnap, Neurath and Reinchenbach (as cited in Sumner & Tribe, 2004). Social scientists understand, explain and predict the social world by scientifically exploring patterns and regularities evident in the social world (Denscombe, 1998; Williams, 2003). Positivists believe the "world is knowable, predictable and singular in truth and reality" (O'Leary, 2004, p. 5). Deductive logic with empirical observation were combined to establish patterns of human behaviour and social reality (Bryman, 2001). A theoretical relationship is identified and then empirically and systematically studied to connect the abstract ideas of the theoretical relationship to precise measurements of the social world (Neuman, 2000; O'Leary, 2004). Findings are regarded as true reflections of social reality when others can replicate them.

The timeframe in which data are collected is a key factor in the research design. Cross-sectional research involves data being collected from a cohort at one point in time. Individual's attitudes, opinions and beliefs about current events and issues are gathered using this research design (Creswell, 2005). A large body of data can be obtained in a short period of time. Although, a cross-sectional design is cost effective to implement, it does not reflect change in attitudes, opinions and beliefs over time (Cresswell, 1994).

Quantitative data can be efficiently gathered using surveys as these describe what is actually going on, in a particular field of practice, regarding a particular issue of some importance" (Greig & Taylor, 1999, p. 100). Surveys are widely used and they are an economical and time efficient means of gathering data from participants at one point in time (Best & Kahn, 2005). The researcher gains a panoramic snapshot of a particular population of individuals' attitudes, behaviours or practices (Denscombe, 1998). Surveys can be administered effectively to large groups of gathered participants or can be mailed to/from individual participants (Cresswell, 1994; Sumner & Tribe, 2004). Numerical data are gained from converting survey responses that are then analysed and presented in graphic and tabular form (Neuman, 2000). Surveys enable a sample of individuals to be studied and from this data inferences may be generalised to the wider population from which the sample was drawn (Cresswell, 1994).

The sampling method impacts on the generalisability of data. A probability sampling method gives each individual in a population equal chance of being included, whereas non-probability sampling does not (Burdess, 1994). Non-probability convenience sampling gathers participants based on convenience and availability and is dependent on participant interest (Best & Kahn, 2005; Cresswell, 1994; Gorard, 2003). This method does not gather a stratified sample, and so findings may not be completely representative of the larger population from which they were drawn (Denscombe, 1998; Williams, 2003). Non-probability convenience sampling does however produce results that give researchers insights into the thoughts, feelings and/or behaviours of participants. Probability stratified random sampling gathers a sample from a population that has been stratified (Neuman, 2000). The researcher controls the size of each stratum so the cohort of participants reflects the proportion to which they are

represented in the wider population (Neuman, 2000). By stratifying a cohort, researchers can more accurately generalize findings to the wider population (Burdess, 1994).

Reliability and validity both influence educational research. The extent to which research instruments produce the same data (replicates) each time they are used to assess a behaviour or construct is referred to as reliability (Bryman, 2001; Greig & Taylor, 1999; O'Leary, 2004; Williams, 2003). Reliability data must be gathered using various participant populations and not just from the norming sample (Thompson & Vacha-Haase, 2000). To enhance the reliability of replication studies the participant selection process, instrumentation design and administration, and analysis of data must be clearly articulated for researchers (Bryman, 2001). When the instrument is reliable, variations in research data should then be attributed to variables rather than the instrumentation (Denscombe, 1998; Williams, 2003).

Validity is more difficult to assess than reliability (Greig & Taylor, 1999). It refers to the strength of data and conclusions gathered from a study and can be internal or external (Bryman, 2001). In quantitative research, internal validity is typically weak as causal statements cannot be made, but rather researchers can only establish associations highlighted in the data (Bryman, 2001). How participants become part of the research cohort is a crucial determinant of the strength of the research's external validity. External validity is enhanced when the sample cohort is randomly selected and stratified as this makes the data more representative of the larger population from which participants were drawn (Bryman, 2001; O'Leary, 2004). Construct validity refers to whether the instrument that is designed to measure a concept actually measures it (Bryman, 2001; Williams, 2003). One way of improving the construct validity of research is to focus on the content validity. Content validity focuses on whether questions are appropriately worded and measure the desired concept (Williams, 2003).

4.4 THE CURRENT RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study utilizes a quantitative research paradigm and reports primary students' attitudes to reading, text type preferences, and teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading. Positivistic principles are reflected in this study as patterns of human reading attitudes, preferences and perceptions are systematically

and empirically established. The current study was designed as a cross-sectional study where data are collected from a cohort at a single point in time. Conclusions gleaned from analyses cannot identify variations across time, but rather only highlight attitudes, preferences and perceptions of students and teachers at the time of the data collection (Term 4, 2004). Students (with their parent/guardian consent) and teachers volunteered to participate and consequently the cohort was not a stratified sample, but rather a non-probability convenience sample.

Using a survey technique enabled data to be gathered from a group of students (n=351) and teachers (n=21) in a time efficient and cost effective manner. Teachers administered the student survey with their class and this eliminated participant-researcher contact and ensured participant responses were not manipulated or influenced by the presence of an external researcher. All student surveys were identical in formatting across year levels (1 to 7) so comparisons could be made of students' attitudes to reading and their preferences for different types of texts. In addition, each teacher received identically formatted teacher checklists to be completed independently. Numerical data were entered into and analysed using SPSS Computer Software Version 12.0 (SPSS Inc, 2003).

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, constructed by McKenna and Kear (1990), was used with students. Minor language and visual adjustments were made to the instrument to suit an Australian context. McKenna and Kear (1990) outlined the validity and reliability of their instrument using statistical measures and therefore, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) is considered a reliable and valid instrument to highlight recreational and academic reading attitudes of primary aged students. One question was added to this instrument (Question 21) to gather students' text type reading preferences. A Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) was completed by teacher participants to provide information about their perceptions of students' behaviour and attitudes to read. Parent/guardians completed the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey (Young, 2003) to provide demographic information about the number of children in the family, parent/guardian educational level and occupation, and their language spoken at home.

4.4.1 Participants

Three hundred and fifty one students and 21 teachers participated in this study. Students in Years 1 to 7 were drawn from 21 classrooms throughout one primary school. Parents/guardians were involved as they provided consent for the students and family demographic data.

4.4.1.1 Students

The cohort consisted of Queensland students from Years 1 to 7 within one Brisbane Archdiocesan Catholic Primary school. Approval to conduct research in a Catholic primary school was sought and received from the Executive Director of Brisbane Catholic Education and the school Principal.

All parents/guardians, whose child/children attended the school, received a letter inviting them to consent to their child/children participating in the study. Written permission was received and the total number of children involved in the study was 351 (153 male and 198 female). This sample represents 66.6% of the school population.

All students (100%), who were granted permission to participate, completed and returned their survey. Students ascertained at Levels 4 and above for intellectual impairment were not included in the study. Students with physical impairments were assisted by a scribe (school officer).

The percentage distribution of male and female students across year levels and the total number of participants in each year level is listed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Student Gender Percentage Distribution Across Year Levels

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
% male students	47.9	37.9	45.9	37.2	51.8	52.5	31.1
% female students	52.1	62.1	54.1	62.8	48.2	47.5	68.9
Total	48	58	61	43	56	40	45

Number and position of the participating child in the family

The Parent/guardian Demographic Survey (see Appendix B) provided data on the position of each participating child in their family and the results are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Child Position in Family

Position in family	Number of children	% of children
1st	127	36.5
2nd	116	33.6
3rd	69	19.7
4th	26	6.8
5th	7	2.0
6th	4	1.1
7th	1	0.3

The majority of the surveys were returned for children who were the first (36.5%), second (33.6%) or third (19.7%) child in the family.

The number of children in families is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Number of Children in Family

Number of children in family	Number of children	% of children
One (only child)	20	5.7
Two	127	36.2
Three	110	31.6
Four	58	16.5
Five	20	5.7
Six	10	2.8
Seven	3	0.9
Eight	0	0
Nine	1	0.3
Ten	1	0.3

The majority of parents/guardians who returned the survey had either two (36.2%) or three (31.6%) children in their family. The mean number of children in families was 2.96.

4.4.1.2 Parents/guardians

Parents/guardians provided demographic information relating to family background on the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey and the return rate was 100%. The parent/guardian survey was completed by mothers/female guardians (90.0%), fathers/male guardians (8.8%), grandparents (0.9%) and guardians (0.3%). Family demographic data helped to contextualise the research findings.

4.4.1.3 Teachers

Participating students were drawn from each class (21 in total) throughout the school where 24% of teaching staff are male. In addition to their classroom teaching role, two teachers are responsible for lessons of LOTE and Drama. Years of teaching experience ranged from one year (beginning teacher) through to more than 30 years with the average teaching experience being 10.8 years. Teachers' ages ranged from 22 years to 58 years with a mean age of 38 years. Nineteen percent of teaching staff lived within the school's shire, 61% of teachers lived within 50km of school, with the remaining 19% living within 100km from the school. Five classroom teachers had acquired or were currently studying for postgraduate teaching qualifications.

4.4.2 Instruments and Research Procedures

Students and teachers each completed a survey instrument that gathered data from students concerning attitudes to reading and text preferences and data from teachers about their perceptions of students' behaviour and attitudes to reading. Parents/guardians provided student and family demographic data. All data collection took place in Term 4, 2004.

4.4.2.1 Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Primary school students' attitudes to reading and text type preferences were explored using a modified version of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) (see Appendix A). This survey was a valid instrument and was normed with over 18,000 students in Years 1 to 6 across thirty-eight American States. The

language of the instrument was modified to suit the Australian context. The American reference to "workbook pages" was replaced with the term *worksheets*, "reading class" was replaced with *reading lessons*, and "summer vacation" was replaced with *school holidays*. McKenna and Kear's (1990) survey instrument was constructed using a pictorial rating scale equating to 4 levels of response, strongly agree; agree; somewhat disagree and disagree using the Garfield character depicting different facial expressions ranging from very happy to very sad. Within this study the Garfield character was replaced with 'smiley faces'.

Two ten question sub-scales, one set for recreational reading (Questions 1-10) and one for academic reading (Questions 11-20) were included on the survey. For each question there was a brief, simply worded question beginning with the words – "How do you feel…". Students were instructed to choose one smiley face from the four options depicting their level of agreement with the question. Pictorial faces ranging from very happy, happy, sad through to upset (crying) were included. A four point Likert scale was used so participants would make a choice concerning their feelings towards aspects of recreational and academic reading without choosing a neutral or central option. Another question was added to the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Question 21 of the student survey asked students to identify their reading text type preferences from seven multiple choice options. Students were permitted to select more than one listed text type.

Research Procedure: Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Following receipt of parental/guardian permission, the adapted version of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was administered under class test conditions. Student response sheets were identically formatted across year levels. Survey administration instructions were provided for each class teacher who administered the instrument to ensure consistency of language and conditions across the cohort (see Appendix A). Before completing the survey, students were instructed to write their name, age and date of birth at the top of their response sheet and they were encouraged to respond honestly as there were no correct or incorrect answers. This was clearly stated in the general instructions that were read aloud to the students by the class teacher.

The class teacher read each question (1-20) aloud and students responded by colouring in the personally relevant smiley face on a four point Likert scale. Students responded to Question 21 by ticking the relevant box/es from the options listed. No time limits were set for completion of the survey. A code was assigned to each student who participated in the research project so data can be reported in an unidentifiable format. Responses to each question on the student survey were analysed using SPSS Computer Software Version 12.0 (SPSS Inc, 2003).

4.4.2.2 Parent/guardian Demographic Survey

Parent/guardian demographic data were explored using an adapted version of the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey constructed by Young (2003) (see Appendix B). This survey instrument was constructed predominantly using a multiple-choice format however a number of questions required parents/guardians to write information in the spaces provided. There were eighteen questions gathering child and family demographic data.

Research Procedure: Parent/guardian Demographic Survey

Following receipt of permission slips, the researcher provided class teachers with named parent/guardian surveys and these were distributed to students to take home to their parents/guardians. Completed surveys were returned to the researcher in envelopes via the class "message buckets". Parents/guardians who did not return their survey within a fortnight were provided with a second copy and as a result, 100% of parent/guardian surveys were returned. Parent/guardian Demographic Surveys (Young, 2003) were assigned a research code matching the corresponding student surveys and teacher checklists so findings are reported using unidentifiable data. Responses on the parent/guardian survey were analysed using SPSS Computer Software Version 12.0 (SPSS Inc, 2003).

4.4.2.3 Teacher Checklist

Information relating to teacher perceptions of students and their reading attitudes were gathered using an adapted version of the Teacher Checklist constructed by Young (2003) (see Appendix C). The Teacher Checklist consisted of 17 questions. Teachers were required to rate each student on a four point Likert scale from "excellent, good, satisfactory and developing" for behavioural and reading characteristics.

Research Procedure: Teacher Checklist

Each class teacher was provided with a photocopied sheet for each participating student. These were presented as a booklet for each class teacher. Teachers ranked students' behaviour and attitude to reading in the classroom. Strict time limits were not stated however, all 21 checklist booklets (100%) were completed and returned within a four week period. A participant code was assigned to each Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) so they could be matched to corresponding students and information from parent/guardian surveys. Responses to the Teacher Checklist were analysed using SPSS Computer Software Version 12.0 (SPSS Inc, 2003).

4.4.3 Data Analysis

Data collected from the student and teacher instruments were analysed using SPSS Computer Software Version 12.0 (SPSS Inc, 2003). Descriptive and other statistical analyses were conducted for students' recreational and academic attitudes, text type reading preferences, and for teachers' perceptions of students as readers and as individuals. Descriptive data were initially analysed to establish the frequency, mean and standard deviation for each question on the student survey and teacher checklist. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests were conducted to identify significant differences due to age or year level in school. Tests also were conducted to examine significance for gender variance. Principal Component Analyses (PCA) were conducted to determine the factor structure of the data sets. Descriptive and other statistical information from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) are displayed in Chapter 5.

4.4.4 Generalisability of data

Data gathered in this study reflected reading attitudes and text type preferences for the cohort of students studied in one particular school at one point in time. Teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour and attitudes to reading were gathered from teaching staff, at one point towards the end of an academic school year. Generalisability of data from the cohort to the wider school population is only possible if aspects of the research design and instruments are carefully controlled. This study provides school personnel with information about students' attitudes to reading and these results have the potential for improving student learning outcomes. The findings, although not fully generalisable, do however add to the existing

knowledge about primary students' reading attitudes and text preferences and teachers' perceptions of behaviour and students' attitudes to reading.

4.4.5 Limitations of the Study

4.4.5.1 Research design

A limitation of this study was the research design. Data were gathered from a cross-section of students, parent/guardians and teachers at one school at a single point in time. This design does not attempt to uncover long-term attitudinal or preference developmental change among primary school students or highlight change in teachers' perceptions over time. Rather this study attempts to provide a contextualised snapshot insight into reading attitudes of students and perceptions of teachers in one primary school.

4.4.5.2 Instruments

The study focuses predominantly on two quantitative instruments (student and teacher) and thus, it may be argued this limits the research. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was a self-report instrument which gathered data on students' recreational and academic reading attitudes. It incorporated a four point Likert scale that could be quantitatively analysed. The Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) was also a self-report instrument that gathered data on teachers' perceptions of students and their reading attitudes. This instrument incorporated a four point Likert scale that could be quantitatively analysed. The Parent/guardian Demographic Survey (Young, 2003) was used to gather data on parent/guardian personal and family demographics. Responses were selected from those listed in addition to providing a number of self-written responses.

With any self-reporting attitudinal or perception instrument, it can be difficult to know whether students or teachers actually feel, believe or do the things they report. Therefore, researchers using self-report instruments can only report on what students and teachers say, rather than on what they may actually note from daily reading behaviour or teaching observations. With demographic instruments researchers rely on the honesty of parents/guardians to complete the instrument accurately as they can only report on information provided. There were no post-interviews with parents/guardians, teachers or students to examine in detail aspects identified in the quantitative instrument. This could be a direction for future research.

4.4.5.3 Participants

This study was limited by the number of parents/guardians who consented to their child participating in the study (66.6% of the school population). Another limitation was that parents/guardians were required to complete and return the Parent/guardian Demographic Survey (Young, 2003) within the research timeframe. Furthermore, parents/guardians may have written responses they thought were socially and/or educationally appropriate, rather than accurate, and this may have limited the study.

Teachers' willingness to administer, during class time, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) could also have limited the number of participants. Furthermore, teachers may have declined to complete the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) or felt inclined to provide responses they thought they should report, rather than giving accurate indications of their perceptions of students.

Data may have been limited should any student, whose parents/guardians consented, not have completed the survey. Students named their response sheet and because the surveys were administered and collected by classroom teachers, students may have been influenced in the way they responded to some questions and may have felt compelled to choose the "correct" response, rather than choose an honest personal response.

4.4.5.4 Individual interpretation

Reading can be a contextual activity. Students may be very competent motivated readers when engaging with high interest, self-selected reading materials but demonstrate less positive reading motivation and competencies when engaging with reading materials that were not self-selected or of personal interest. Therefore, when students completed the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) their responses could have been influenced by their interpretation of whether the question referred to reading materials of personal interest or those provided by their teacher.

Students' responses to the text type preferences question also may have been influenced by interpretation. Students may have had a different interpretation of what constitutes each text type, for example, the *Magic School Bus* series (Lane, 2006) could be considered a picture book or an information book. Furthermore, students'

responses for the text type preferences question were limited by student memory of texts on the day the survey was administered. Another consideration is students could only select types of texts they have had previous access/exposure to either at home or school.

4.4.5.5 Delimitations

Delimitations have been incorporated into the research design. Firstly, the quantitative design of the instruments enabled data to be conducted in a short time frame with minimal disruption to class routines or timetabled activities as students, teachers and parents/guardians were required to complete one survey each. The choice of instruments delimited the study. Another delimitation imposed on this study, for manageability purposes, was the location and its population. The participant cohort was comprised of students from a school accessible to the researcher.

4.4.6 Ethical Considerations

Personal information was collected from students, teachers and parents/guardians. Consequently, the researcher is morally obligated to adhere strictly to the code of ethics for the implementation of a study (Schwandt, 1993; Stake, 2000). Researchers are guided by four principles of ethical conduct and these are:

1. Informed Consent;
2. Openness;
3. Privacy and confidentiality and;
4. Accuracy (Christians, 2000).

Students, teachers and parents/guardians were fully informed about what was required of them in this study. Data were gathered, collected and stored securely to maintain participant privacy and confidentiality and data were accurately entered for analysis using SPSS Computer Software Version 12.0 (SPSS Inc, 2003).

4.4.6.1 Participation consent

The Human Research Ethics Committee (Australian Catholic University) and the Director of Brisbane Catholic Education provided formal ethical clearance for this study. The Principal of the school consented to the study being conducted in Term 4, 2004. Parents/guardians consented to their child and themselves participating in the study in writing on the consent form/letter provided. Similarly, teachers indicated consent to participate on a consent form. Copies of Ethics Approval letters (from

Australian Catholic University, Brisbane Catholic Education), the school Principal's written consent, Letters to Participants and Consent Forms are presented as Appendices (D-J). Correct protocols for the distribution of information letters, consent forms and surveys were followed. It was acknowledged that ethically, participation in this study was voluntary and so students, teachers and parents/guardians could withdraw from the study at any time without justification.

4.4.6.2 Access to information

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act (Office of the Queensland Parlimentary Counsel, 2005) states all participants have the right to access personal information held regarding them. Parents/guardians were made aware in the information letter that any information about their child's recreational and academic reading attitudes and text type preferences could be communicated with them, should they express such an interest. Similarly, teachers reserve the right to request access to information they provided regarding students' reading attitudes and behaviour characteristics.

4.4.6.3 Confidentiality

Another ethical consideration related to participants' confidentiality. Students were required to name their survey to enable responses to be matched with both parent/guardian demographic and teacher checklist details for data analyses. Each survey was allocated a separate research code to ensure anonymity of responses at the data analysis stage. Findings will be reported using coded, non-identifiable data. Methodological information and findings will be summarised and appear in written publications or may be orally presented in a form that does not identify participants in any way. Data from this study will be stored securely, according to Ethics Guidelines, to ensure confidentiality of participants is upheld. Data will be fully destroyed, in accordance with time requirements, outlined in relevant Ethics Guidelines.

4.4.6.4 Working with children legislation implications

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act (Office of the Queensland Parlimentary Counsel, 2005) state adults who have contact with young children must undergo a 'working with children' check. Regular classroom teachers administered the student survey and these people have undergone such checks in order to be registered by the Queensland College of Teachers. The

researcher is also a Queensland registered teacher and has received full teacher registration.

4.4.7 Theoretical Framework

The McKenna model of reading (McKenna et al., 1995) provided a theoretical framework for this study that aligns with the socio-cultural reading perspective. McKenna et al. (1995) drew together elements of previous models presented by Fishbein and Ajzen (1972), Liska (1984), Ruddell and Speaker (1985), and Matthewson (1991). Elements of the Fishbein and Ajzen (1972) and Liska (1984) models featured prominently in the McKenna Model (McKenna et al., 1995). These models are now described.

4.4.7.1 Fishbein and Ajzen (1972) Model

Fishbein and Ajzen (1972) stated beliefs students have about reading influenced their attitudes, which in turn affected their intentions and reading behaviour. Beliefs could be related to the object or activity itself or be normative (influenced by others) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1972). Normative beliefs were based on students "perceived expectations of relevant others" and their "motivation to comply with these expectations" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1972, p. 516). Beliefs could be descriptive, inferential or informational in nature. Descriptive beliefs relate to an individual's experience, inferential beliefs were reached by logical deductions from existing beliefs and informational beliefs were influenced from external significant individuals. New beliefs needed to be introduced to challenge pre-existing beliefs if reading attitudes were to be positively shaped (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1972).

4.4.7.2 Liska (1984) Model

Liska's (1984) model challenged Fishbein and Ajzen's (1972) lockstep causal model. Liska (1984) argued that one flaw in Fishbein and Ajzen's (1972) model was that a student's intention to read was not sufficient in itself to bring about certain reading behaviours. Some reading activities required a base level of social interaction or a set of key skills and it was argued if these skills were not evident, then student intention to read could not be realized (Liska, 1984). Students' beliefs were believed to influence reading behaviour directly. Unlike Fishbein and Ajzen (1972), Liska (1984) highlighted a direct relationship between reading behaviour and attitude.

4.4.7.3 McKenna (1995) Model

The McKenna Model built on models presented by Fishbein and Ajzen (1972) and Liska (1984) and proposed reading attitude was an affective characteristic influenced by a student's beliefs. The McKenna Model highlighted three main influences in attitudinal change and maintained attitudes develop over time due to the relationship between:

1. normative beliefs (those influenced by others);
2. beliefs about the outcomes of reading and;
3. specific reading experiences (McKenna et al., 1995, p. 939).

This current study was grounded in McKenna's model (McKenna et al., 1995) as it explored whether attitudinal reading differences existed throughout primary years and whether teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading matched those of students.

The McKenna Model (McKenna et al., 1995) highlighted that as students get older they may still see reading as a pleasurable activity. However it may not rate as pleasurable as various other recreational activities. Similarly, as students get older their normative beliefs will be influenced more and more by significant others in their environment which consequently affects reading attitudes. As identity and a sense of group belonging become more significant in the older year levels, attitudes to reading may decline as students begin to pursue more socially acceptable (peer related) activities (McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

The McKenna Model (McKenna et al., 1995) reflects key beliefs of the current socio-cultural reading perspective. A child's habitus (embodiment of social and cultural background) influences them to think about, feel and behave in certain ways about reading. Students' social and cultural background affects their access to literacy activities (print and technological). Students' reading attitudes may change over time depending on their access to literacy activities. Through actively engaging in various social and cultural literacy activities, students internalize the purpose of and outcomes for reading, and the value placed on it by influential members of their immediate and technological world. Perceptions teachers hold regarding students' attitudes to reading, and their perceptions of behaviour characteristics can influence the reading activities planned and provided for students. Teachers' perceptions can also influence

the way students view reading as a recreational and academic experience. Students' attitudes to reading and actual engagement with texts may be influenced not only by teachers but other adults as well.

The McKenna Model of reading (McKenna et al., 1995) drew on elements from several other models and it was chosen as a framework for this current study. A diagrammatic representation, linking aspects of the McKenna model with key concepts presented in this study, is presented below in Figure 4.3.
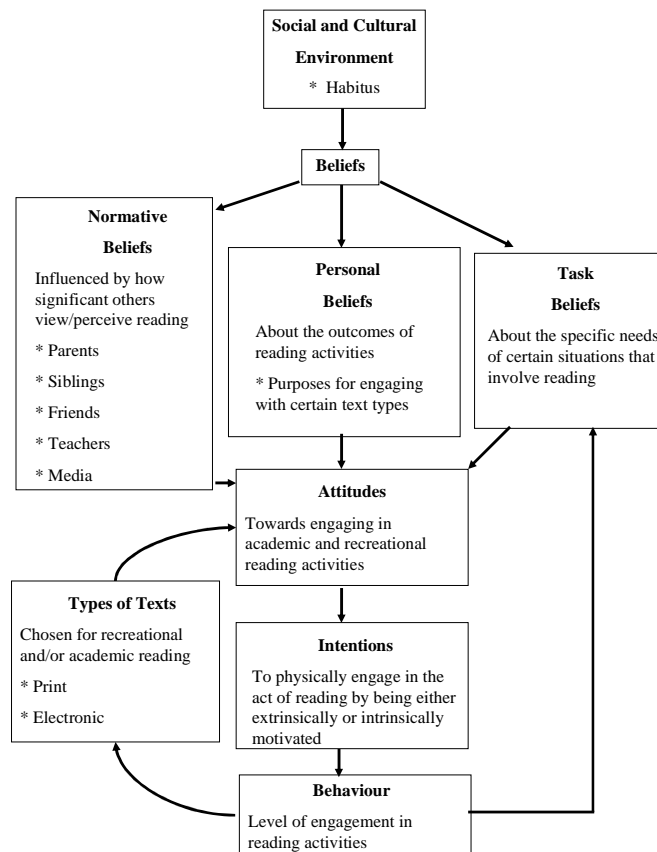
Figure 4.3 Model of reading

Studies have been conducted over the past decade to investigate reading attitudes of primary students and these studies align with the McKenna model (Kazelskis et al., 2004; Kush & Watkins, 1996; Lazarus & Callahan, 2000; McKenna et al., 1995; Worthy et al., 1999). Reading attitudinal variances in primary aged students have been highlighted in Chapter 3.

4.5 CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter methodological considerations relating to this study have been outlined. The design of the research has been discussed in terms of the paradigm, epistemology, framework, time dimensions, and data collection techniques. Descriptive data on participants were presented. This study involves the administration of three instruments - one for students (attitudes to reading), teachers (perceptions) and parents/guardians (demographics) and the research procedures have been articulated. Descriptive analyses were conducted on data from students to establish frequencies and distributions. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests were conducted to establish significance followed by Principal Component Analyses (PCA) to identify the factor structure of the data sets.

The cohort of participants in this study is not a stratified sample and therefore findings are not completely generalisable. However, they do provide administration personnel and teachers at other schools with a valuable insight into students' possible attitudes and text preferences and information relating to teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading. Limitations of the study and ethical considerations were outlined and theoretical models that influenced the construction of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) were presented. The McKenna Model (McKenna et al., 1995) has been shown to align with the current socio-cultural perspective of reading.

The design of the research has been presented in Chapter 4 and contributes one part to the overall understanding of reading, and this is reflected in Figure 4.3. In the next chapter, data gathered from this study are displayed.
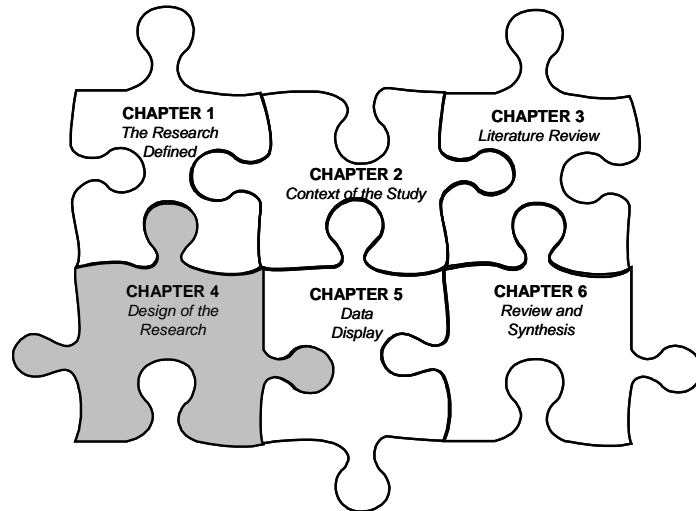
Figure 4.3 Thesis overview

CHAPTER 5

DATA DISPLAY

5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter of the thesis, data gathered from students and teachers are displayed. Students' attitudinal and text type preference data and teachers' perception data collected in this study were analysed using SPSS Computer Software Version 12.0 (SPSS Inc, 2003). Data are presented in four sections addressing each of the research questions.

Question 21 was added to the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey for this study. Therefore to establish reliability of the instrument, Question 21 was omitted when calculating Cronbach alpha coefficients for comparison with McKenna et al.'s (1995) original study (Questions 1 to 20). Validity of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) are stated. Principal Component Analyses were conducted on data from students and factor solutions are presented. Year level, age and gender frequencies of students' attitudes are presented and descriptive data on recreational and academic questions are outlined. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) analyses test for significant differences across year level and age for each subscale on the student survey. An independent samples t-test tests for significant differences for gender and this also is reported. Cross-tabulations provide frequencies of students' responses for preferred reading text types. Pearson's Chi-square tests indicate significance for year level and age. Independent samples t-tests test for significant differences in text types for gender.

Descriptive data for the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) are presented. Principal Component Analysis was conducted on data from teachers and factor solutions are presented. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) analyses test for significance across year level and age for each subscale on the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003). An independent samples t-test tests for significant differences for gender and this is presented. Contrasts will be made between teachers' perceptions in lower year levels and middle/upper year levels and also across students' ages. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment in reading are correlated with their perceptions of

students' overall reading achievement in school, and significance is tested using a Chi-square test. The outline for this chapter is presented in Figure 5.1.
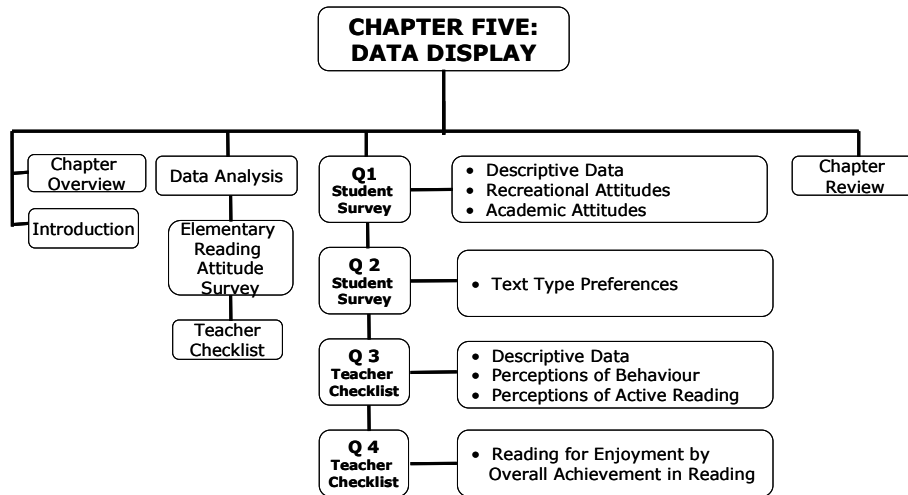
Figure 5.1 Overview of Chapter 5

5.2 INTRODUCTION

5.2.1 Reliability and Validity of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Reliability of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey instrument was established by McKenna et al. (1995) using Cronbach's Alpha. Coefficients of .74 to .87 for the recreational subscale, and .81 to .83 for the academic subscale were reported by McKenna et al. (1995). Reliability of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey instrument was calculated for this study using Cronbach's alpha and the coefficient for the recreational subscale was .77 and for the academic subscale it was .81. Reliability of the instrument used in this study is considered sound and aligns with that of the original McKenna et al. (1995) study.

Internal validity of a study relates to the inferences that are made regarding causation. Ensuring strong internal validity is only relevant in studies that endeavour to establish causes for observed phenomena. Correlation of findings does not indicate causality, but rather establishes a relationship between aspects studied. From data gathered in this study, causal statements cannot be made regarding why students have certain

attitudes to reading. Only association can be established between factors and students' attitudes towards and perceptions of reading. Therefore, the internal validity of the instrument is regarded weak yet this does not impact on the study.

Construct validity of the instrument was examined. The instrument was designed to examine recreational and academic reading attitudes of students and factor analyses conducted indicated the existence of these two subscales. Content validity of the twenty questions was also examined. Content validity relates to whether questions are appropriately worded to measure the desired concept. When examining communalities of each of the twenty questions on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) it was noted Question 18 on the academic subscale ("how do you feel about reading aloud in class") had an extraction value of .16. Responses to Question 18 seem to be more focused on the performance (reading aloud) element of the question rather than on the academic reading aspect. This question could be reworded to more appropriately measure the desired concept and enhance its content validity.

5.2.2 Validity of the Teacher Checklist

Internal validity of the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) is similarly weak, as causal statements cannot be made. Factor analysis indicates the instrument contains two subscales – teachers' perceptions of students' general classroom behaviour and teachers' perceptions of students as readers. This reflects subscales identified by Young (2003). Content validity is sound as communalities of each question on the instrument were within an appropriate range.

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Principal Component Analysis enabled an investigation of the factor structures of the data sets for both the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003). The recreation and text type subscales of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) each reported the existence of two factors. The academic subscale however reported only one factor. The amount of variance captured for the factor solutions of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was calculated. It was found that the recreation (44.99%), academic (37.37%) and text type (54.91%) subscales reported a factor variance of moderate strength. The variance

reported for the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) was higher (81.41%) than for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) subscales. Therefore, because the factors in the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) captured a higher percentage of variance, these factors are considered to be stronger factors.

The eigenvalues for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003) are reported and these indicate the amount of variation in the total sample that is accounted for by each factor. Eigenvalues less than 1 were eliminated. However, for each instrument subscale, those factors with eigenvalues over 1 were considered to contribute to an explanation of variances. The higher the eigenvalue, the greater the contribution that factor makes to accounting for the variation in the sample. Analysis of the instrument subscales in this study will be presented below to detail structures, variance, eigenvalues and loadings of each factor.

5.3.1 Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

5.3.1.1 Recreational and Academic Subscales

The student instrument is organised into recreational reading attitudes (Questions 1 to 10) and academic reading attitudes (Questions 11 to 20) and both subscales are presented in a Likert scale format.

Principal Component Analysis was first conducted on the items for the recreational subscale within the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Principal Component Analysis, with varimax rotation, of the 10 item recreational subscale (Questions 1 to 10) provided a two factor solution which accounted for 44.99% of the total variance. Factor one presented with an initial Eigenvalue of 3.26 and factor two presented with an Eigenvalue of 1.23. The rotated component matrix indicated the first factor related to Questions 5, 2, 8, 7 and 1 with each question having loadings between .54 and .71. This factor explored students' attitudes towards *reading books in free time*. The second factor related to Questions 9, 10, 6, 3 and 4 with each question having loadings between .49 and .72. This factor explored students' attitudes towards *acquiring books to read in free time*.

Factor analysis also was conducted on academic subscale data from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Principal Component Analysis of

the 10 item academic subscale (Questions 11 to 20) provided a one factor solution which accounted for 37.37% of the total variance. The solution could not be rotated as only one component was extracted. Factor one presented with an initial Eigenvalue of 3.74. The component matrix indicated that this factor related to all academic subscale questions. This factor explored students' attitudes towards *reading as a school task*. Questions 16, 12, 11, 17, 13, 15, 20, 14 and 19 were included and all had loadings between .58 and .74.

5.3.1.2 Text Type Reading Preferences

The students' Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) instrument contained one question (21) that gathered data on text type preferences and responses were presented in a yes/no format. Factor analyses were conducted on the seven text types presented. Principal Component Analysis, with varimax rotation, on the text type data provided a two factor solution which accounted for 54.91% of the total variance. Factor one presented with an initial Eigenvalue of 2.75 and factor two presented with an Eigenvalue of 1.10. The rotated component matrix indicated the first factor related to factual information magazines, factual information books, newspapers, picture books, comics, and children's magazines. Each text type had loadings between .57 and .77. The second factor related to chapter books and this text type had a loading of .93.

5.3.2 Teacher Checklist

The teacher instrument contained 17 questions presented in a Likert scale format. Factor analysis was conducted on teachers' perception data from the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003). Principal Component Analysis, with varimax rotation, of the 17 perception items provided a two factor solution which accounted for 81.41% of the total variance. Factor one presented with an initial Eigenvalue of 1.54 and factor two presented with an Eigenvalue of 12.30. The first factor related to Questions 6, 7, 3, 4, 2, 1 and 5. Each question had loadings between .71 and .88. This factor explored teachers' perceptions of students' *general classroom behaviour*. The rotated component matrix indicated the second factor related to Questions 13, 17, 14, 12, 16, 11, 10, 15, 8 and 9. Each question had loadings between .79 and .89. This factor explored teachers' perceptions of *students as readers*.

5.4 ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY: DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Data from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) were first analysed to ascertain the frequency and distribution at each year level, age, and for male and female students.

5.4.1 Year Level

Year level distribution across the sample was relatively evenly spread and can be seen in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Student Distribution Across Year Levels

	Frequency	Percent
Year 1	48	13.7
Year 2	58	16.5
Year 3	61	17.4
Year 4	43	12.3
Year 5	56	16.0
Year 6	40	11.4
Year 7	45	12.8
Total	351	100.0

5.4.2 Age

Initially students' ages were gathered in years and months on the survey instrument for each individual, but due to the spread of ages across the sample these were converted to an age range. Seven age ranges were chosen with each of the first six age ranges equating to 11 months i.e. age range 1 = 6 years to 6 years 11 months; age range 2 = 7 years to 7 years 11 months etc. The seventh age range covered students aged 12 years to 13 years 11 months. The youngest child within the sample was 6 years of age and the eldest was 13 years and 11 months. The frequency distribution of ages across the sample is shown in Figure 5.2.
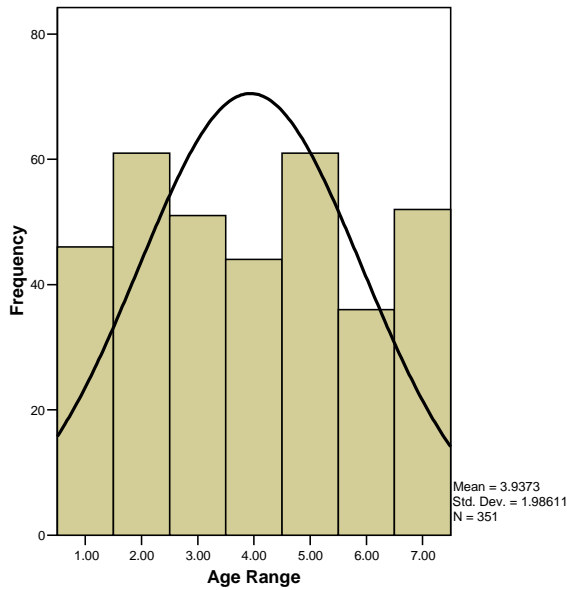
Figure 5.2 Frequency of students' ages

Distribution of participants in the sample does not reflect a normal distribution bell curve, as a high frequency of students at each age was desired for this study.

5.4.3 Gender

Gender distribution across the cohort saw 198 female students (56.4%) and 153 male students (43.6%) participate in the study.

5.4.4 Recreational and Academic Subscales

Descriptive data were examined further to establish mean scores for questions on the recreational and academic subscale to ascertain trends relating to year level, age, and gender. The frequency of student responses to the ten recreational and ten academic subscale questions were calculated. Each 'smiley face' on the survey instrument was rated from 4 to 1 (with 4 being very happy through to 1 being very sad). Recreational subscale scores ranged from 14 to 40 and academic subscale scores ranged from 10 to 40.

The mean score for student recreational subscale responses (Questions 1 to 10) was 29.70 with a standard deviation of 5.02. Distribution of student responses on the recreational subscale reflected a normal distribution bell curve, and this is shown in Figure 5.3.

Mean = 29.7037
Std. Dev. = 5.022
N = 351
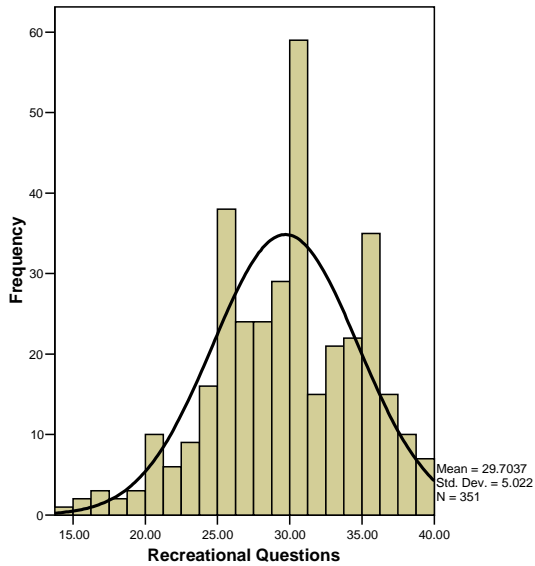
Figure 5.3 Distribution of scores for the recreational subscale

The mean score for student academic subscale responses (Questions 11 to 20) was 28.83 with a standard deviation of 5.55. Distribution of student responses on the academic subscale reflected a normal distribution bell curve, and this is shown in Figure 5.4.

Mean = 28.8291
Std. Dev. = 5.5461
N = 351
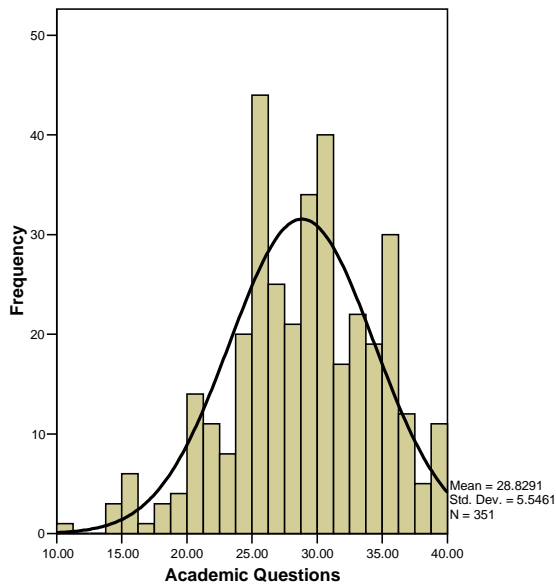
Figure 5.4 Distribution of scores for the academic subscale

5.5 ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY: RECREATIONAL READING ATTITUDES

Data for recreational reading attitude subscale questions (1 to 10) were analysed for significant differences across year level, age and gender. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests were conducted to test for significance of differences. An independent samples t-test was conducted for gender.

5.5.1 Year Level

Mean scores for each year level indicate trends in recreational subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.5.
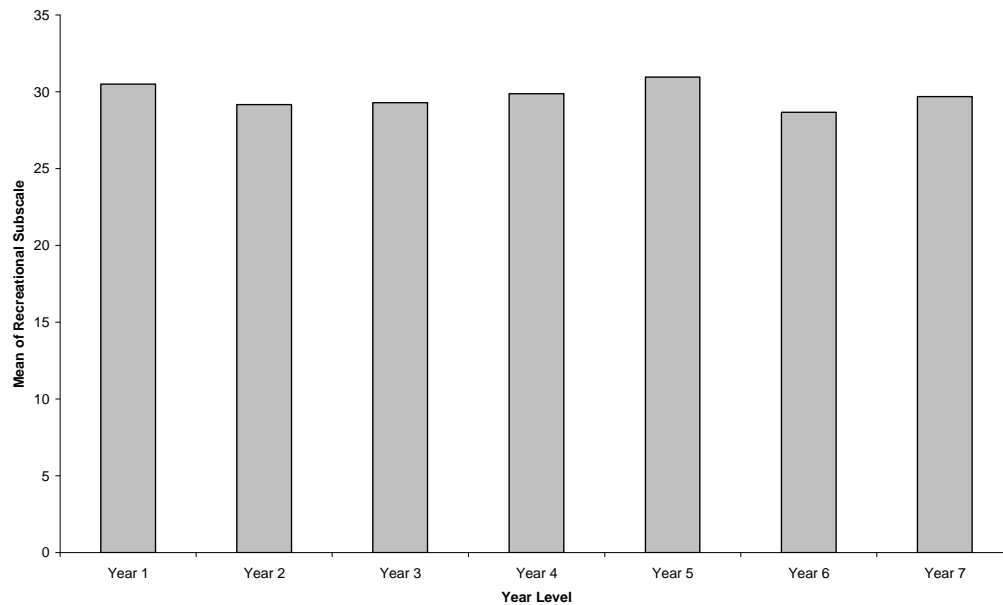
Figure 5.5 Mean scores: Recreational subscale by year level

Year 5 students (mean 30.96) present with the most positive recreational reading attitudes, followed by Year 1 students (mean 30.50). Year 6 students (mean 28.68) present with the least positive recreational reading attitudes. Year 1 students (mean 30.50) have a more positive attitude towards recreational reading than Year 2 students (mean 29.17) and Year 5 students (mean 30.96) were more positive than Year 6 students (mean 28.68). Recreational reading attitudes were more positive for each

year from Year 2 (mean 29.17) through to Year 5 (mean 30.96). ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests did not highlight significant differences for recreational questions in relation to year level and this is shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Recreational Subscale by Year Level

		df	f	Sig.
Q1to10	Between Groups	6	1.32	.25
	Within Groups	344		
	Total	350		

5.5.2 Age

Mean scores for age indicate trends in recreational subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.6.
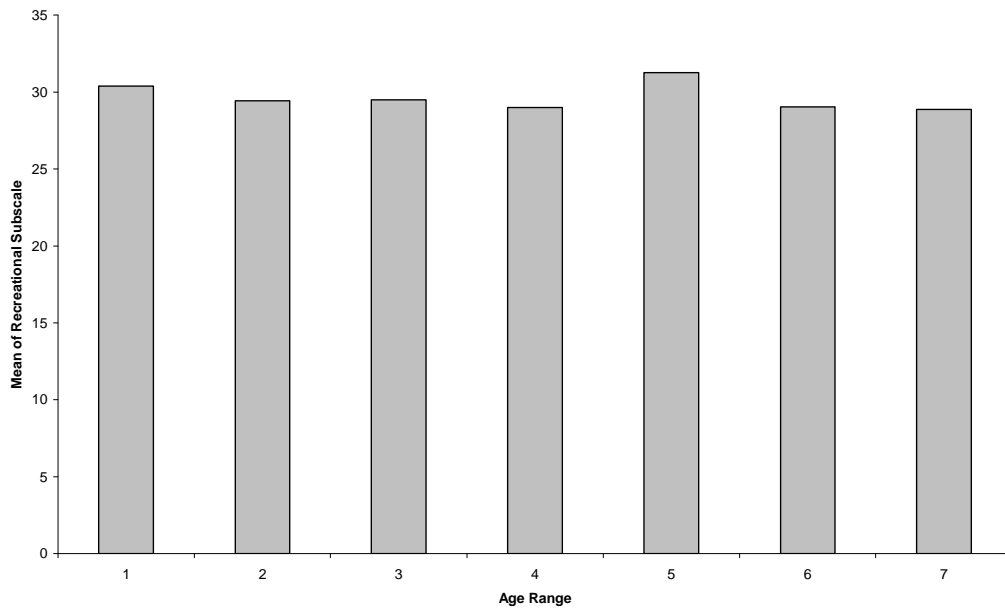
Figure 5.6 Mean scores: Recreational subscale by age

Students 10 years to 10 years 11 months *age range 5* (mean 31.26) present with the most positive recreational reading attitudes, followed by those 6 years to 6 years 11 months *age range 1* (mean 30.39) and this reflects findings for year level. Students 12

years to 13 years 11 months *age range 7* (mean 28.87) present with the least positive academic reading attitudes and this contrasts that for year level. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests did not identify a significant effect for age for recreational reading questions and this is shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Recreational Subscale by Age

		df	f	Sig.
Q1to10	Between Groups	6	1.68	.12
	Within Groups	344		
	Total	350		

5.5.3 Gender

Mean scores for gender indicate trends in the recreational subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7 Mean scores: Recreational subscale by gender

Female students (mean 30.30) present with more positive recreational reading attitudes than male students (mean 28.93). An independent samples t-test tested for a

significant difference between recreational attitudes to reading and gender. This data is presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Independent Samples t-Test: Recreational Subscale by Gender

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig.
Q1to10	Equal variances assumed	-2.56	349	.01

The t-test for equality of means indicates results for the recreational subscale for gender are significant (.01). Female students present with significantly more positive recreational reading attitudes than male students.

5.5.4 Summary of Recreational Reading Attitude Findings

Significant differences in recreational reading attitudes were not noted for year level and age. A significant difference exists in the recreational reading attitudes of male and female students. Male students prefer to spend their recreational time engaged in other activities and do not exhibit as positive an attitude towards reading during spare time as female students.

5.6 ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY: ACADEMIC READING ATTITUDES

Data for academic reading attitude subscale questions (11 to 20) were analysed for significant differences across year level, age and gender. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests were conducted to test for significance of differences. An independent samples t-test was conducted for gender.

5.6.1 Year Level

Mean scores for year level indicate trends in academic subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.8.
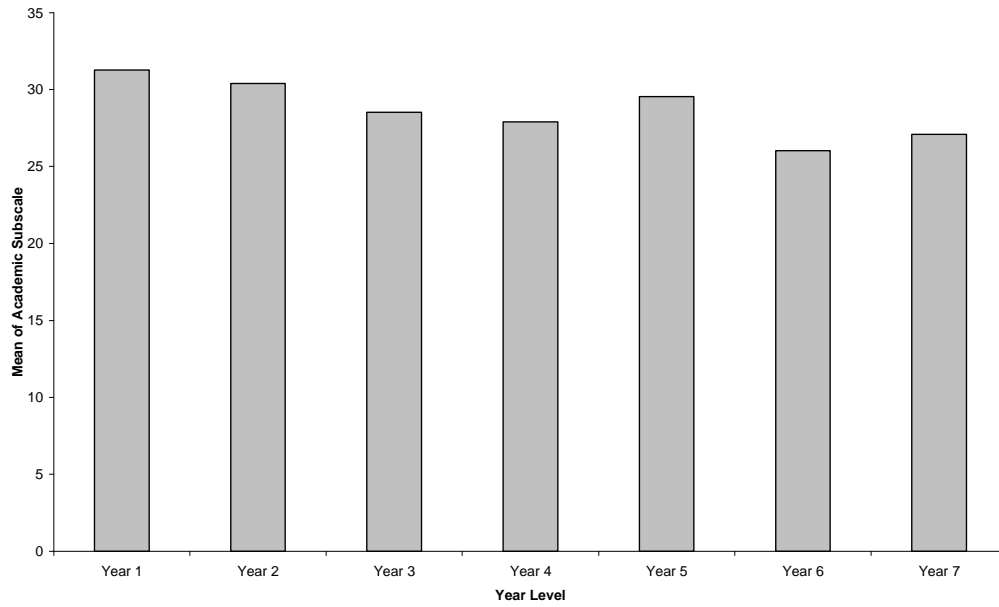
Figure 5.8 Mean scores: Academic subscale by year level

Year 1 students (mean 31.27) present with the most positive academic reading attitudes, followed by Year 2 students (mean 30.41). Year 6 students (mean 26.03) present with the least positive academic reading attitudes. Students in Year 2 o 7 had a more negative attitude to academic reading than students in Year 1 (mean 31.27). Year 5 (mean 29.54) and Year 7 (mean 27.09) are the only two year levels where academic subscale mean scores showed an increase from the previous year level. An ANOVA highlighted a significant difference for academic questions in relation to year level and this is shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Academic Subscale by Year Level

		df	f	Sig.
Q11to20	Between Groups	6	5.57	<.01
	Within Groups	344		
	Total	350		

Post hoc (Scheffe) tests revealed significant differences for the academic subscale for year level. Significant differences were found between Year 2 and Year 6 students, and Year 1 and Year 7 students. Students in Year 2 (mean 30.41) had more positive academic reading attitudes than those in Year 6 (mean 26.03), and Year 1 students (mean 31.27) were more positive towards reading than those in Year 7 (mean 27.09).

5.6.2 Age

Mean scores for age indicate trends in academic subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.9.
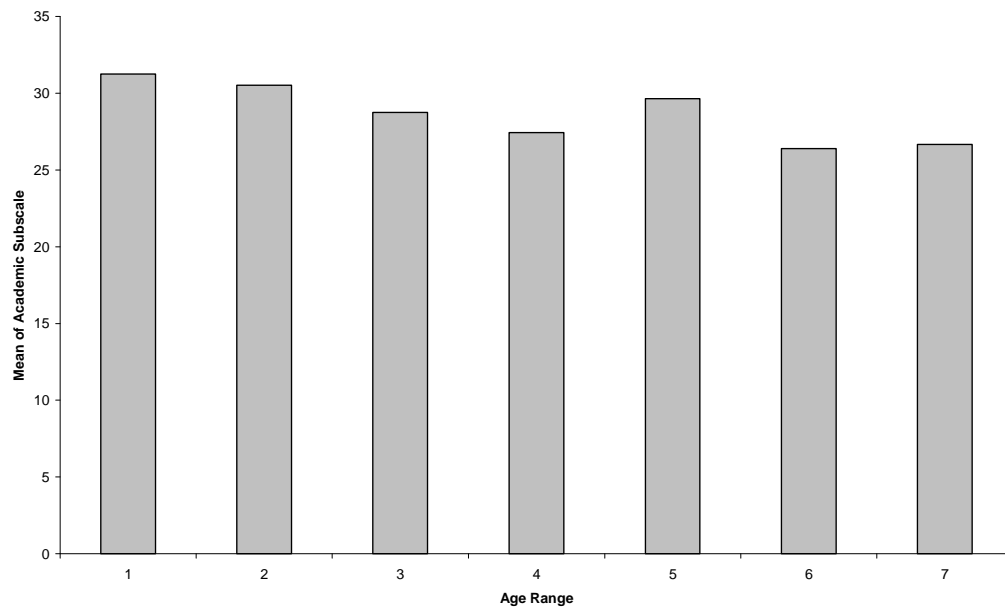
Figure 5.9 Mean scores: Academic subscale by age

Students 6 years to 6 years 11 months *age range 1* (mean 31.26) present with the most positive academic reading attitudes, followed by students aged 7 years to 7 years 11 months *age range 2* (mean 30.52). Those students in age range 6 (mean 26.39) present with the least positive academic reading attitudes. Age range 5 (mean 29.64) and age range 7 (mean 26.67) are two points where academic reading attitudes of students are more positive than in the previous age range. Descriptive analysis findings for age align with year level findings. An ANOVA identified a significant effect for age for the academic reading questions and this is shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Academic Subscale by Age

		df	f	Sig.
Q11to20	Between Groups	6	6.06	<.01
	Within Groups	344		
	Total	350		

Post hoc (Scheffe) tests revealed significant differences for the academic subscale for age. Significant differences were found between students aged 6 years to 6 years 11 months (mean 31.26) and 7 years to 7 years 11 months (mean 30.52) compared to students aged 11 years to 11 years 11 months (mean 26.39) and 12 years to 13 years 11 months (mean 26.67). Younger students were found to have more positive academic reading attitudes than older students.

5.6.3 Gender

Mean scores for gender indicate trends in academic subscale data. These are presented in Figure 5.10.

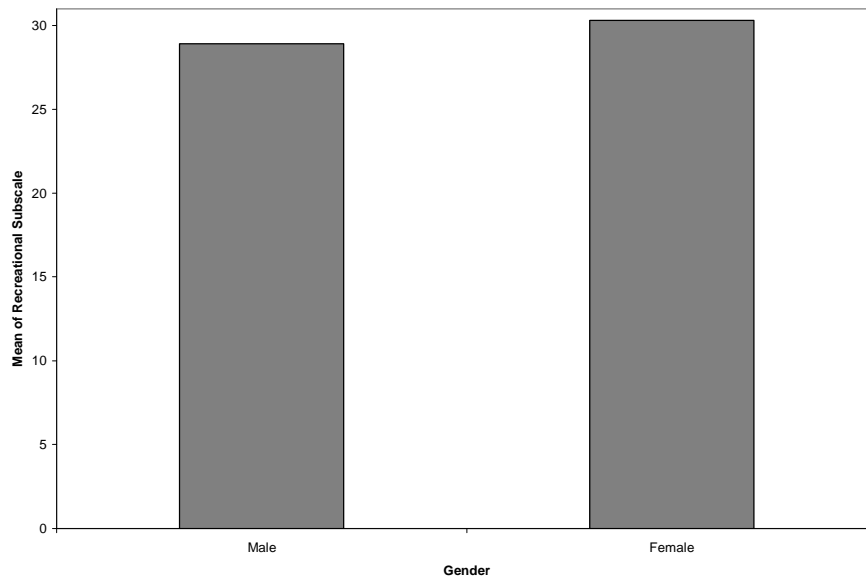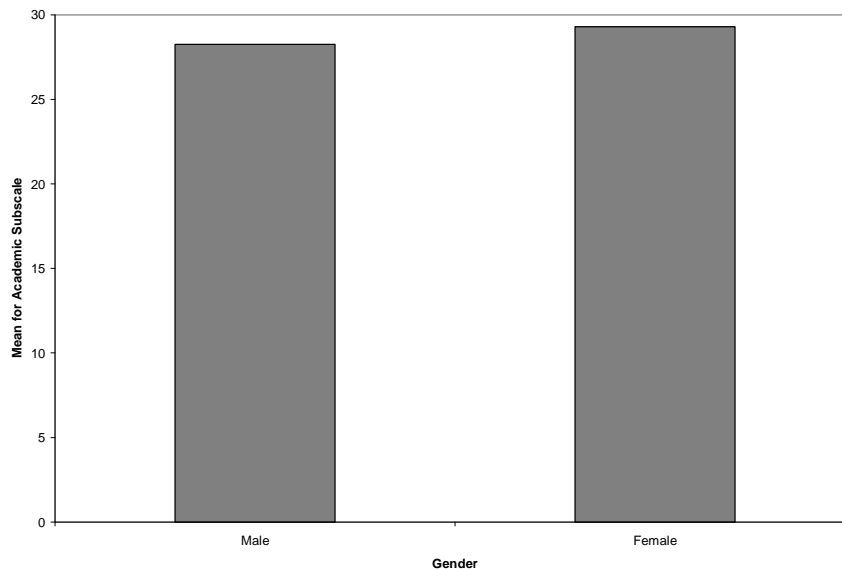*Figure 5.10* Mean scores: Academic subscale by gender

Female students (mean 29.28) present with more positive academic reading attitudes than male students (mean 28.25). This data is presented in Table 5.7. An independent samples t-test was conducted for academic attitudes to reading for gender to test for significance. This is shown in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

Independent Samples t-Test: Academic Subscale by Gender

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig.
Q11to20	Equal variances assumed	-2.56	349	.01

The t-test for equality of means indicates results for the academic subscale for gender are significant (.01). Female students present with significantly more positive academic reading attitudes than male students.

5.6.4 Summary of Academic Reading Attitude Findings

Significant differences in academic reading attitudes of students have been highlighted for year level and age. Older students' academic reading attitudes are more negative than younger students' academic reading attitudes. There also does appear to be a significant difference in academic reading attitudes of male and female students. Female students present with significantly more positive attitudes to academically reading in school than male students.

> *Research Question 2:*
> *How do students' preferences for reading different text types*
> *develop in primary school?*

5.7 ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY: TEXT TYPE PREFERENCES

Students' text type reading preferences (Q21) on the adapted Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) were analysed to ascertain the frequency for each text type at each year level, age, and for male and female students. Descriptive data generally highlight a variation in text type reading preferences across

primary year levels, ages and for male and female students. Pearson's Chi-square test tests for significant differences for year level, age and gender variables.

5.7.1 Year Level

Cross-tabulation analyses for year level indicate trends in text type reading preference data for picture books, chapter books, factual information books, children's magazines, factual information magazines, comics and newspapers. Chi-square tests indicate significance of year level differences. Data for text types are presented in Figures 5.11, 5.12, and 5.13.
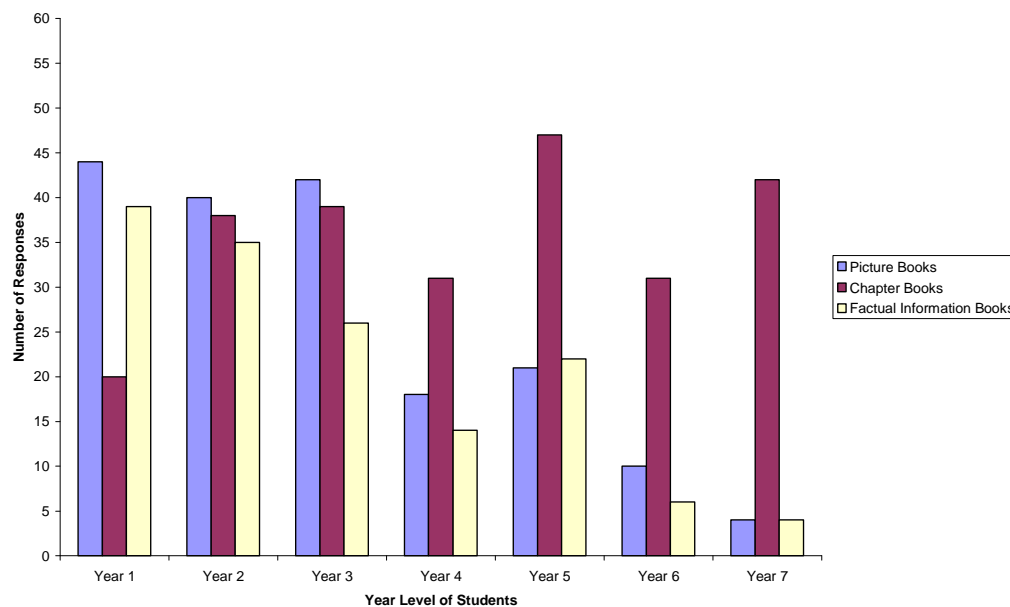
Figure 5.11 Picture, Chapter and Information Book preferences by year level

Interest in reading picture, chapter and factual information books varies across primary year levels. Students in Years 1, 2, and 3 present with very positive attitudes towards reading picture books. However students in Years 4 to 7 do not present with positive attitudes towards reading picture books. Chapter books are popular with most year levels, bar Year 1 and they are the preferred book type of Year 4 to 7 students. Year 5 students present with the most positive attitudes towards reading chapter books. Younger students have a more positive interest in reading factual information books than older students. However a slight rise in interest compared to the previous year level occurs in Year 5 and Year 7 students.
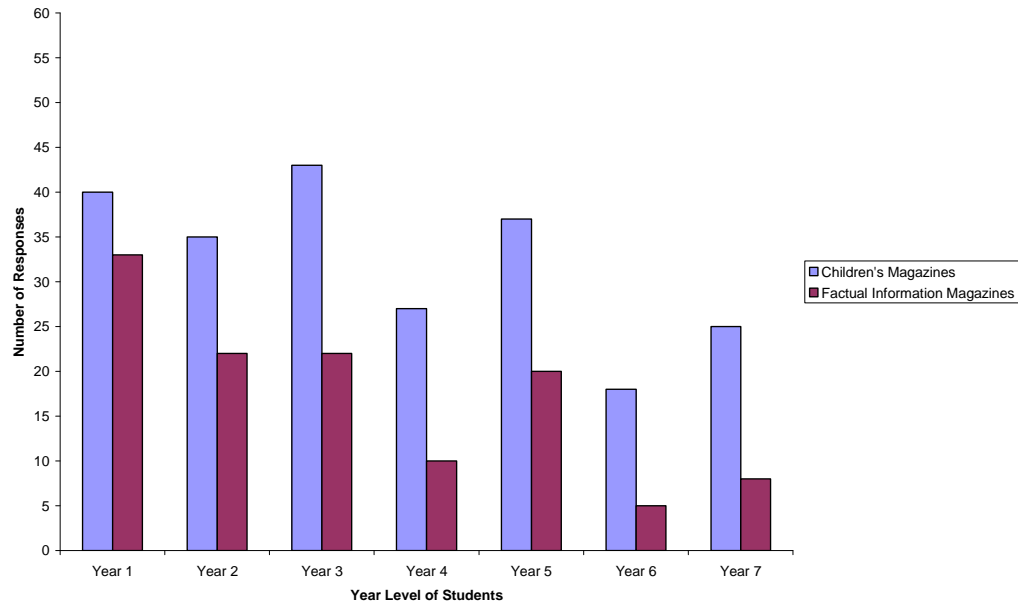
Figure 5.12 Children's and Factual Information Magazine preferences by year level

Older students have a less positive interest in reading factual information magazines compared to younger primary level students, although a rise in interest occurs in Year 5 students. Interest in reading children's magazines is similarly less positive in older students than younger students. However rises in interest are evident in Years 3, 5 and 7 students. Children's magazines are the more preferred magazine type across year levels.
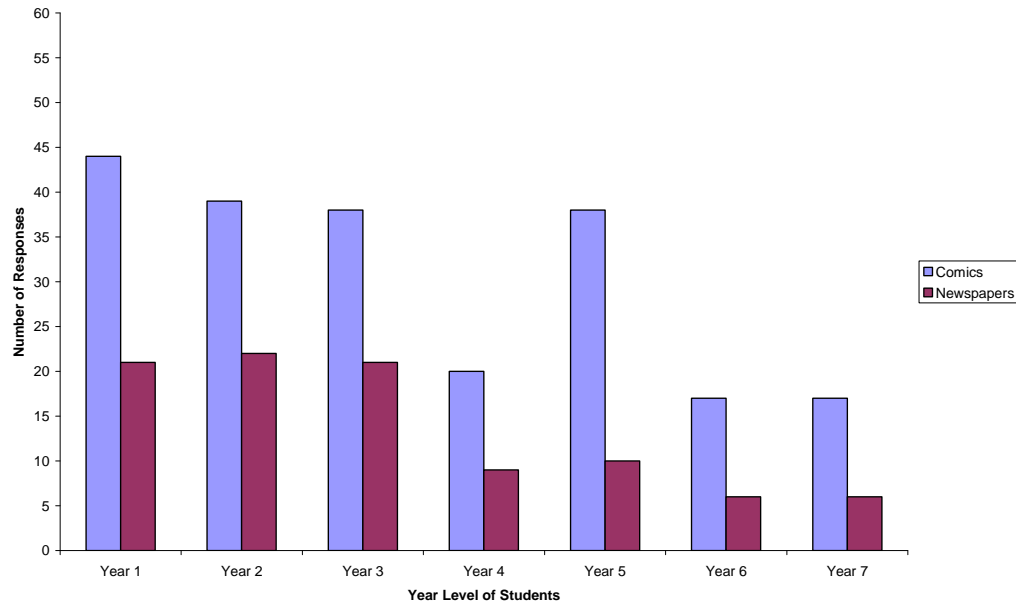
Figure 5.13 Comic and Newspaper preferences by year level

Older students have a less positive interest towards reading newspapers and comics. However, there is a rise in interest in reading comics noted in Year 5 students. Interest in reading comics is most evident with Years 1, 2, 3 and 5 students. Comics are a more preferred reading type for primary students than newspapers.

Pearson Chi-square tests were conducted to test the significance of differences between students' preferred types of texts and year level. All text types were significant for year level at the <.01 level and this is presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8

Chi-Square Tests for Text Type Preferences by Year Level

Pearson Chi-Square Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.(2-sided)
Picture Books	95.31	6	<.01
Chapter Books	38.70	6	<.01
Factual Information Books	60.50	6	<.01
Children's Magazines	17.05	6	<.01
Factual Information Magazines	42.03	6	<.01
Comics	40.69	6	<.01
Newspapers	34.49	6	<.01

5.7.2 Age

Cross-tabulation analyses for age indicate trends in text type reading preference data for picture books, chapter books, factual information books, children's magazines, factual information magazines, comics and newspapers. Chi-square tests indicate significance of age differences. Data for each text type are presented in Figures 5.14, 5.15 and 5.16.
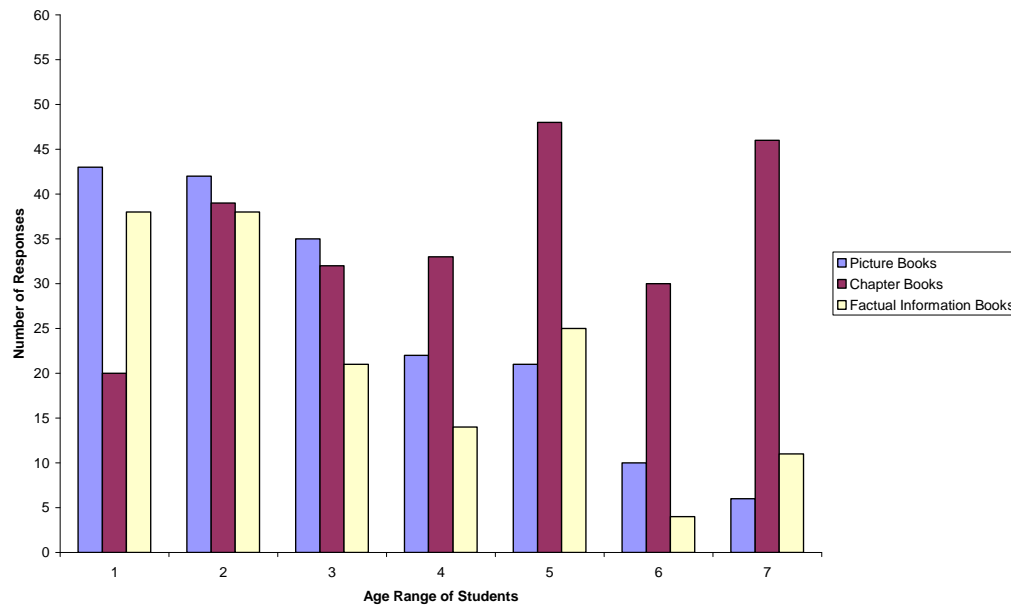
Figure 5.14 Picture, Chapter and Information Book preferences by age

The data indicate that as students get older their interest in reading picture, chapter and factual information books changes. Younger students prefer to read picture books compared to older students. Chapter books are popular with students of all ages, bar those 6 years to 6 years 11 months (*age range 1*). Chapter books are the preferred book type of students aged from 9 years to 9 years 11 months through to 12 years to 13 years 11 months (*age ranges 4 to 7*). Students aged 10 years to 10 years 11 months (*age range* 5) present with the most positive attitudes towards reading chapter books, followed closely by students aged 12 years to 13 years 11 months (*age range 7*). Older students' interest in reading factual information books is more negative than younger students' interest. However there is a rise in interest from the previous age ranges for students aged 10 years to 10 years 11 months (*age range* 5) and 12 years to 13 years 11 months (*age range 7*). These findings reflect those for year level.
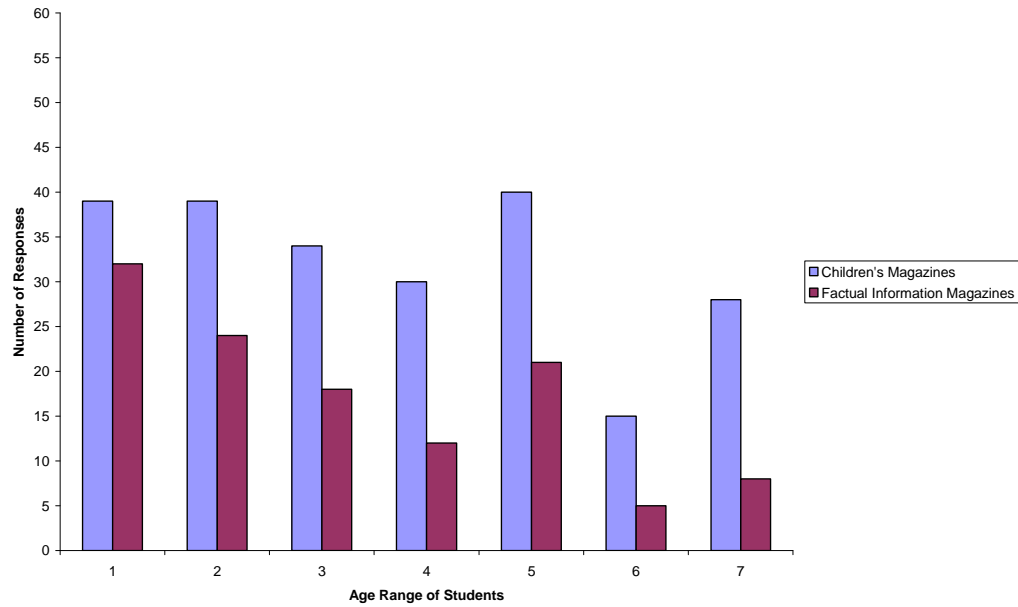
Figure 5.15 Children's and Factual Information Magazine preferences by age

Older students have a more negative interest in reading factual information magazines than younger students. There is a rise in interest for reading factual information magazines in students aged 10 years to 10 years 11 months (*age range 5*). Older students similarly have a more negative interest in reading children's magazines than younger students. However rises in interest are evident in students aged 10 years to 10 years 11 months (*age range* 5) and 12 years to 13 years 11 months (*age range* 7). Students tend to prefer to read children's magazines moreso than factual information magazines. These findings reflect those for year level.

Figure 5.16 Comic and Newspaper preferences by age

Older students' interest in reading newspapers and comics is more negative than younger students' interest. A rise in interest is noted in students aged 10 years to 10 years 11 months (*age range 5*). Positive interest in reading comics is seen in students aged 6 years to 6 years 11 months (*age range 1*), 7 years to 7 years 11 months (*age range 2*), 8 years to 8 years 11 months (*age range* 3) and 10 years to 10 years 11 months (*age range 5*). Comics are a more preferred type of text for primary aged students than newspapers. These findings reflect those for year level.

Pearson Chi-square tests were conducted to test the significance of differences between students' preferred types of texts and age. All text types were found to be significant for age at the <.01 level and this is shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9

Chi-Square Tests for Text Type Preferences by Age

Pearson Chi-Square Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Picture Books	94.23	6	<.01
Chapter Books	32.79	6	<.01
Factual Information Books	66.18	5	<.01
Children's Magazines	19.64	6	<.01
Factual Information Magazines	42.04	6	<.01
Comics	37.98	6	<.01
Newspapers	40.35	6	<.01

5.7.3 Gender

Cross-tabulation analyses for gender indicate trends in text type reading preference data for picture books, chapter books, factual information books, children's magazines, factual information magazines, comics and newspapers. Chi-square tests indicate significance of gender differences. Data for each text type are presented in Figures 5.17, 5.18, and 5.19.
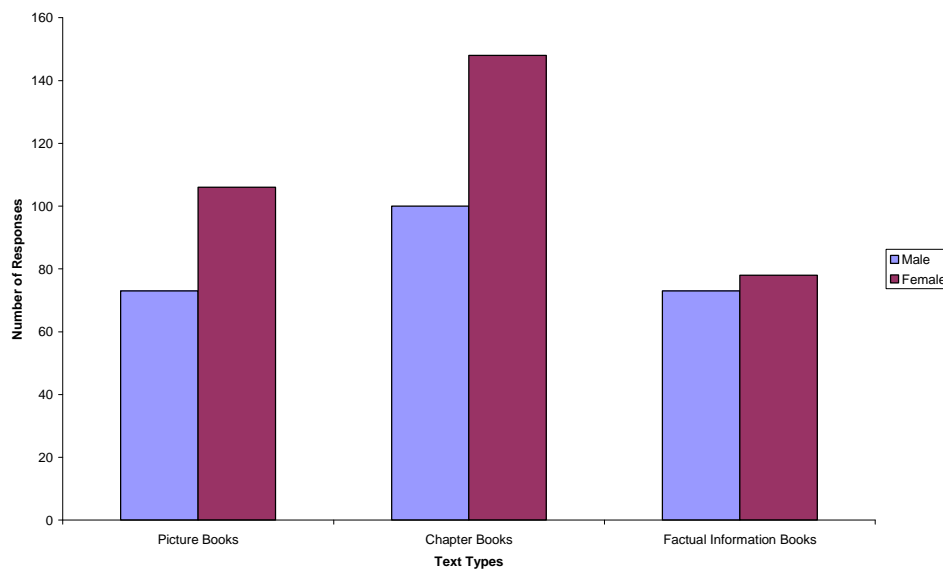
Figure 5.17 Picture, Chapter and Information Book preferences by gender

Overall, female and male students prefer to read chapter books, however female students show a stronger preference (n=148) than male students (n=100). Female

students (n=106) also prefer to read picture books more than male students (n=73). Preference for reading factual information books is fairly equitable for gender (males 73; females 78).
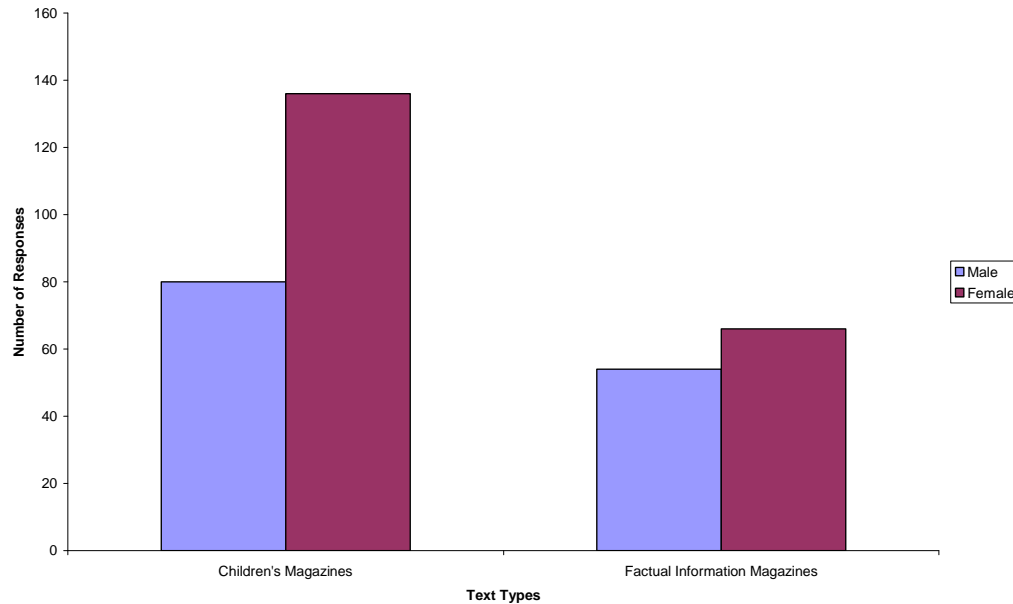
Figure 5.18 Children's and Factual Information Magazine preferences by gender

Female students have a stronger preference for reading children's magazines compared to male students. Female and male students have a similar preference for reading factual information magazines. Female (n=136) and male (n=80) students tend to prefer to read children's magazines over factual information magazines (female n=66; male n=54).
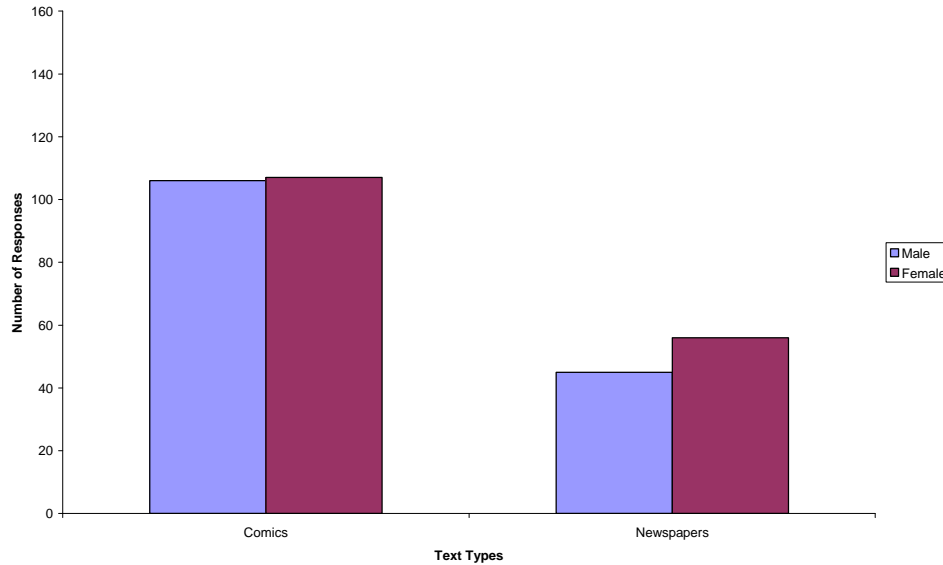
Figure 5.19 Comic and Newspaper preferences by gender

Female students (n=56) show slightly more of a preference for reading newspapers than male students (n=45). However the preference for reading comics is similar (female n= 107; male n=106). Comics are more preferred by females and males than newspapers.

Pearson Chi-square tests were conducted to test the significance of differences between students' preferred types of texts and gender. Children's magazines and comics were the only text types that showed a significant difference for gender and this is shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10

Chi-Square Tests for Text Type Preferences by Gender

Pearson Chi-Square Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Picture Books	1.17	1	.28
Chapter Books	3.34	1	.07
Factual Information Books	2.44	1	.15
Children's Magazines	4.43	1	.04
Factual Information Magazines	.15	1	.70
Comics	8.40	1	<.01
Newspapers	.05	1	.82

5.7.4 Summary of Text Type Reading Preferences

Comparisons were made between the total number of responses for all text types listed in Question 21 of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The most preferred text type of primary students was found to be chapter books (n=248). Children's magazines (n=225) and comics (n=213) were also very popular. Factual information magazines (n=120) and newspapers (n=101) were the least preferred text types of primary students. Total responses for text types are presented in Figure 5.20 and findings for year level, age and gender are summarized.
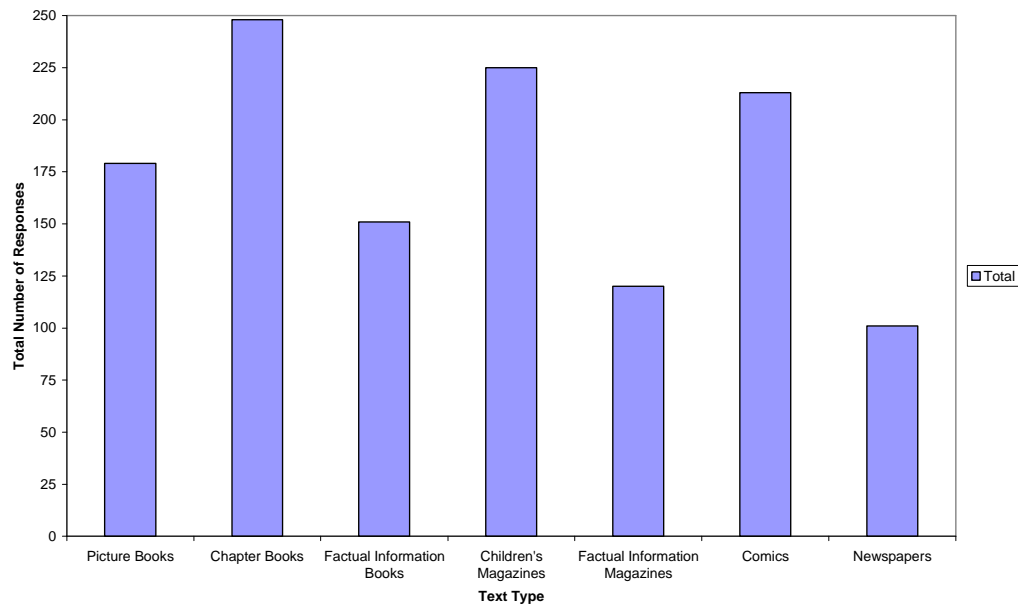
Figure 5.20 Total responses for text types

Picture, chapter and factual information books

Students have a more positive attitude towards reading picture books in the early primary ages and year levels. Chapter books are a more preferred type of text for older students who are in middle and upper primary year levels. Female students prefer to read picture and chapter books more than male students. Interest in reading information books declines as students get older and move throughout primary year levels. Both male and female students show a similar level of interest in reading information books.

Children's and factual magazines

Older students' interest in reading both factual and children's magazines is more negative than younger students' interest. Children's magazines are more popular, and interest in reading them rises in Years 3, 5 and 7. Female students show a more positive attitude towards reading information and children's magazines than male students.
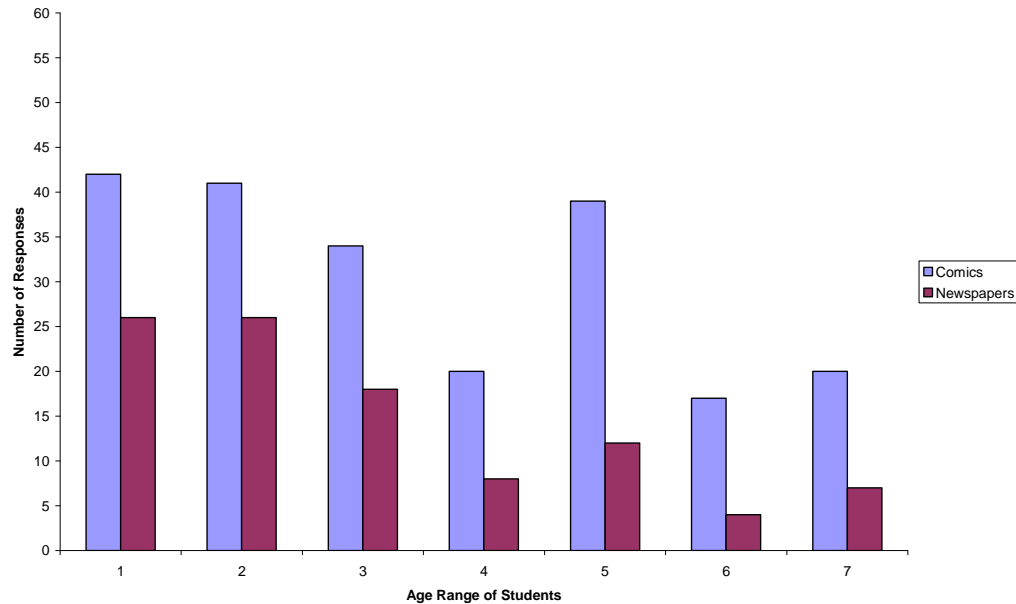
Comics and Newspapers

Older students' interest in reading newspapers and comics is more negative than younger students' interest. Comics are more popular than newspapers. Female students have a more positive attitude towards reading newspapers than male students. Interest in reading comics is similar for female and male students.

> *Research Question 3:*
> *What perceptions do teachers have of their students'*
> *classroom behaviour and attitudes to reading?*

5.8 TEACHER CHECKLIST: DESCRIPTIVE DATA

5.8.1 Behaviour and Reading Subscales

Descriptive data were examined to establish mean scores for questions on the behaviour and reading subscale to ascertain trends relating to students' year level, age and gender. The frequency of teachers' responses to the seven behaviour and ten reading subscale questions were calculated. Each response from teachers was rated from 4 to 1 (with 4 being excellent through to 1 being developing). Behaviour subscale scores ranged from –1.86 to 2.79 and reading subscale scores ranged from –2.37 to 2.75.

The mean score for teachers' behaviour subscale responses (Questions 1 to 8) was -1.69 with a standard deviation of 1.00. Distribution of teachers' responses on the behaviour subscale reflected a normal distribution bell curve, and this can be seen in Figure 5.21.
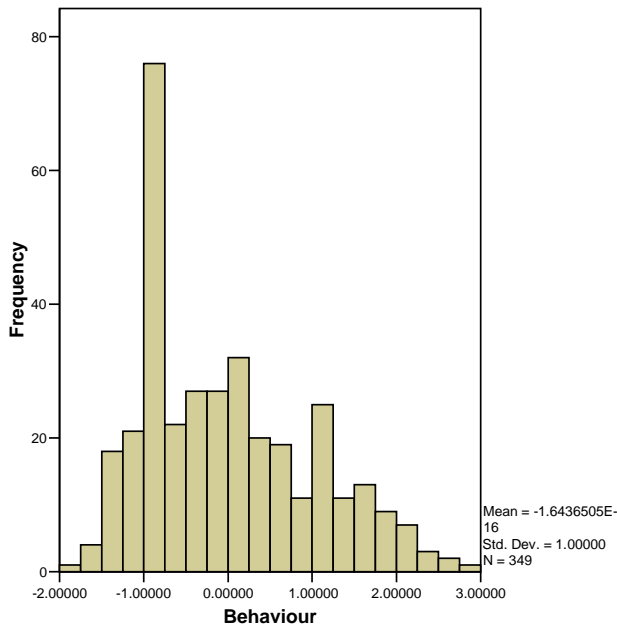
Figure 5.21 Distribution of scores for the behaviour subscale

The mean score for teachers' reading subscale responses (Questions 8 to 17) was –1.64 with a standard deviation of 1.00. Distribution of teachers' responses on the reading subscale reflected a normal distribution bell curve. This is highlighted in Figure 5.22.
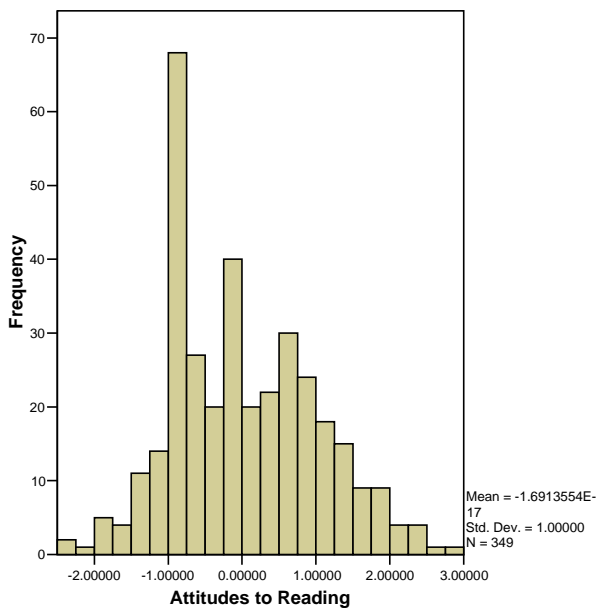
Figure 5.22 Distribution of scores for the reading subscale

5.9 TEACHER CHECKLIST: PERCEPTIONS OF BEHAVIOUR

Data for teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour subscale questions (1 to 7) were analysed for significant differences across year level, age and gender. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests were conducted to test for significance of differences. Contrast tests indicate significance of findings between lower and middle/upper year levels and ages of students. An independent samples t-test was conducted for gender.

5.9.1 Year Level

Mean scores for each year level indicate trends in the behaviour subscale data. These are presented in Figure 5.23.

Figure 5.23 Mean scores: Behaviour subscale by year level

Year 5 (mean .29) teachers have the most positive perception of their students' behaviour, followed by Year 3 (mean .14) and Year 6 (mean .13) teachers. Year 7 (mean -.28) and Year 4 (mean -.27) teachers have a negative perception of their students' classroom behaviour. An ANOVA highlighted a significant difference for the behavioural questions in relation to year level. This is shown in Table 5.11.

120

Table 5.11

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Behaviour Subscale by Year Level

		df	f	Sig.
Q1-7	Between Groups	6	2.36	.03
	Within Groups	342		
	Total	348		

Post hoc (Scheffe) tests did not indicate significance between teachers' perceptions across year level. A contrast test was conducted to indicate any contrast between teachers' perceptions in Years 1 to 3 and Years 4 to 7. This is presented in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12

Contrast Test: Behaviour Subscale by Year Level

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q1-7	Assume equal variances	.41	342	.69

The contrast test did not identify a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of behaviour in the lower year levels compared to middle and upper year levels.

5.9.2 Age

Mean scores for age indicate trends in the behaviour subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.24.

Figure 5.24 Mean scores: Behaviour subscale by age

Teachers of students aged 8 years to 8 years 11 months *age range 3* (mean .22) have the most positive perception of students' behaviour, followed by teachers of students aged 10 years to 10 years 11 months *age range 5* (mean .19) and 11 years to 11 years 11 months *age range 6* (mean .18). Teachers of students aged 9 years to 9 years 11 months *age range 4* (mean -.34) have the least positive perception of their students' behaviour. An ANOVA identified a significant effect for age for the behaviour questions as shown in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Behaviour Subscale by Age

		df	f	Sig.
Q1-7	Between Groups	6	2.22	.04
	Within Groups	342		
	Total	348		

Post hoc (Scheffe) tests did not indicate significance between teachers' perceptions across age. A contrast test was conducted to indicate any contrast between teachers'

perceptions of students aged 6 years to 8 years 11 months (*age ranges 1 to* 3) and 9 years to 13 years 11 months (*age ranges 4 to 7*). This is presented in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14

Contrast Test: Behaviour Subscale by Age

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q1-7	Assume equal variances	.76	342	.45

The contrast test did not identify a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of younger students' behaviour compared to older students' behaviour.

5.9.3 Gender

Mean scores for gender indicate trends in the behaviour subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.25.
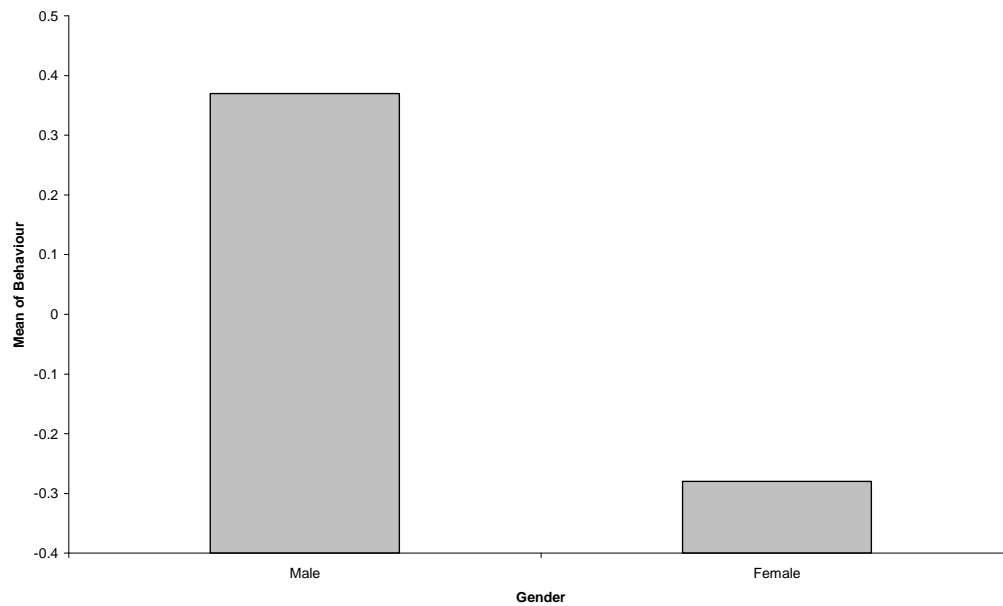
Figure 5.25 Mean scores: Behaviour subscale by gender

Teachers perceive male students (mean .37) to behave more appropriately in class than female students (mean -.28).

An independent samples t-test was conducted for the behaviour subscale for gender and this data is presented in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15

Independent Samples t-Test: Behaviour Subscale by Gender

| | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
		t	df	Sig.
Q1to7	Equal variances assumed	6.35	347	<.01

The t-test for equality of means indicates there is a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of behaviour for male and female students.

5.9.4 Summary of Behaviour Subscale Findings

Significance in teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour for year level and age have been indicated, however post hoc (Scheffe) tests do not report any significance. Teachers of students in the younger year levels perceive behaviour to improve. However declines in perceptions occur by teachers of students in Years 4, 6 and 7. Contrast tests have not highlighted significance between teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour and year level or age. There is a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of males and females behaviour. Teachers' perceive male students behave more appropriately in class than female students.

5.10 TEACHER CHECKLIST: PERCEPTIONS OF READING

Data for teachers' perceptions of students' reading subscale questions (8 to 17) were analysed for significant differences across year level, age and gender. ANOVAs and post hoc (Scheffe) tests were conducted to test for significance of differences. Contrast tests indicate any significance of findings between lower and middle/upper year levels and ages of students. An independent samples t-test was conducted for gender.

5.10.1 Year Level

Mean scores for each year level indicate trends in the reading subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.26.
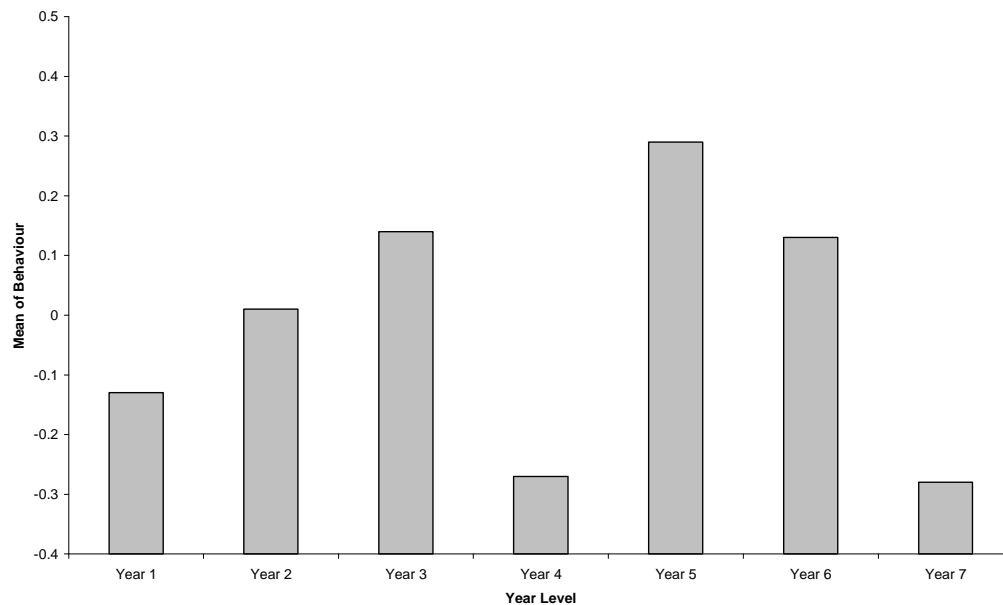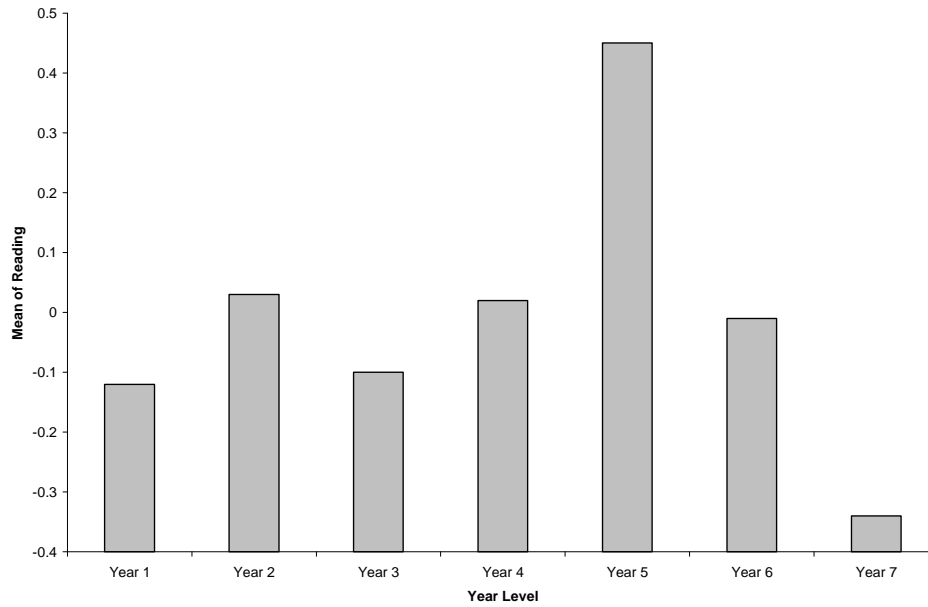
Figure 5.26 Mean scores: Reading subscale by year level

Year 5 (mean .45) teachers' have the most positive perception of students' as readers and Year 7 (mean -.34) teachers' have the least positive perceptions of their students as readers. An ANOVA highlighted a significant difference for the reading questions in relation to year level. This is shown in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Reading Subscale by Year Level

		df	f	Sig.
Q8-17 Reading	Between Groups	6	3.00	<.01
	Within Groups	342		
	Total	348		

Post hoc (Scheffe) tests revealed a significant difference for the reading subscale for year level. Significant differences were found between teachers' perceptions of students in Year 7 and Year 5. Teachers of Year 5 (mean .45) students had a more positive perception of them as readers compared to Year 7 teachers' (mean -.34) perceptions.

A contrast test was conducted to indicate any significance between teachers' perceptions in Years 1 to 3 and Years 4 to 7 and this is presented in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17

Contrast Test: Reading Subscale by Year Level

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q8-17	Assume equal variances	-.86	342	.39

The contrast test did not identify a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of students' reading in the lower year levels compared to middle and upper year levels.

5.10.2 Age

Mean scores for age indicate trends in academic subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.27.
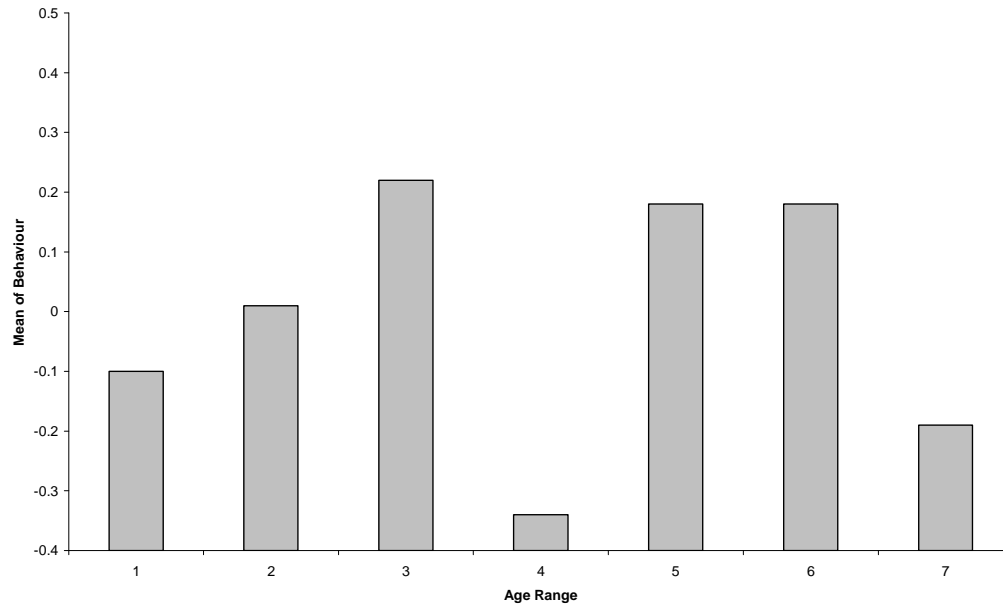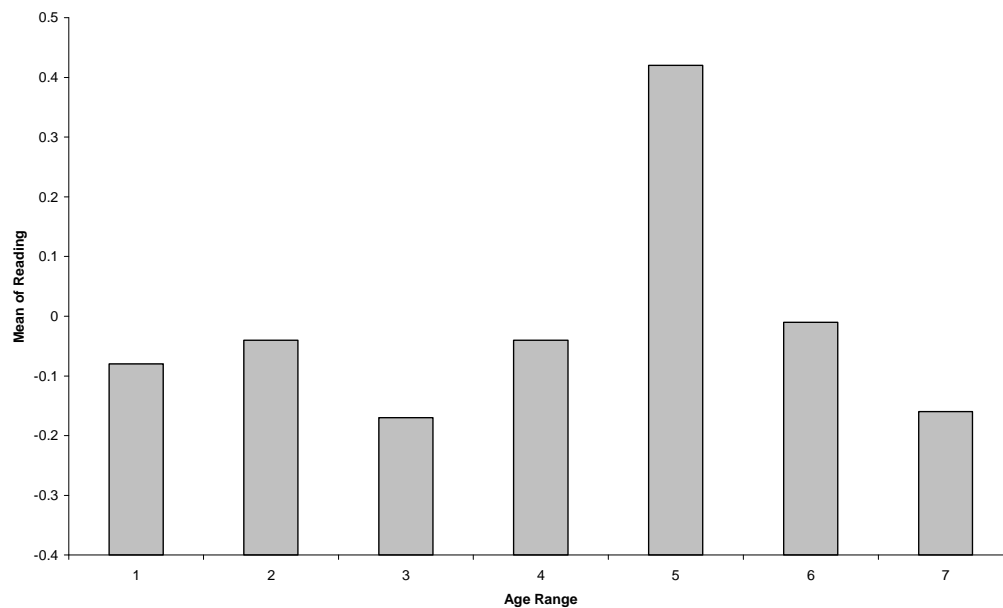

Figure 5.27 Mean scores: Reading subscale by age

Teachers of students aged 10 years to 10 years 11 months *age range 5* (mean .42) have the most positive perceptions of students as readers. Teachers of students in the other age ranges did not have a positive perception of their students as readers,

especially those teachers of students aged 8 years to 8 years 11 months *age range 3* (mean -.17) and 12 years to 13 years 11 months *age range 7* (mean -.16). An ANOVA identified a significant difference for the reading questions in relation to age and this is shown in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18

One-Way Analysis of Variance: Reading Subscale by Age

		df	f	Sig.
Q8to17	Between Groups	6	2.37	.03
	Within Groups	342		
	Total	348		

Post hoc (Scheffe) tests did not indicate significance for reading by age. A contrast test was conducted to indicate significance between students aged 6 years to 8 years 11 months (*age ranges 1 to 3*) and 9 years to 13 years 11 months (*age ranges 4 to 7*). This is presented in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19

Contrast Test: Reading Subscale by Age

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q8-17	Assume equal variances	-1.34	342	.18

The contrast test did not identify a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of younger students' reading compared to older students' reading.

5.10.3 Gender

Mean scores for gender indicate trends in the reading subscale data and these are presented in Figure 5.28.
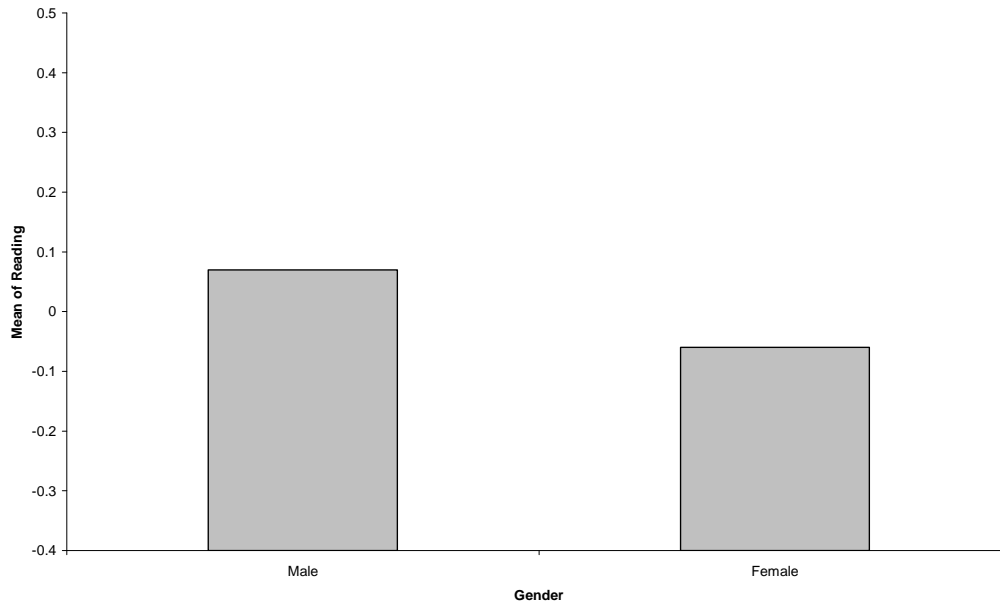
Figure 5.28 Mean scores: Reading subscale by gender

Teachers perceive male students (mean .07) to be more positive about reading than female students (mean -.06).

An independent samples t-test was conducted for the reading subscale for gender. This data is presented in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20

Independent Samples t-Test: Reading Subscale by Gender

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig.
Q8to17	Equal variances assumed	1.22	347	.23

The t-test for equality of means indicates there is not a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of male and female students' attitude to reading.

5.10.4 Summary of Reading Subscale Findings

Differences in teachers' perceptions of students' attitude to reading for year level and age have been indicated. Post hoc (Scheffe) tests have not indicated significance for age. However there is a significant difference for year level. Teachers of students in

Years 1 to 2 and Years 3 to 5 perceive students' reading attitudes improve. However teachers in Years 3, 6 and 7 have a more negative perception of students' reading attitudes compared to teachers in the previous year level. Year 5 teachers perceive their students to be significantly more positive about reading compared to Year 7 teachers' perceptions of their students. Contrast tests have not highlighted significance between teachers' perceptions of students' level of reading and year level or age. Teachers' perceive male students to be more engaged readers than female students, although this is not statistically significant.

> *Research Question 4:*
>
> *What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading for enjoyment and their overall achievement in reading?*

5.11 TEACHER CHECKLIST: CORRELATION OF ENJOYMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Teachers' perceptions of students' recreational and academic reading attitudes were gathered on the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003). Data for teachers' perceptions of students' attitude to reading for enjoyment in class (Question 8) and their overall achievement in school reading (Question 17) were analysed.

A Pearson's correlation tested whether a bivariate correlation exists between two items (Questions 8 and 17) on the Teacher's Checklist (Young, 2003). This is shown in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21

Correlation: Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Reading for Enjoyment and Overall Achievement in Reading

		Q8 Reading for Enjoyment	Q17 Overall Achievement in Reading
Q8 Reading for Enjoyment	Pearson Correlation	1	.77(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.01
	N	349	349
Q17 Overall Achievement in Reading	Pearson Correlation	.77(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.01	
	N	349	349

A correlation of .77 exists for the two questions identified and this was significant (at the .01 level).

Cross-tabulation analyses provide data indicating the frequency of responses for both questions for each of the four Likert responses (developing, satisfactory, good and excellent) listed on the Teacher Checklist (Young, 2003). Data are presented in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Reading for Enjoyment by Overall Achievement in Reading

		Q 8 Reading for Enjoyment				
		Developing	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
Q17 Overall Achievement in Reading	Developing	104	12	2	0	118
	Satisfactory	40	68	11	0	119
	Good	2	22	47	5	76
	Excellent	2	6	12	16	36
	Total	148	108	72	21	349

Thirty percent of teachers who perceive students do not enjoy reading at school (developing) also perceive they have a very low level of overall reading achievement. Only 0.6% of teachers who perceived students have a positive attitude to reading (good and excellent) for enjoyment also perceived they had a low level of reading achievement (developing). Twenty-three percent of teachers indicated they perceived students who enjoyed reading at school (good and excellent) also achieved well academically in reading (good and excellent). Only 1.1% of teachers thought students who did not enjoy reading at school (developing) can achieve highly in reading (good and excellent). Teachers at the school perceive students to have a low level of enjoyment and achievement for reading.

A Pearson Chi-square test was conducted to test the significance of differences between teachers' perceptions of students' reading enjoyment and academic achievement in reading. Significance was indicated at the <.01 level and this is presented in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23

Chi-Square Tests for Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Enjoyment by Achievement in Reading

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	341.58	9	<.01
N of Valid Cases	349		

5.11.1 Summary of Correlation Findings

Significance in teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of reading and overall achievement in reading has been highlighted. Teachers' perceive that as students' level of reading achievement increases so too does their level of enjoyment in reading. Therefore, teachers believe that the more students are able to academically read, the more they like it and want to read for recreational purposes.

5.12 CHAPTER REVIEW

Data from students and teachers have been displayed in this Chapter. Firstly, students' attitudes for recreational and academic reading, and their text type reading preferences have been detailed. Secondly, teachers' perceptions of their students' behaviour and attitudes to read were presented. The relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of reading in class and their overall achievement in reading also have been discussed.

Descriptive analyses were initially conducted and provide an insight into general trends in data relating to year level, age and gender of students. Principal Component Analyses were conducted on students' attitude and preference data, and also on teachers' perception data, and factor solutions were presented. ANOVAs were conducted on data from students and teachers to examine differences for year level and age. Post hoc (Scheffe) tests tested for significance of year level and age differences and independent samples t-tests were conducted to test for significance for gender. Pearson Chi-square tests tested for significant differences for students' preferred text types and Pearson's Correlation highlighted the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of reading and reading achievement.

A display of data from students and teachers has been presented in Chapter 5 and contributes one part to the overall understanding of reading, and this is reflected in Figure 5.29. In the next Chapter conclusions will be made and recommendations suggested.
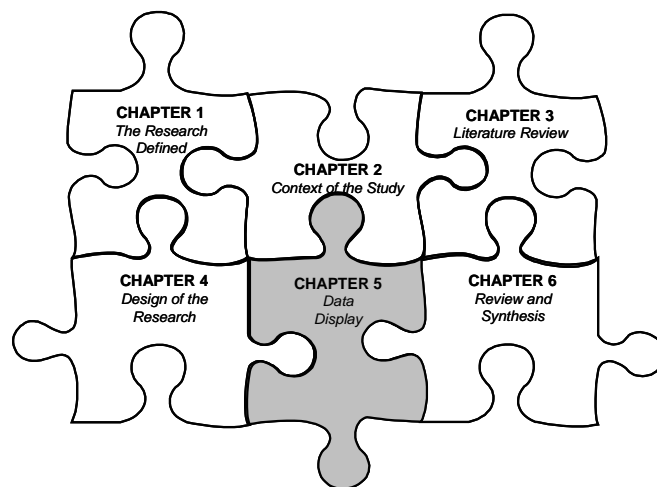
Figure 5.29 Thesis overview

CHAPTER 6

REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS

6.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This study has been a purposeful inquiry into students' attitudes towards reading and their text preferences. In addition, teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes also have been examined. Four research questions have guided this study and these have illustrated how students feel about engaging in reading, both for recreational and academic purposes, and how teachers perceive their students' behaviour and attitudes to reading.

Each chapter in this thesis has presented a valuable piece of the picture into students' attitudes towards and teachers' perceptions of their reading. This chapter presents the final piece by drawing together findings, conclusions and recommendations. Finally, these recommendations are aligned with key National and System recommendations and directions for further research are highlighted. An overview of Chapter 6 is presented in Figure 6.1.
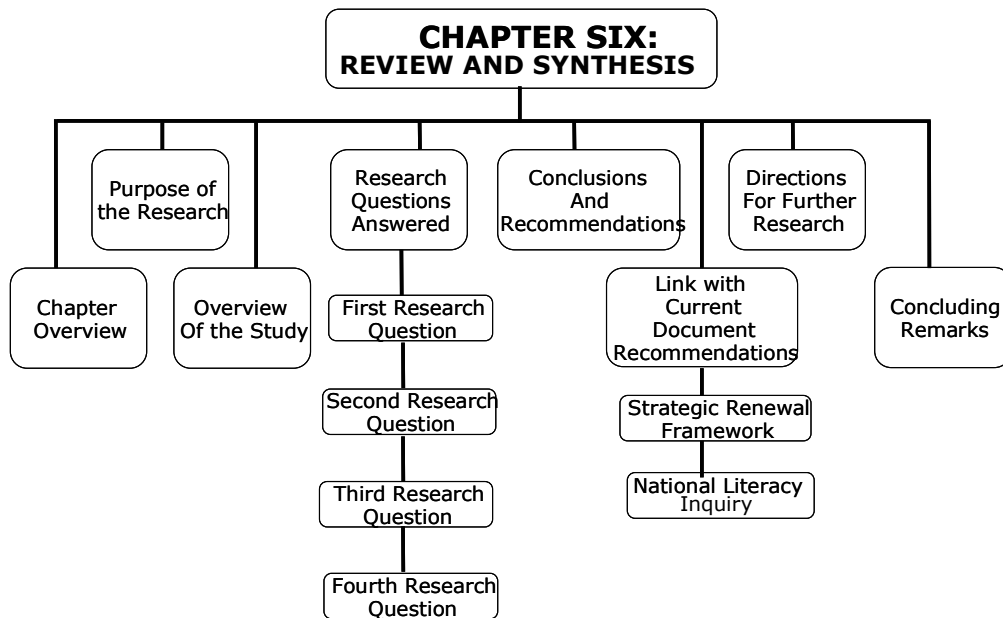
Figure 6.1 Overview of Chapter 6

6.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to explore students' recreational and academic reading attitudes and text type preferences as well as teachers' perceptions of students' classroom behaviour and attitudes to read so a more comprehensive informed understanding of reading can be gained. This knowledge helps teachers design innovations in curriculum content and practice and also promotes relevant future resourcing of texts for use in classrooms. Consequently, classroom reading activities can become more recreationally and academically relevant for today's students.

The study involved students (in Years 1 to 7) and teachers from a Brisbane Catholic Education Archdiocesan primary school. It is relevant in that it aligns with the current National agenda on Australian students' literacy standards. The area of reading has been researched widely over the past decade. However, this study adds its own value as it examines students' reading attitudes and text preferences and their teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes. Four research questions have guided this study. These are:

1. How do students' attitudes to reading develop in primary school?
2. How do students' preferences for reading different text types develop in primary school?
3. What perceptions do teachers have of their students' classroom behaviour and attitudes to reading?
4. What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading for enjoyment and their overall achievement in reading?

6.3 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The thesis is divided into six chapters and each chapter contributed one part to a detailed understanding of the study. In Chapter 1 the research questions, problem, purpose and significance are stated. The researcher is introduced and experiences that led to this study being conducted are articulated. The research site is explained to situate the study in an educational context.

The study is contextualised in Chapter 2 in light of relevant National, State and System literacy agendas. The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First century (MCEETYA, 1999) presents National educational guidelines for schools. National literacy standards of Australian students

also are summarized in this Chapter. The introduction of the new outcomes-based Queensland English Syllabus (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005a) and the current Year 2 Diagnostic Net (Department of Education & the Arts, 1998) enable teachers to understand and assess student literacy performance in light of documented levels and phases. The Queensland Reform Longitudinal Study (Lingard et al., 2001), Literate Futures project (Department of Education, 2000), and New Basics Project (Department of Education & the Arts, 2004) address key issues of literacy access and power in increasingly diverse student populations and these State projects are detailed. Trends in the data from Queensland Year 3, 5 and 7 statewide literacy tests (Queensland Studies Authority, 2003, 2004a) are examined and Brisbane Catholic Education's framework (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005) documents are discussed. Demographic details relating to students' family and school suburb are provided to contextualise data presented in Chapter 5.

A review of relevant literature is presented in Chapter 3. The history of reading theories throughout the last century is detailed as well as students' innate influences of motivation, curiosity and self-efficacy. Family influences on reading and school-based influences also are detailed. Motivational and attitudinal instruments used by key researchers are presented along with related findings. These findings influence the understanding teachers have of their students reading attitudes and motivation.

The research design that aligns with the research questions is presented in Chapter 4. The paradigm for this study is quantitative and it operates within an objectivist epistemology. Research principles align with a positivistic framework. Research must be reliable and valid and these concepts are defined. The cross-sectional nature of the design enables data to be collected using a common survey technique across the primary school including Years 1 to 7. Participants, setting, instruments and research procedures are explained along with methods of analysis employed to reduce and examine the data findings. Generalisability of data, limitations and ethical considerations are documented and the theoretical framework is discussed.

Data gathered from two quantitative surveys, one from students and the other from teachers, are displayed in Chapter 5. Data are presented in four sections addressing each research question. Differences for year level, age and gender are explored for

each research question. Reliability and validity of instruments used in this study are outlined.

Data displayed in Chapter 5 are reviewed and synthesized in Chapter 6. The four key research questions are answered in this Chapter as conclusions are drawn regarding students' attitudes and preferences for reading as well as teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading. Recommendations are made in light of these conclusions and are linked with current National and System documents. Directions for future research are suggested.

6.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

This section of the chapter draws together findings relating to each research question with data being drawn from participating students and teachers.

<u>6.4.1 First Research Question</u>

The first research question examined students' attitudes to recreational and academic reading. Attitudes are presented and year level, age and gender variances are noted. The first research question is:

* How do students' attitudes to reading develop in primary school?

Firstly, recreational reading attitudes of students were investigated in relation to students' attitudes to recreational reading and it was found recreational reading is more preferred by students in Years 3 to 7 than academic reading. In this study, students in Years 2 to Year 5 had positive reading attitudes. This contrasts with findings from Davies and Brember (1993) where it was found that recreational reading engagement of students were more negative across the primary years. At the school where the study was conducted, students in Years 1 to 4 attend weekly library lessons. During these visits students are introduced to a variety of texts. These sessions have a recreational reading emphasis rather than an academic focus. This may contribute to the positive attitudes of students towards recreational reading. Male and female students prefer recreational reading over academic reading. Furthermore, female students have more positive recreational attitudes towards reading than male students who appear to prefer to spend their recreational time engaged in activities other than reading. This finding supports that of Baker and Wigfield (1999), Brozo

and Schmelzer (1997), Fielding (1998), Kush and Watkins (1996) and Parker and Paradis (1986).

Secondly, students' attitudes to academic reading revealed reading attitudes of students in Year 1 and Year 2 are more positive for academic reading than recreational reading. In this study older students' attitudes presented with more negative attitudes towards academic reading. This supports findings from Kush and Watkins (1996), McKenna et al. (1995), Sainsbury and Schagen (2004) and Worthy et al. (1999). Female students were found to present with more positive academic reading attitudes compared to male students and this reflects findings from the aforementioned researchers.

6.4.2 Second Research Question

The second research question explored types of texts students prefer to read. Preferences are presented and year level, age and gender variances are noted. The second research question is:

> * How do students' preferences for reading different text types develop in primary school?

Students in early primary years prefer picture books whereas students in upper primary years prefer chapter books. The most preferred type of text is chapter books, followed by children's magazines and comics. Older students' interest in reading information books, magazines, comics and newspapers was more negative than younger students' interest. Female students show more of a preference for reading picture and chapter books and magazines compared to male students. Both female and male students show an equitable level of interest in reading factual information books and comics.

Davies and Brember (1993) found that 94% of primary aged students they studied rated fiction as their preferred recreational reading material. However this study's findings contrast this as only 34.5% of students' text type preference responses were for fiction texts. Findings from this study support Davies and Brember's (1993, 1995) findings in that interest in recreational reading of information texts was more negative in the upper primary year levels. Furthermore, Davies and Brember's (1995) assertions that comics become more popular text types for students than information

books (as students got older) was replicated in this study. Interest in reading comics has been previously reported to increase from Years 4 to 6, and comics have been stated as being the preferred reading material of Year 6 students (Parker & Paradis, 1986; Worthy et al., 1999). Findings from this study did not align with these previous findings. The increase in the availability of electronic print may be impacting upon students' reading preferences. Students today may be more inclined to read factual informational texts (through email and the internet) than engage in reading print-based fictional texts.

6.4.3 Third Research Question

The third research question identified the perceptions teachers have about their students' behaviour in class and attitudes towards reading. Variances for year level, age and gender are noted. The third research question is:

* What perceptions do teachers have of their students' classroom behaviour
   and attitudes to reading?

Firstly, teachers' perceptions of their students' behaviour were investigated and it was found that their perceptions of students' behaviour improves throughout the early years (Years 1-3). However these perceptions are less positive in Year 4, before positively peaking in Year 5. Teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour is more negative again in Year 6 and Year 7. Furthermore, teachers were found to have more positive perceptions of male than female students' behaviour in class.

Teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour differed throughout primary years. In this study, teachers perceive students' behaviour is generally less positive in the middle and upper primary years. Students in these year levels (Years 4 to 7) are becoming more independent learners who are exploring their interests and they are forming their identity as a person and a learner and so behaviour can vary considerably over time (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). A developing sense of identity influences students' general classroom behaviour and their attitudes towards and engagement in reading (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). Teachers' perceptions of student behaviour and attitude affects the way they plan for and manage reading activities in class.

Secondly, teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading were investigated and it was found that their perceptions of students' attitudes to reading were more positive in Year 2 to Year 1 and again from Year 4 to Year 3 and then Year 5 to Year 4. Teachers' of students in Years 3, 6 and 7 do not perceive their students to be as positive about reading as teachers in the other year levels. The difference between Year 5 and Year 7 teachers' perceptions of students' reading attitudes is significant. Teachers perceive male students to be more positive about reading than female students.

Teachers align reading activities with their perceptions of students' reading needs (Sweet et al., 1998). A reciprocal relationship between teachers' perceptions of students as readers and their actual level of reading engagement in school has been reported in previous studies (Nolen & Haladyna, 1990; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). In this study, teachers' perceptions of students as academic readers do not align with students' actual attitudes towards engaging in academic reading. Students' attitudes towards reading for academic purposes were found to be less positive across the primary year levels whereas only teachers of Year 7 students have significantly more negative perceptions of their students as readers. This mismatch can impact on students' learning as reading activities provided may not address their academic reading needs. Consequently, students' attitudes towards reading and their level of engagement can be affected.

Teachers perceive that male students behave more appropriately in class and are more positive about reading at school compared to female students. This finding is of interest in light of the research in the area of boys and education (Biddulph, 1997; Department of Education Science & Training, 2005c). Further qualitative investigation is needed to examine these findings in detail.

6.4.3 Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question examined teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of and achievement in reading at school. The fourth research question is:

> * What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading for enjoyment and their overall achievement in reading?

A significant correlation exists between teachers' perceptions of students' enjoyment of and achievement in reading. Teachers perceived students who struggled to read did

not enjoy reading, and those students who do achieve well with reading enjoy engaging in reading at school.

Findings from this study align with existing literature on motivation and self-efficacy (Aunola et al., 2002; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005; Stahl, 2003; Young et al., 1997). Students' motivation to read is influenced by their internal beliefs regarding their capability (self-efficacy). Their attitudes to reading can change depending on their actual or perceived success or failure in reading activities (Kazelskis et al., 2005). If students perceive they can read they are more likely to engage in reading activities in class and achieve higher academically with reading. Therefore, students who are more efficacious and motivated to read become better readers (Gambrell, 1996; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

In this study only 4.6% of students were perceived by their teachers to have an excellent level of academic reading achievement and enjoy engaging in reading. Thirty percent of students in this study were perceived to have a negative attitude to reading for enjoyment in class and were perceived not to achieve well in reading. This finding supports McKenna et al.'s (1995) model that indicates students who have trouble with reading would have more negative reading attitudes than students for whom reading comes easily. If students are perceived by their teachers as having low levels of enjoyment and achievement in reading, they may develop task avoidance and self-handicapping strategies as they come to expect failure. Throughout the primary years this can impact greatly on students' level of reading achievement in school and also on their level of participation in society in years to come.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching today is significantly different from previous decades as teachers use curriculum documents emphasizing an outcomes based approach, and students are socially and experientially different. It is argued "today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). Compared to students from previous generations, students today, "think and process information fundamentally different" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). Students today are growing up in a society whereby reading material is available to them on demand, at the touch of a finger, using modes such as the world wide web, email, mobile phones and instant text messaging. This shift in students' thinking patterns and the types of

reading materials available has serious implications for teachers in the way they plan, teach and assess curriculum content, especially reading. Innovative reading practices need to be embraced by teachers so students today can effectively engage in reading activities at school.

This section of the chapter highlights conclusions from data presented in Chapter 5 and recommendations are made based on these. A detailed picture of students' reading attitudes and preferences and teachers' perceptions has been presented. The following five recommendations suggest how schools can maximize the quality of class based reading activities to promote students' positive reading attitudes, increase their level of reading engagement and enhance their academic achievement.

6.5.1 Recreational and Academic Attitudes of Students

Students' recreational reading engagement needs to be publicly promoted and positively celebrated in schools. For students to be motivated and see the value of engaging in reading they must be immersed in a school classroom environment that offers a range of recreational activities and opportunities. These activities and opportunities need to be actively sought by teachers and enthusiastically promoted so all students can become more effective readers and develop positive attitudes towards engagement with reading beyond school. By school personnel publicly promoting and celebrating reading, students will perceive recreational reading as an enjoyable and socially accepted practice.

> **1. It is recommended that recreational reading engagement be publicly promoted and positively celebrated within the school community.**

The teaching of reading needs to be structured throughout all primary year levels so students are scaffolded appropriately and can develop positive attitudes towards themselves as readers. Blocks of time devoted to literacy ("literacy blocks") are an effective way of organising literacy activities as students have a consistent daily lesson structure and sequence and can be in a regular routine about when, where and how to 'do literacy'. Having an established daily structure for literacy activities takes the guesswork away regarding expectations for task and behaviour so students can exert their cognitive attention towards the set literacy tasks.

Within a literacy block framework, teachers have the opportunity to support struggling readers academically by providing regular scaffolded assistance and modeling of reading and coping strategies. Through whole class and small group components of the literacy block, teachers can become aware (through observation and open verbal communications) of students' textual interests, attitudes and perceptions of themselves as readers both recreationally and academically. Class reading data are invaluable to teachers and informs their further literacy planning and pedagogical practices.

A structured literacy block format could be used by teachers throughout all primary year levels to effectively teach literacy skills and concepts of print. If students systematically learn key reading skills in early and middle primary year levels then students may develop a higher level of reading competency and a more positive attitude towards recreational and academic reading by the upper primary year levels.

> **2. It is recommended that a structured approach to literacy sessions (literacy block) be established and implemented with students across all primary year levels.**

Guided reading is an effective strategy for the teaching of reading as students are grouped together for reading activities predominantly on the basis of their academic reading levels. Students who do not enjoy reading at school perceive they have a low level of reading achievement. In small guided reading groups, teachers can interact more regularly with students to gain a deeper insight into their reading attitudes and preferences. Teachers can use data gathered to select more personally relevant text types and topics for groups of students. Consequently, teachers can use these texts as a vehicle to enhance students' interest in engaging in reading and to allow students to experience the enjoyment of reading texts of interest.

By teachers working with a group of students of a similar reading level, students can feel comfortable expressing ideas and experimenting with level appropriate reading strategies. Active verbal dialogue can occur between teachers and students to clarify or expand upon reading strategies used, textual concepts and vocabulary (which aids comprehension). The small group format and matching of student to text allows students to consistently experience success when reading and over time perceive

themselves as successful readers. Promoting students' positive attitude towards academic reading is particularly significant as they move through primary year levels and become more self-conscious. Therefore, guided reading would be a beneficial strategy for the teaching of reading across all primary year levels to positively promote students' self-efficacy as well as their academic reading ability.

> **3. It is recommended that guided reading occur as a key instructional approach to the teaching of reading across all primary year levels.**

6.5.2 Text Types Preferred by Students

Teachers typically demonstrate a strong reliance on fiction based texts when teaching reading, as early years classes (Years 1 to 3) traditionally introduce picture books, whereas middle to upper years classes (Years 4 to 7) focus on chapter books (novels). The sections students may borrow from in school libraries can often reinforce this fictional distinction. Teachers often believe non-fiction texts are too difficult for students, particularly those in the early years. Over-reliance on fiction texts emphasizes to students 'true' reading is only a fiction-based act. Consequently, those students who struggle with reading fictional texts may come to believe they are not good readers because they cannot read picture story books or chapter books. These students may in fact be good readers with non-fiction or real-life texts, however fail to realize this because these text types are not shared by teachers at school as appropriate reading texts.

Students should be exposed to various text types throughout their primary years of schooling (Department of Education, 1994). Literary texts are predominantly used by teachers. However non-literary text types may be more engaging for some students, particularly those in the middle to upper primary year levels, because they have a real-life functional purpose. Using real-life and life-like texts in class reading activities can be beneficial as students see them as interesting and they become aware of the relevance of being an effective reader in today's society. Using a range of texts in the classroom can spark students' curiosity and provide the motivation needed by some students to read. Comics and magazines are identified in this study as being among the highly preferred text types of students and so teachers could promote a high level

of reading interest and engagement amongst students by using comic series and magazine articles for class shared and guided reading activities. School librarians need to purchase a range of texts of varying types so teachers can use these to positively enhance students' attitudes towards reading.

Society today is becoming ever-increasingly reliant on electronic mediums for the transmission of information. In order to effectively operate in their world today, students need experience in the classroom engaging functionally with many types of texts (print, online, multimodal). By acknowledging students' real-life reading interests (e.g. internet searching, gaming, CD-ROMs etc), teachers can harness students' positive attitude and enthusiasm towards engaging in these reading experiences. By aligning their teaching practices more accurately with students' recreational reading interests, teachers can enhance students' level of academic engagement in reading. In order for this to occur, school libraries/resource centres need to be resourced with not only a range of print text types, but also electronic text types. The authentic resourcing of school libraries/resource centres and classrooms is a key consideration for school Administration personnel in this technological society.

> **4. It is recommended that a range of text types (both print and electronic) be purchased and made available for students to independently read, and for teachers to use in class shared reading activities across all primary year levels.**

6.5.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Behaviour and Attitude to Read

Teachers need to strive for quality evidence-based teaching practices that match the needs of each student as it is what students experience in class "on a day to day basis in interaction with teachers and other students that matters" (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d, p. 19). Effective whole school planning frameworks, reading assessment tools and student monitoring practices provide teachers with valuable data (evidence) on which to base the implementation of teaching (reading) strategies. By knowing this data teachers can align their teaching practices more accurately with students' reading needs, in turn making the curriculum relevant to the students, rather than expecting students to match the curriculum.

The teaching of reading should be centred on both students' personal and academic needs, rather than teachers' perceptions of their needs. In the early years of primary school (Years 1 to 3) teachers typically are aware of the reading levels of each student in their class by using reading assessment kits such as *PM Benchmark* (Smith & Randell, 2002). Consequently, the teaching of reading skills, vocabulary and print concepts in these classrooms align closely with students' level of reading. As students move into middle and upper primary year levels teachers often assume all students read at a similar level and so reading benchmark assessments may not be periodically conducted in middle and upper year levels. Therefore, the introduction of new reading skills, vocabulary and print concepts may not align closely with students' level of reading. When students are consistently presented with leveled reading texts that are too high or low for their reading ability, their motivation to read is not positively promoted. Consequently, over time students may come to regard reading as too hard or boring for them. The level of texts provided for students can impact significantly on their self-efficacy and in turn attitude towards reading.

All teachers need to be aware of their students' benchmark reading levels and ensure reading activities in class align with these as "the quality of education is crucially dependent upon the adequate provision of books and their appropriate use" (Davies, 1986, p. 181). Periodic assessment of students' reading is crucial in promoting reading achievement and positive attitudes of students.

While it is imperative teachers are aware of students' academic standard of reading, they must balance data with an understanding of students' attitudes towards reading and their particular textual interests. Data from this study indicate teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to reading in school do not align with students' actual attitudes to reading. Consequently, teachers' literacy planning and daily pedagogical reading practice may not be matching students' recreational reading needs, textual and topic interests, or be motivating them to engage in class reading activities. Teachers may choose to administer reading attitude/interest inventories (commercial or constructed) with their class at certain intervals to gain an insight into their attitude towards engaging in reading. Observational experiences, during whole class shared reading or small group guided reading, allow classroom teachers to engage in dialogue with students in order to delve into students' attitudes about

aspects of reading and also to gain knowledge over students' preferences for text types or topics. When the classroom teaching practices are accurately aligned with students' reading interests, the potential for students' level of academic and recreational engagement in reading is greatly enhanced.

> **5. It is recommended that the teaching of reading be 'data-driven' rather than based on teachers' perceptions of students' reading needs. Periodic assessments of students' reading achievement and attitudes to reading should occur to provide this data for teachers.**

6.6 LINK WITH CURRENT COMMONWEALTH AND STATE DOCUMENTS

The five recommendations presented in this thesis are based on conclusions from the data analyses. A number of priorities and recommendations from The Strategic Renewal Framework (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005) and the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d) align with recommendations from this study and these are now presented.

6.6.1 Strategic Renewal Framework (2007-2011)

The Brisbane Catholic Education Strategic Renewal Framework 2002-2006 (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2005) is currently undergoing consultation and renewal for the next five year period (2007-2011). The renewal model "provides a process whereby a school connects with its beliefs and values, reflects upon the past and plans for a hope-filled and enhanced future" (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2006, p. 3). Brisbane Catholic Education commits to eight priorities for the period 2007-2011 and Priority Area 1 aligns directly with recommendations from this study. This priority is presented in Table 6.1 along with the strategic intentions and expectations for schools.

Table 6.1

Strategic Renewal Framework (2007-2011): Priorities

Priority Area 1: Enhance and resource a curriculum in which teaching and learning in our schools establishes improved student learning outcomes.	
Strategic Intentions	a) Identify and implement clear strategic approaches at school and system level for the improvement of student learning outcomes.
	b) Strengthen the continuity of teaching and learning approaches and the engagement of all students across the early, middle and senior phases of learning in our schools.
	c) Develop and implement data informed, evidence based processes and applications to inform quality teaching and learning.
Expectations by 2011	a) Schools utilize a variety of student performance data to inform teaching and learning and evaluate progress in improving student learning outcomes.
	b) Classroom teaching and learning approaches are responsive, inclusive, collaborative, innovative and effective.

(Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2006, p.11)

Priority Area 1 indicates Brisbane Catholic Education supports the implementation of strategic learning approaches (e.g. Guided Reading and Literacy Blocks) so that students' learning outcomes and engagement across all year levels can be positively enhanced (strategic intention *a* and *b*). These intentions align with recommendations 2 and 3 from this study. Furthermore, in this priority it is indicated that the curriculum needs to be appropriately resourced and this reinforces recommendation 4 from this study. Strategic intention *c* and expectation *a* of this priority state that quality teaching needs to be data-informed and evidence based. This intention aligns with the fifth recommendation from this study. It is expected that teachers in Brisbane Catholic education schools look for innovative approaches to the teaching of reading and that they are responsive to the needs of students (expectation *b*). By addressing recommendations outlined in this study, schools will be making significant inroads

into addressing the first priority articulated in the Strategic Renewal Framework 2007 to 2011 document (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2006).

6.6.2 National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy

The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005d) centred on exploring how reading is taught in Australian schools, how reading proficiency is assessed, and how university courses prepare undergraduate teachers to teach reading. The emphasis of this National Inquiry is on quality teaching and teacher quality. Twenty recommendations were identified in this Inquiry that aim at improving the reading standards of Australian students. Recommendations 2 and 15 align with recommendations from this study and they are presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy: Recommendations

2: Teachers provide an integrated approach to reading that supports the development of oral language, vocabulary, grammar, reading fluency, comprehension and the literacies of new technologies.
15: The Committee recommends that schools and employing authorities, working with appropriate professional organizations and higher education institutions, provide all teachers with appropriate induction and mentoring throughout their careers, and with ongoing opportunities for evidence-based professional learning about effective literacy teaching.

(Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d, p.7 & 10)

The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d) identified the importance of integrating technologies (electronic texts) into reading activities and also highlighted the need for schools to provide teachers with ongoing opportunities for professional learning about how to use 'evidence' to guide their planning for and teaching of reading. By addressing recommendations from this study, teachers will be aligning their practice with the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Department of Education Science & Training, 2005d) recommendations.

6.7 DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has highlighted conclusions and made recommendations about reading. Some of these recommendations lend themselves to further investigation through quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research. Avenues for extending this study further are now articulated.

This study firstly highlights reading attitudes of students in one Catholic Archdiocesan primary school. The size of the sample may have limited the study. Broadening this study to include students from a wider cross-section of the primary Archdiocesan educational community would provide data at a system level. Data could be beneficial for Brisbane Catholic Education curriculum co-ordinators as they plan for and implement in-servicing for teachers on motivating types of reading activities, innovative teaching strategies, reading assessment practices, and how to use technological texts in the classroom.

Further research into recreational and academic attitudes of students would be valuable. This study reports that recreational reading attitudes of students are more positive as students move from Year 2 through to Year 5. Conducting a further study with a qualitative paradigm is suggested as an in-depth investigative interview could glean further attitudinal information from students. Data could illustrate why primary aged students have a positive regard for recreational reading. Unlike recreational reading, academic attitudes of students decline throughout primary year levels. Through conducting some structured interviews, contributing factors to students' academic reading attitudinal decline can be uncovered.

Secondly, this study presents text type reading preferences of students and chapter books, children's magazines and comics were identified as their top three preferred reading materials. Future research could investigate underlying reasons for students' text type reading preferences as this would enable teachers and librarians to understand more fully what textual characteristics draw students to read.

The types of texts students read, recreationally and academically, today are widening with the availability of electronic texts. As today's students regularly interact with various forms of ICLTs, it would be appropriate to investigate students' use of and attitude towards reading using digital literacy as well. This would enable teachers to

have a wider understanding of students' attitudes towards reading – not just in print form.

Teachers' perceptions of students as individuals and as learners highlight an interesting area of reading research. This area has not been widely studied and therefore, further follow-up qualitative investigation would prove fruitful. Understanding the extent to which teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour and attitudes matches or mismatches their actual behaviour and/or attitudes is important as it affects the way teachers plan and implement reading activities. Furthermore, it impacts on students' level of engagement with reading activities in class. The more knowledge teachers have about their perceptions and their students' attitudes, the more relevant their teaching will be.

6.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Findings from this study are of interest to teachers as they strive to improve their students' reading attitudes and achievement standards. Students' task engagement, attitudes and skill ability are key factors for teachers' consideration when planning and teaching reading activities. Teachers need to be aware that students' interest in and engagement with reading may change as they approach the middle and upper years in primary school and as they pursue other recreational interests. Promoting positive student engagement in reading is related to reading attitude, and reading attitude is linked to reading skill (Gambrell, 2004). With a positive attitude towards reading engagement, students are more likely to engage fully in reading activities in a recreational or an academic context.

It is acknowledged data presented in this study reflect the reading attitudes and text type preferences of one cohort of students, and the perceptions of teachers in one school. There are areas associated with the topic of reading which currently lie unexplored and can be avenues for future investigation. This study has provided educators with a clearer understanding of the reading attitudes and preferences of students and the perceptions teachers hold about students' reading. This study brings teachers one step closer in the quest for a comprehensive understanding about how to effectively engage students in reading throughout the primary school years.

Students must engage in class reading activities that facilitate reading skill development, however this needs to occur with texts they can read and ones that evoke a significant level of student interest (motivation). Meaningful student learning cannot occur unless students personally invest time, effort and cognitive attention in the reading experience (Worthy et al., 1999). In doing this, students develop the notion that reading is a purposeful and enjoyable activity in which they can engage.

Teachers can impact on and positively influence students' attitudes to reading by regularly reflecting on and adjusting their teaching and learning strategies and practices and by incorporating a wide range of appropriately leveled texts into class reading activities. Teachers need to align their teaching practices more accurately with students' reading interests. Regular assessments of students' academic reading skill and attitudes to reading should occur to guide the teaching of reading in the classroom. Teachers need to be aware that repetitive and routine reading tasks using texts that do not align with students' reading ability and interest do little to promote positive engagement with and attitudes towards reading. A structured approach to the teaching of literacy (literacy blocks) enables students to be in a set routine and to focus directly on the aspect/s of literacy being taught. How students are taught to read influences their attitude towards reading engagement throughout their schooling years.

Teachers need to acknowledge reading in today's society is not simply defined as an act involving interaction with printed texts, but rather is the "flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications, technologies via spoken language, print and multimedia" (Luke, Freebody & Land, 2000, p. 20). Today's students can interact with many types of texts including print, online and multimodal texts. Students today may read the internet, emails, multimodal texts, electronic games, CD ROMs, word and data processing presentation packages, and digital photography/video applications. These types of texts are stimulating for students and maintain their interest to read because they are enjoyable, interactive and current (Bernard, Chaparro, Mills & Halcomb, 2002). Students using online and multimodal electronic texts are still engaged in reading purposefully and must comprehend meaning as much as when they engage with traditional print-based texts.

Students today can positively engage in reading a range of electronic texts efficiently and effectively both in and out of school (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Perry et al., 2003). These same students may not however always show positive attitudes towards traditional print-based reading during class recreational and academic activities. Teachers need to adopt a balanced approach to the class reading texts used. This may be achieved by implementing recreational and academic skills based instructional and guided reading activities using a combination of print and electronic texts.

Real-life and life-like reading texts and activities are essential in promoting students' positive reading attitudes and increased reading engagement. Through the careful selection of texts for guided and shared reading activities, teachers can endeavour to positively motivate a wider range of students to engage purposefully in recreational and academic reading (Worthy, 2002; Worthy et al., 1999). By selecting electronic texts and using them in the teaching and assessing of students' reading, teachers can boost students' attitudes and engagement towards school reading activities. Teachers' enthusiasm for using a combination of print and electronic texts in class guided and shared reading activities can have a positive effect on students' attitudes to reading now and into their future.

Teachers of today may have experienced as students, and now teach from, a traditional model of teaching. Changing the way teachers perceive students as learners requires a significant paradigm shift. In past generations teachers were regarded as the expert or the transmitter of curriculum knowledge. The 'tables have turned' today and it is the students who typically have greater knowledge of digital literacies. Today's students are native speakers of the digital language and as such are conceptually viewed as *digital natives* (Prensky, 2006). Teachers were not born into the world of computer and video games, email, internet and mobile phones but rather acquired knowledge of and skill for using these modes, to varying levels of success, at some point in their life and are termed *digital immigrants* (Prenksy, 2006). Teaching is challenging today as digital immigrants are placed in the position to teach the digital natives. This presents an educational challenge as "our digital immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age) are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language" (Prenksy, 2001, p. 2).

The challenge for teachers today is to learn new methodologies, new content and new ways of thinking. In order to teach students to read and to maintain their reading engagement, teachers (digital immigrants) must learn to teach and assess in a language and style familiar to students (digital natives). Therefore, teachers need to learn new ways to present content, rather than relying on the same teaching modes they experienced as students. Prensky (2001) argues however, that it is harder to learn "new ways to do old stuff than to actually learn new stuff" (p. 4). Teachers are required to positively embrace change and actively explore new avenues for the effective delivery and assessing of reading activities for students. If teachers truly are interested in promoting positive attitudes amongst students they must design activities that are relevant for this generation of learners. Students' attitudes to reading can be positively enhanced by teachers if they are given the opportunity to engage with 'real' texts and present their learning in a mode of communication that aligns with their reality of being a student today.

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Name: _____   **Grade:** _____   **Male   Female**

School: _____   **Date of Birth:** _____   **Age:** _____

<div style="border:1px solid">

ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

</div>

Colour in the face that best describes how you feel.

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy day?
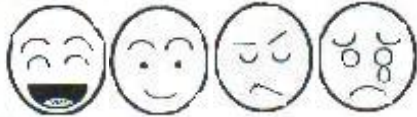
2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?
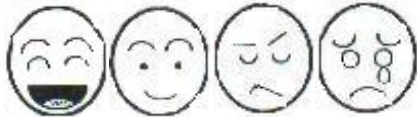
3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?
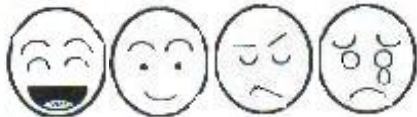
4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?
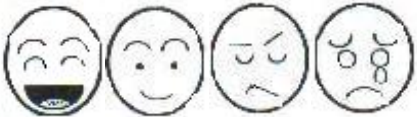
5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

7. How do you feel about reading during your school holidays?
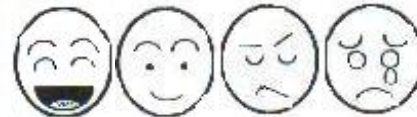
8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?

9. How do you feel about going to a bookshop?

10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?
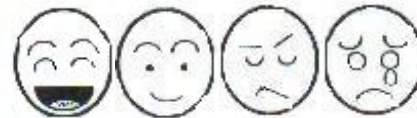
Kear (1990)

Appendix A

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11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?
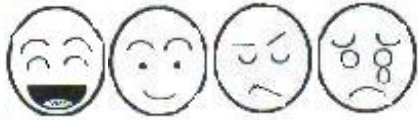
12. How do you feel about doing worksheets after reading?
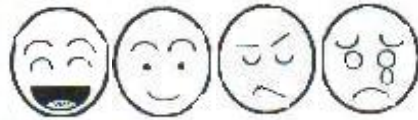
13. How do you feel about reading at school?
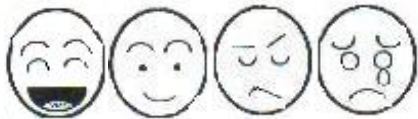
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?
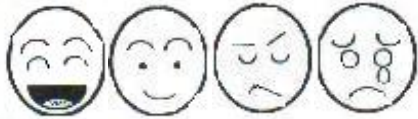
15. How do you feel about learning from a book?

16. How do you feel when it's time for reading lessons?

17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading lessons?

18. How do you feel when you read aloud in class?
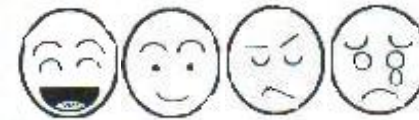
19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?
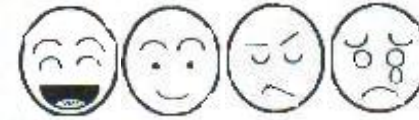
20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?
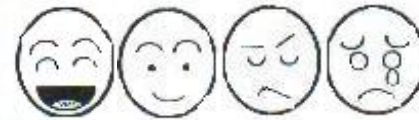
21. My favourite types of reading material are:

☐   Story picture books
☐   Chapter books (novels)
☐   Factual information books
☐   Children's magazines
☐   Factual information magazines
☐   Comics
☐   Newspapers

Adapted from McKenna and Kear (1990)
Appendix A

TEACHER TO READ TO STUDENTS BEFORE ADMINISTERING THE PRIMARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

This survey is designed to find out what you think about reading at home and at school.

For each question, you are to colour in only one face that best tells the researcher how you feel about reading at home or at school.

For the last question you need to tick the boxes to tell me your favourite type of reading material.

There is no right or wrong answer to each question.

Please be as honest as you can.

PARENT/GUARDIAN DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Dear Parent/Guardian,

You have granted permission for your child to participate in a research study focusing on reading attitudes of primary school aged boys and girls. Please complete this parent survey and return to your child's teacher, in the envelope provided, by ………………….. Thank you. Anne-Marie Black (Researcher)

Please print your response or circle the answer.

1. Child's name: _____

2. Your child's grade: _____

3. Name of the person completing this survey:
   _____

4. Your relationship with the child (e.g. mother, father, guardian) _____

5. Your child's date of birth _____/_____/_____

6. Your child's gender: Male   Female

7. Number of children in your family: _____

8. Place of the child in the family:
   1 (eldest); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; other _____

9. Your occupation: _____

10. Your highest level of education achieved:
    Yr 10; Yr 12; TAFE; University; Other

11. Your age: under 21; 21-25; 26-30; 31-35;
    36-40; 41-45; 46-50; 51-55, above 55

12. Your partner's occupation: _____

13. Your partner's highest level of education achieved:
    Yr 10; Yr 12; TAFE; University; Other

14. Your partner's age: . under 21, 21-25;
    26-30; 31-35; 36-40; 41-45; 46-50;
    51-55, above 55

15. Does your family have English as a second language?

Yes   (Please answer Questions 16 and 17)
No   (Please go to Question 18).

16. Does your child speak another language at home?   Yes   No

17. What language does your child speak?
    _____

18. Is your child of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background?   Yes   No

Please rate the following in relation to your child by ticking the appropriate box.

Child's name	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Developing
1. Application to tasks				
2. Ability to concentrate				
3. Attitude to school				
4. Personal organization				
5. Ability to follow instructions				
6. Behaviour in class				
7. Willingness to conform to authority				
8. Attitude to reading for enjoyment in class				
9. Attitude to reading in class activities				
10. Attitude to reading for homework				
11. Attitude towards reading fiction texts				
12. Attitude towards reading non-fiction texts				
13. Fluency as a reader				
14. Reading comprehension				
15. Willingness to change his/her reading books often				
16. Interest in books as a source of learning				
17. Overall achievement in school reading				

Adapted from Young (2003) Appendix B

TEACHER CHECKLIST

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a study where the development of children's attitudes to reading is being investigated. It would be appreciated if you could complete the following section of the checklist.

Please put the completed checklist in the envelope provided and place it in the marked box in your Administration Office. Thank you. Anne-Marie Black (Researcher)

Please rate the following for each child by ticking the appropriate column.

Child's name	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Developing
1. Application to tasks				
2. Ability to concentrate				
3. Attitude to school				
4. Personal organization				
5. Ability to follow instructions				
6. Behaviour in class				
7. Willingness to conform to authority				
8. Attitude to reading for enjoyment in class				
9. Attitude to reading in class activities				
10. Attitude to reading for homework				
11. Attitude towards reading fiction texts				
12. Attitude towards reading non-fiction texts				
13. Fluency as a reader				
14. Reading comprehension				
15. Willingness to change his/her reading books often				
16. Interest in books as a source of learning				
17. Overall achievement in school reading				

Child's name	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Developing
1. Application to tasks				
2. Ability to concentrate				
3. Attitude to school				
4. Personal organization				
5. Ability to follow instructions				
6. Behaviour in class				
7. Willingness to conform to authority				
8. Attitude to reading for enjoyment in class				
9. Attitude to reading in class activities				
10. Attitude to reading for homework				
11. Attitude towards reading fiction texts				
12. Attitude towards reading non-fiction texts				
13. Fluency as a reader				
14. Reading comprehension				
15. Willingness to change his/her reading books often				
16. Interest in books as a source of learning				
17. Overall achievement in school reading				

Adapted from Young (2003) Appendix C

✚ **ACU National**

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Janelle Young   Brisbane Campus

Co-Investigators: n/a

Student Researcher: Miss Anne-Marie Black   Brisbane Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
Attitudes to reading: A cross-sectional comparative study of primary aged students

for the period: 02/06/04 - 31/12/04

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: Q2003.04-27

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999) apply:

(i)   that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and

(ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than minimum risk.   There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of minimum risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: *K. Pashley*   Date: 4 June 2004
         (Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

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243 Gladstone Road, Dutton Park.
GPO Box 1201 Brisbane 4001 Australia
Phone: (07) 3840 0400 - Fax: (07) 3844 5101
http://www.bne.catholic.edu.au

Catholic
Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane

A11.071 DB:le
22 July 2004

Dear Anne-Marie

Thank you for your letter regarding permission to approach Brisbane Catholic Education schools for your research on *'Attitudes to reading: a cross-sectional comparative study of primary aged students '*. Permission is granted to approach the nominated schools within the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

I would ask you to contact the principal or head of campus of the respective schools:

> St Peter's School, Caboolture
> St Eugene School, Burpengary
> Southern Cross Catholic College, Scarborough Campus

> Southern Cross Catholic College, Kippa Ring Campus
> Southern Cross Catholic College, Woody Point Campus

seeking their involvement in the project.

Please note that participation in your study is at the discretion of each of the principals.

If you have any further queries, please contact our Research Coordinator, Brian Goulding, on (07) 3840 0427.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lisa Eastment
Research Coordinator
Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane

PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: Attitudes to Reading: An Investigation Across the Primary Years

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr. Janelle Young

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Anne-Marie Black

I ………………………….. *(the Principal)* have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided regarding this study. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that the student researcher (named above) may conduct this study at this school (in accordance with the details provided). I realize that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify this school and its parents/guardians, students or teachers in any way.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL:………..………………………………………………………………………

(block letters)

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL:………………………………………………… **DATE:** …………...

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:…………………………………...**DATE:** …………...

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:………...…………………………**DATE:** …………...

ACU National

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Attitudes to Reading: An Investigation Across the Primary Years

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr. Janelle Young

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Anne-Marie Black

NAME OF PROGRAMME IN
WHICH ENROLLED: Master of Education (Research)
Australian Catholic University
(McAuley Campus at Banyo)

The purpose of this research project is to gather data on primary students' attitudes to reading. Students involved in the research project will be drawn from Years 2, 4 and 6. Data is being gathered from students, parents/guardians and teachers. Participating students will complete a written survey relating to attitudes to reading and this will be done in class. Parents/Guardians will complete a survey about home literacy practices and their perceptions of their child's attitude to reading. A checklist relating to students' attitudes to reading, class work habits and reading achievement will be completed by class teachers.

This study does not pose any significant risks or discomfort for participants. The student survey is similar to those used regularly by class teachers for the purposes of student self-evaluation. Teacher and Parent/Guardian surveys are similar to others that may have been completed previously.

Participation in the research project requires students to spend between fifteen and thirty minutes of class time. Parent/Guardian and Teacher participants will complete their survey/checklist at a personally convenient time and it is envisaged that this will take less than fifteen minutes.

Participation in this research project enables students, parents/guardians and teachers to contribute to the field of educational research. Through their involvement in this research project, participants enable the researcher to gather and analyse data, regarding students' attitudes to reading. It is envisaged that results will contribute to improved literacy learning outcomes for primary aged students. Research information and results will be summarized and may appear in written publications or be presented orally to others in a form that does not identify the participants in any way. All data will be reported in coded form.

Parents/Guardians are free to refuse consent, or to withdraw consent at any time, thus discontinuing their or their child's participation in the study, without providing justification. These courses of action will not prejudice student future academic progress.

Participant confidentiality is ensured through the allocation of a research code to data for each participant.

Data collection, analysis, and presentation are reported using coded, non-identifiable data. The research project requires personal data from participants. Data gathered from this research project will be stored in Dr. Janelle Young's office Assistant Head, School of Education, Australian Catholic University (McAuley Campus at Banyo) to ensure the confidentiality of participants is upheld. All primary data will be retained by the University for five years following publication or for five years following completion of the project if the data are not used for publication. After this period, data are to be disposed of in accordance with the University's Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Questions regarding this project should be directed to the Research Supervisor, Dr. Janelle Young.

>Assistant Head
>School of Education
>Australian Catholic University
>McAuley Campus at Banyo
>P.O BOX 456
>VIRGINIA QLD 4014

Telephone: (07) 3623 7160
Fax: (07) 3623 7247
Email: j.young@mcauley.acu.edu.au

On conclusion of the research project, results will be provided for the participants.

This research project has been approved by both the Human Research Ethics Committee Australian Catholic University and the Executive Director of Brisbane Catholic Education.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way that you or your child has been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee.

Address: Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
               ℅ Research Services
               Australian Catholic University
               McAuley Campus at Banyo
               P.O. BOX 456
               VIRGINIA QLD 4014

Telephone: (07) 3623 7294
Fax: (07) 3623 7328

Any complaint or concern is treated in confidence and will be fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you grant permission for your child to participate in this research project, you should sign all the attached copies of the Consent Forms, retain the participant copy for your records and return the researcher copies, in the attached envelope labeled "Research Project – A Black". Completed surveys and consent forms should be sent to the School Administration Office and these will be forwarded to the student researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Anne-Marie Black   Dr. Janelle Young

⊕ACU National

INFORMATION LETTER TO TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT:	Attitudes to Reading: An Investigation Across the Primary Years
STAFF SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Janelle Young
STUDENT RESEARCHER:	Anne-Marie Black
NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED:	Master of Education (Research)
Australian Catholic University
(McAuley Campus at Banyo)

The purpose of this research project is to gather data on primary students' attitudes to reading. Students involved in the research project will be drawn from Years 2, 4 and 6. Data is being gathered from students, parents/guardians and teachers. Participating students will complete a written survey relating to attitudes to reading and this will be done in class. Parents/Guardians will complete a survey about home literacy practices and their perceptions of their child's attitude to reading. A checklist relating to students' attitudes to reading, class work habits and reading achievement will be completed by class teachers.

This study does not pose any significant risks or discomfort for participants. The student survey is similar to those used regularly by class teachers for the purposes of student self-evaluation. Teacher and Parent/Guardian surveys are similar to others that may have been completed previously.

Participation in the research project requires students to spend between fifteen and thirty minutes of class time. Parent/Guardian and Teacher participants will complete their survey/checklist at a personally convenient time and it is envisaged that this will take less than fifteen minutes.

Participation in this research project enables students, parents/guardians and teachers to contribute to the field of educational research. Through their involvement in this research project, participants enable the researcher to gather and analyse data, regarding students' attitudes to reading. It is envisaged that results will contribute to improved literacy learning outcomes for primary aged students. Research information and results will be summarized and may appear in written publications or be presented orally to others in a form that does not identify the participants in any way. All data will be reported in coded form.

Parents/Guardians are free to refuse consent, or to withdraw consent at any time, thus discontinuing their or their child's participation in the study, without providing justification. These courses of action will not prejudice student future academic progress.

Participant confidentiality is ensured through the allocation of a research code to data for each participant. Data collection, analysis, and presentation are reported using coded, non-identifiable data.

The research project requires personal data from participants. Data gathered from this research project will be stored in Dr. Janelle Young's office Assistant Head, School of Education, Australian Catholic University (McAuley Campus at Banyo) to ensure the confidentiality of participants is upheld. All primary data will be retained by the University for five years following publication or for five years following completion of the project if the data are not used for publication. After this period, data are to be disposed of in accordance with the University's Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Questions regarding this project should be directed to the Research Supervisor, Dr. Janelle Young.

> Assistant Head
> School of Education
> Australian Catholic University
> McAuley Campus at Banyo
> P.O BOX 456
> VIRGINIA QLD 4014

Telephone: (07) 3623 7160
Fax: (07) 3623 7247
Email: j.young@mcauley.acu.edu.au

On conclusion of the research project, results will be provided for the participants.

This research project has been approved by both the Human Research Ethics Committee Australian Catholic University and the Executive Director of Brisbane Catholic Education.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way that you or your child has been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee.

Address: Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
    ‰ Research Services
    Australian Catholic University
    McAuley Campus at Banyo
    P.O. BOX 456
    VIRGINIA QLD 4014

Telephone: (07) 3623 7294
Fax: (07) 3623 7328

Any complaint or concern is treated in confidence and will be fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you grant permission for your child to participate in this research project, you should sign all the attached copies of the Consent Forms, retain the participant copy for your records and return the researcher copies, in the attached envelope labeled "Research Project – A Black". Completed surveys and consent forms should be sent to the School Administration Office and these will be forwarded to the student researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Anne-Marie Black   Dr. Janelle Young

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM (for your child)

TITLE OF PROJECT: Attitudes to Reading: An Investigation Across the Primary Years

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr. Janelle Young

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Anne-Marie Black

I ………………………….. *(the parent/guardian)* have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in this activity, realizing that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:………………………………………………………………

(block letters)

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:……………………………………… **DATE:** …………..

NAME OF CHILD:………………………………………………………………………………..

(block letters)

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:………………………………..**DATE:** …………...

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:………...…………………………**DATE:** …………..

ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

I ………………………… *(the participant aged under 18 years)* understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in the project, realizing that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18: …………………………………………………….

(block letters)

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT: …………………………………………...**DATE:** …………..

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:………………………………..**DATE:** …………...

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:………...…………………………**DATE:** ……………

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TEACHER CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: Attitudes to Reading: An Investigation Across the Primary Years

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr. Janelle Young

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Anne-Marie Black

I ………………………….. *(the teacher)* have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that I will participate in this activity, realizing that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF TEACHER:…………...…………………………………………………………………

(block letters)

SIGNATURE OF TEACHER: ....……………………………………… **DATE:** ……………

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:………………………………..**DATE:** …………...

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:………...…………………………**DATE:** …………..