



Western
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Reading Experiences of Older People

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RA in a DAY

Today's Agenda

- Why Reading and Older People?
- What We Already Know
- Research Questions
- (What Can You Do? What Are You Already Doing?)

Demography, growth and inequality

Age invaders

A generation of old people is about to change the global economy. They will not all do so in the same way

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1.2k



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IN THE 20th century the planet's population doubled twice. It will not double even once in the current century, because birth rates in much of the world have declined steeply. But the number of people over 65 is set to double within just 25 years. This shift in the Faculty of Information & Media Studies

Why Older People?

Ageing is not just “*in* the body but in the *relationships* between the body and its environment”

-Philip Stafford in *Elderburbia* (italics mine, 2009)

Why reading and older people?

- How to support existing reading cultures
- How to build new reading cultures
- Inform us about what it means to grow old

Who Reads into Old Age?

GENDER: women more than men

RACE: visible minorities less likely

EDUCATION: better vs. less educated

READING HISTORIES: people who read when they were younger

GEOGRAPHY: urban compared to rural

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS?

How much & how often?

“Our findings illustrate that the aging of the population is a factor that encourages reading rather than threatening it.”

Reading and Buying Books for Pleasure, 2005
Department of Canadian Heritage

“Every month the public library delivers [. . .] a big physical pile, it’s huge, and she goes through those during the month, reads pretty much all of them [. . .] she likes her library pile [R7].”

Mary Cavanagh and Wendy Robbins,
“Baby Boomers, Their Elders and the Public Library.”
Library Review 61, 2012. pp. 627-8)”

What do older people read?

Where & How?

“Book reviews, the author’s reputation, the experts quoted on the cover, and the literary merit of the book were particularly influential with those over 65.”

Australian Study of Reading for Pleasure (2014)

Motivation to Read?

- relieve boredom
- defeat loneliness
- seek pleasure
- learning
- make connections

“I really like to read, so I actually read a variety of things. The only thing I can’t stand is when things are too vulgar. I enjoyed talking about books when I lived at home. I got in with the retired teachers and librarians. I really miss that group. We were all interested in good books. We had a sort of group that we called a “discussion club.” We talked about books, and authors, and things. But, since I’ve been here I haven’t discussed books with anybody. I’m trying real hard on my own to stay interested in these things...”

“Mrs. C.” 81 yrs.

(in Chatman, 1992 *Information World of Retired Women*, pp.98-99).

Value of Reading

- love, friendship
- improved quality of life
- engagement with life
- cognitive benefits
- “serious leisure” pursuit

Technologies of reading

- **Low adoption of tablets and e-readers**

“reluctant to adopt e-reading technologies and practices but convenience, growing influence of the internet in daily life as well as growing interest in ebooks [are] important factors that might drive use and continuing interest”

(Quan-Haase, Martin and Schreurs, 2014).

- **Large print publishing**

my research questions

How do **reader-identities** intersect with identities as an older person, a retired person, an ageing person?

What **roles do books play** – in terms of being points of access to memory, to home, to past experience, to people?

Does reading and support for reading contribute “**place-making**” and **re-making and rebuilding** of “**home**” among older people?

Thank you!

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Comments, questions:

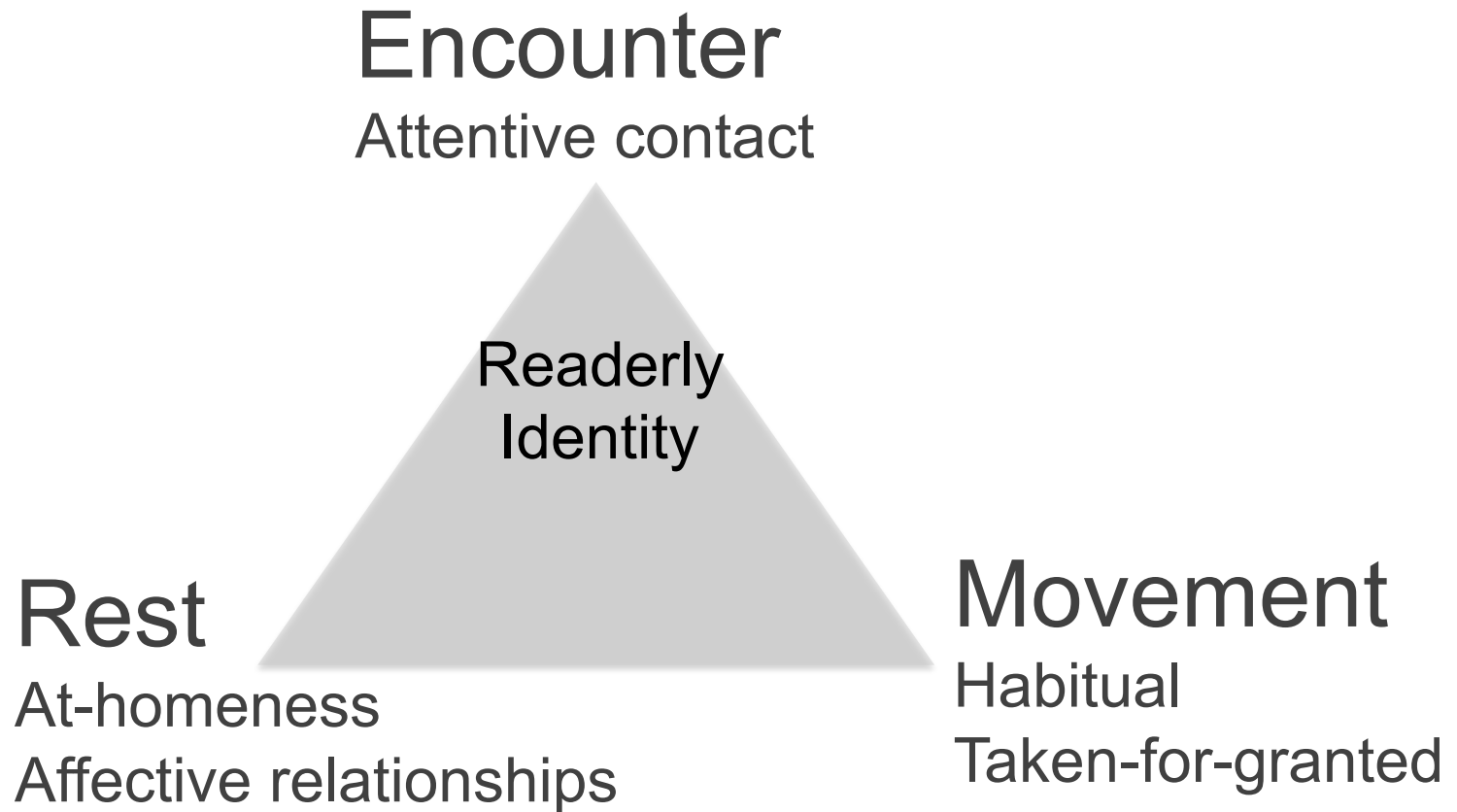
Email: prothba2@uwo.ca

Twitter: [@readingspaces](https://twitter.com/readingspaces)

More info + pathfinder (in-progress)

[http://readingspaces.typepad.com/
reading_spaces/](http://readingspaces.typepad.com/reading_spaces/)

Reading Experience as Place-Making



Reading as Place-Making

Encounter

Shared Reading
Reading Groups
Connecting

Readerly
Identity

Rest

Library as Place
Book as Object
Reading “in place”

Movement

“Everyday”
Experiences of
Reading