

Finding Life in All Its Possibilities:

Interviews with Four Female Readers of a Certain Age

**Cynthia Mann Haiken
Reading Interests of Adults
17:610:585:90
December 1, 2014**

I. Introduction

The November 21, 2014 edition of *The New York Times* Book Review contained a review written by Curtis Sittenfeld of a book called *All My Puny Sorrows* by Miriam Toews. The review opened with a description of the 2013 exchange between the novelist Claire Messud and an interviewer at Publishers Weekly. The interviewer had remarked that she would not want to be friends with the protagonist of Messud's most recent novel. Messud responded: "If you're reading to find friends, you're in deep trouble. We read to find life, in all its possibilities."

This paper seeks to explore the role that reading plays in the lives of the middle-aged professional woman juggling family and career. Its focus is a series of interviews conducted with four women between the ages of 49 and 51. Each of the women is married with two children, each works outside the home, and each woman's husband also works outside the home. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the reading habits of these women, what they read, how often and where they read, and most importantly, why they read.

The first section of the paper provides a general overview of previous studies that has been done of readers who read for pleasure, that is, people who read not for a school assignment or to gather information for a professional task, but for enjoyment, who view reading as a leisure activity. The second section of the paper describes the procedures under which this study was conducted. This includes the method of selecting the four women for the study, dissemination of the questions that form the basis of the interviews, the individual interviews themselves, including follow-up emails and the process of reviewing the transcripts of the interviews to gather data on similarities and differences among the women and their reading habits. The third section of the paper presents an analysis and discussion of the results of the four interviews. The

final section of the paper summarizes the findings and conclusions and makes recommendations for future study.

II. Overview of Prior Reading Studies

The first section of Chapter 4 of a book published in 2006 called *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community*, contains an overview of large-scale studies of reading conducted over the past 80 years. These include periodic studies by the Book Industry Study Group, a study on leisure activities by Robert and Helen Lynd in the 1930s, a series of studies by Douglas Waples in the 1930s and 1940s, a 1942 study of reading patterns by Ruth Strang, and Philip Ennis' 1965 study of adult book reading, among many others. These studies generally found that 70-75% of book reading was done by 20% of the adult reading population (Ross 2006, 136), that "each person's reading pattern is complex and unique because of the hundreds of single factors that influence a person's reading," (Ross 2006, 137) and "in most cases...the person's reading had immediate and obvious relevance to his life." (Ross 2006, 145).

Most articles written on the subject of readers who read for pleasure acknowledge that Janice Radway's book *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, first published in 1984 and revised with a new introduction in 1991, is the first study of readers focused on one category of genre fiction. (See Smith 2007, 48). Radway's work focused on romance novels and their readers, but she also noted that the women she interviewed for her study relied intensely on books and reading. 88% of the women in Radway's study read every day, and Radway noted that "uninterrupted reading is very highly valued...because it is associated with the pleasure of spending time alone." (Radway 1984, 1991, 59). "What emerges from Radway's work is a complex portrait of the ways in which a particular group of readers

read, how reading fits into their lives, their reading behaviors, and their values in terms of what a ‘good’ book is and what it is not.” (Smith 2007, 48)

Catherine Sheldrick Ross, a professor at the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Western Ontario, interviewed 194 heavy readers who read for pleasure in order to understand how readers choose books to read for pleasure. Her study did not focus on a particular genre but instead examined readers who read for enjoyment rather than as part of an academic or professional assignment. Ross defined a heavy reader as someone who reads at least one book per week. Ross noted that these readers make time and find opportunities to read. “The readers in my study said that they made time and built opportunities for reading into their daily routines...they can and do read anywhere.” (Ross 1999, 787) In a series of papers published in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Ross stressed the importance of the reader’s mood to the book selection. If a reader is under stress, Ross found, she is likely to turn to short books that are easy to read. When life is calmer, a reader is more likely to opt for a demanding, unfamiliar book. (Ross 2000, 14) An experienced reader will be able to make an educated guess at the likelihood that a book choice will be successful based on a series of clues, including the reader’s previous experience of an author, the book’s genre and reputation, the reputation of the publisher of the book, the cover art and blurbs about the book on the front or back cover, and recommendations from friends and family. (Ross 2000, 13)

Ross also noted the importance to readers of the stories themselves. “When the right match is made between reader and story, readers use the text to create a story about themselves.” (Ross 1999, 793) Her study demonstrated the active engagement of the reader in making meaning from the text of a novel. “Readers play a crucial role in enlarging the meaning of the text by reading it within the context of their own lives...readers creatively rewrite texts. Readers

choose books for the pleasure anticipated in the reading itself but then, apparently serendipitously, they encounter material that helps them in the context of their lives.” (Ross 1999, 785) Ross concluded that the more successful the reading experience a reader has, the more the reader wants to read. The opposite is also the case: If a reader has a failed reading experience, she has less desire to read. (Ross 1999, 789)

In 2006, Ross, together with Lynne McKechnie and Paulette Rothbauer, published *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries and Community*. Ross noted that readers actively choose to escape into the world of the novel. (Ross 2006, 153) Ross quoted one of the readers who participated in her study as saying that “books give me comfort; make me feel better about myself, reassure me that I am normal and not a freak because characters in books have feelings like mine, and provide me with confirmation that others have gone through similar experiences and survived.” (Ross 2006, 163) Ross found that the more a reader knew in advance about a book, the more likely the reader was to enjoy the book. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in that experienced readers learn how to decipher the clues discussed above to discern the book’s core characteristics prior to choosing to read it.

The study described in this paper builds on these previous works but seeks to understand how and why women who are juggling the demands of work and home, careers and family, still find time to read and to make connections with other readers. Its focus is on the reading habits of four well-educated professional women who are working mothers and who are married to men who also work outside the home. Although there are a myriad of leisure activities available today, there is a general belief that working mothers are too busy for any down time, that they burn the candle on both ends and barely make things work. This study examines the validity of

those general observations in the context of reading habits and the relative importance of books and reading in the lives of these busy women.

III. Data Collection Process

Of the three possible options for this study, a field study, observation of a reading group or individual interviews, only the interview option was feasible within the period of time permitted for the paper. The field study option, while interesting, seemed better done in a group, and as I am an online student, finding colleagues nearby to join me in a field study would have been complicated. In addition, it is not widely known among my friends and professional colleagues that I am studying for a Masters in Library and Information Sciences. It would be particularly awkward for my law colleagues to learn about my plans to change professions before I have completed my degree and found employment in a library setting. For that reason, reaching out to the broader community to find a book group that I could observe for this study was a challenge. Thus, I decided to make discrete inquiries to identify individual readers who would be willing to participate in this study.

In order to find individual readers to interview, I called two close friends who are aware that I am studying for an MLIS. I asked them to identify friends of theirs who were readers and who might be willing to be interviewed, and I described the topics for the questionnaire. Both friends called back within a day to tell me that each had a friend who would be happy to participate in the study. These friends are identified in this paper as Case 1 and Case 3. I sent each of Case 1 and Case 3 the email contained in Appendix A to this paper. Each one responded quickly to that email, agreed to answer the questions in the questionnaire and asked me to send the questionnaire in advance so that she could review the questions and think about her answers. I forwarded the questionnaire as requested. Within a few days, I heard back from both of them.

They were ready to be interviewed and had identified others who were interested in participating as well. Case 1 had mentioned the study to her cousin, who thought it sounded interesting and wanted to join. Case 1's cousin is Case 2 in this study. Case 3 had mentioned it to her sister, with whom she is very close, and the sister offered to participate as well. Case 3's sister is Case 4 in this study. I sent Case 2 and Case 4 the email, contained in Appendix A, received an enthusiastic response from each of them, and followed the same process of sending the questionnaire in advance and waiting to schedule an interview as I had done with Case 1 and Case 3.

Because none of the four participants lives near me, each of the interviews took place on the telephone. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. There was a slight period of awkwardness at the beginning of the conversation, as we were strangers to one another. In addition, I conducted the interview via a speakerphone so that I could type the answers to the questions in real time as the interview progressed. I asked whether this was ok, and no participant was troubled by it, but the use of a speakerphone created some initial distance. We quickly discovered that we had many things in common, apart from mutual friends, including our age, the ages of our children, our time management struggles and other similar stages of life issues. This commonality helped ease any feelings of shyness the participants may have had, so that as the interview went on, the participants started to speak more freely about their reading habits and views about the genre under discussion. Each interview went off topic from time to time. We would digress to talk about the logistical issues of raising children while managing a career, a husband and a home and trying to find time for reading and other leisure activities. We also veered slightly off topic to talk about books each of us had read that might be of interest in light of the books we were discussing for the interview, and those digressions were informative

as the enthusiastic responses to book recommendations demonstrated the level of interest the participants had in books and reading. Because three of the four participants discussed romance novels as their genre of interest, I asked each of them four additional questions that are described in Radway's study but are not part of her questionnaire. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this paper include those questions and the responses. I did not ask Case 3 these questions, because she opted to be interviewed about detective/mystery novels. At the end of each interview, in addition to offering my genuine gratitude for the participant's time and mental energy, I asked whether the participant would mind if I sent follow-up questions, if needed, and each participant confirmed her continued availability for questions without hesitation.

Once all four interviews had been completed, I went back over my typed transcripts from the four interviews and sent each of the participants a few follow-up questions. The answers to those questions are folded into the text of each of the four interviews. I asked each of the four participants to tell me more about their jobs because I realized that I wanted to understand better what each one of them did professionally, not only because it helped me to understand the kinds of tasks each woman performed every day but also because it helped illustrate what the participants' daily and weekly schedules were like, which in turn helped me to understand better how each woman made time for reading, and when. I received detailed written responses to that question. With one exception, my other follow-up questions were more individualized, based on some specific aspect of the initial interview. For example, I asked Case 1 to explain to me why she liked reading in bed so much. Her email response contained a full explanation of what her bed meant to her along with a picture of her reading in bed, so that I had visual representation. As another example, I asked Case 3 to explain why she did not read at night, and she called me to tell me that she wished she could read at night, but because she left work most days in time to

collect her children from school, there being no school bus in her area and no other way for her children to get home until they learn how to drive, she felt she had to make up for lost time by working from home after dinner. This was to me a very poignant anecdote that illustrated how carefully calibrated Case 3's schedule is.

The final follow-up question, which I asked of all four participants, was the result of a spirited online chat conversation with my professor. That chat clarified for me what the real purpose of these interviews was, which was to understand the role that reading plays in the lives of these women. That was particularly powerful for me when I thought about how busy these women are and how aware they are of the limited time available to them for personal hobbies. I sent each one of them the email attached as Appendix B to this paper. All four of them wrote back the answers that are at the end of each interview. Some answered very quickly and others took a few days to answer. It is clear to me that each one thought very carefully about the question before sending me a response.

The final stage of my data collection involved reading and re-reading the transcripts of the interviews, looking for similarities among the four sets of answers, as well as for areas where the participants had noticeably different responses. Table 5 contains a chart demonstrating the areas where the four women showed some degree of overlap in terms of their similarities and also illustrates some areas of divergence. I also looked for themes that appeared consistently across the four interviews, and for statements that corresponded to the conclusions reached in earlier reading studies, described above in Part II of this paper.

IV. Analysis and Discussion

There are some striking similarities in the demographics of the four women who participated in this study. Each is between the ages of 49 and 51. Each is married with two

children, a boy and a girl. Each lives in a major metropolitan area, within 30 minutes of a large city. Each woman has a job apart from raising her children, and each woman lives in a two-income household. All four attended prestigious universities (three of the four attended Ivy League universities and the fourth attended the state school equivalent of an Ivy League university). Two attended prestigious graduate school as well. Three of the four women belong to a book club, and two of them belong to two book clubs. None of them attend religious services in a meaningful way or participate in many other cultural activities. All four women finish every book they start, even the ones they don't like. As Case 4 noted, "I also always want to know how it ended, even if the book itself doesn't do much for me. I can't help it." (personal communication, November 20, 2014). All four remember their parents reading to them when they were very young and recall that they started reading on their own, for pleasure, at a young age. As Ross noted: "people who were encouraged to read as children were four times more likely to be fiction readers as adults compared with people who were not encouraged to read as children." (Ross 2006, 44) The experiences of these four women appear to support Ross' conclusion.

There are some striking differences among the four women as well. Two of the four women do not use electronic devices to read, while the other two use a Kindle, one almost exclusively. Two of the women keep every book they read, which is part of why the Kindle has become so useful to them. Two give the books away or donate them when they are finished reading, unless a book is too good to part with. Two do most of their reading in bed, and two do most of their reading while commuting. Two watch certain TV shows fairly regularly, and two do not watch TV at all. It appears from the interviews that Case 1 and Case 2 have more control over their daily and weekly schedule and thus more flexibility in their reading time, than Case 3

and Case 4, although Case 2 made clear that she actually schedules reading time into her daily routine, by making sure that she reads the newspaper in the morning and her book at night. Case 1, a small business owner who walks to work (the only one of the four women to do so), has the most time for reading. Both Case 3 and Case 4 appear to have less time for reading than Case 1 and Case 2, although Case 3 appears to read almost as frequently as Case 1, most likely due to her lack of television watching.

The three women who discussed romance novels expressed affection for the genre and articulated very similar views about the appeal of romance fiction. All three noted the reliable existence of a happy ending. As Case 1 said, “you are guaranteed a happy ending.” (personal communication, November 12, 2014). They noted similar features of the typical romance plot, including the initial refusal or obstacle to the romantic pairing of the main protagonists and the eventual resolution in favor of the couple. They noted the lack of suspense in romance novels and the comfort that comes from knowing what will happen. Focus instead shifts to the characters, their chemistry and dialogue and personal relationships among them. Case 2 commented that “what is interesting is how it happens, and whether there is snappy dialogue or really good chemistry between the two main characters. But there is no element of uncertainty or suspense. They are very reliable.” (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Tellingly, each of the three women used the word “escape” to describe why she read romance novels. Case 2 said: “sometimes I just want to escape into a story that I know will have a happy ending.” (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Case 4 was even more direct about it, noting that “when life gets a little tough or overwhelming, romance novels are a great source to ease the stress and provide an escape.” (personal communication, November 20, 2014). Radway noted a similar concept in her study of romance readers, and commented that “the simple event of

picking up a book enabled them to deal with the particular pressures and tensions encountered in their daily round of activities.” (Radway 1984, 1991, 86). In fact, in answering Radway’s question about the most important reason why they read romance novels (Table 1), both Case 1 and Case 2 answered that they read romance to escape their daily lives, and Case 4 answered that she reads it for relaxation and relief from stress.

Even though Case 3 chose to focus on the mystery novel instead of the romance novel, she noted the existence of escape as part of the reason why she reads mysteries: “They usually describe a world that is so different from my own, basic, suburban experience that it’s great to go into that world for awhile and see how the mystery develops.” (personal communication, November 19, 2014). Case 3 spoke with warmth and detail about the appeal of the genre and why the plot elements engage her. She specifically noted that although it is rarely the case that the mystery remains unsolved at the end of a detective novel, if there are romance elements to the story, those often do not end as happily as they do in typical romance fiction. Case 3 spoke more than once about the existence of red herrings and a rising level of suspense as the plot develops and the detective gets closer to solving the crime. But she said that the suspense is more about discovering the identity of the murderer rather than any concern that the crime will go unsolved. “I guess there is always an element of suspense and the expectation that the mystery will be solved at the end. I expect a less ambiguous ending than I might get in other genres. These stories are almost always resolved with little left hanging.” (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Interestingly, Case 3 spoke very clearly about not associating characters in novels with characters in real life, or making comparisons between those characters and people she knows. “They are the authors’ creations. I know that’s a very literal interpretation of your question, but

that's how I think about characters in books. I never think of them as real people." (personal communication, November 19, 2014). She focused specifically on the fact that in a novel, the reader can get inside the head of one or more of the characters, and while we might wish to be able to do that in real life, we never can. "We never have the level of understanding of real people that we do of characters in a novel." (personal communication, November 19, 2014). She was the only one of the four who made this distinction. Although the other three women do not confuse romance novels with reality, each of them found a sufficient degree of realism in the characters portrayed in romance novels to help them relate the events of the story to events in their own lives. As Case 2 noted, "part of the attraction is that there's enough of a real person there to relate to." (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Radway noted a similar need among the romance readers she studied to find "identification between the reader and a fictional heroine whose identity as a woman is always confirmed by the romantic and sexual attentions of an ideal male." (Radway 1984, 1991, 113)

The fact that three of these busy women made time for book clubs, and that two of them belong to two book clubs, underscored the importance to them not only of reading but of sharing books within a community. Case 2 in particular spoke about her realization that certain books were inherently more suitable for book clubs than others. "There have to be strong plot points or character development worth talking about to be a good book club book. Without those elements, everyone ends up saying stuff like "it was good, I liked it" and then we move on to talking about our kids." (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Case 2 also took it upon herself to organize a neighborhood book club as her second club. All three women seemed very aware of the diversity of the members of their book clubs, and of which book clubs were not diverse at all. "The thing I love about this one is the cross section of people in it. Unlike my first

club, this one has all ages covered, and even though we are all women, we represent a lot of different backgrounds.” (Case 2, personal communication, November 17, 2014). Case 3 praised the diversity of the members of her book club, expressing clearly that with such diversity comes particularly engaging discussion: “My book club has an international membership so we frequently have very different opinions on what we read. There is a big divide in my book group between feminists and non-feminists, which makes for some very polarizing conversations.” (personal conversation, November 19, 2014). Case 4 noted that one of her book clubs is more “intellectual” and the other is more “relaxed.” (personal communication, November 20, 2014). She drew a distinction between the literary heft of the novels read in the former as compared with the easier texts and more casual conversation that exists in the latter. She did not express a preference for one over the other, but it was clear from her description of the two clubs that the differences between them made at least as much of an impression on her as did the books she read in each club.

The thing that was most striking to me in these interviews is that, despite extensive professional and personal obligations, all four of them make time for reading, and books play an important role in their lives. Even Case 2, who reads only at night, commented that when she is engrossed in a story, “sometimes I go upstairs early because I want to read more. If I am up really late, I only read a few pages, but I read every single night. At this point, I cannot go to sleep without reading.” (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Case 4 made a similar observation: “Some days I fall asleep after one page and other times the book is so good I don’t stop until I’ve finished it.” (personal communication, November 20, 2014). Case 3 commented that she sometimes discovers how much she likes a book by how determined she is to find time to keep reading it. (personal communication, November 19, 2014). Case 1 uses her days off to

read. Ross wrote that she found that with heavy readers, “reading was interwoven into the texture of their lives, not separate from it.” (Ross 1998, 787) Thus, it is clear that for each of these women, reading is an essential component of their lives and fills a real role.

It seems clear that the escape element is a large part of the appeal of reading. As Case 1 stated, “I get to escape from the rest of my life and go places within the novel that I would otherwise never go, and be with people I would otherwise never be with.” (personal communication, November 12, 2014). As noted above, each of the women described reading in terms of an escape at least once, if not several times, over the course of her interview. Case 2 used particularly evocative words to describe what reading can do for her: “I want to be transported by a book and so invested that it's a shock to my system when the book is over.” (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Case 3 told me that she “really loves reading and getting lost in some other world...For me, it serves as a stress release.” (personal communication, November 19, 2014). It may be that the fullness of these women’s lives, the constant struggle between work and family and the lack of real personal time actually increases the desire these women have to read, and makes them determined to find a way to bring reading into their lives. In one of my favorite quotes from all four interviews, Case 1 becomes almost poetic in explaining why romance novels hold such appeal for her. She said that they “transport me from my every day, which is divine. I can travel to Ireland...or I can solve mysteries in...stand-alone romance suspense novels. I can be part of a group of amazing friends doing what they love to plan and do weddings, or another group of amazing friends living in a small town and hanging out together with their husbands all the time. I would love to be in their lives.” (personal communication, November 12, 2014). Her use of the word “transport,” a word also used by Case 2 to describe what reading can do for her, is so telling, as it means not just to

convey but also to delight or enrapture. As Ross points out, avid readers choose “to enter a world and live there for a given period of time.” (Ross 2006, 153) For these four working mothers, reading gives them the ability to take a pause from their everyday lives and return, refreshed and restored. As Ross noted, for heavy readers, “Reading is like breathing.” (Ross 2006, 149)

V. Summary

This study attempts to understand the role that reading plays in the lives of busy, well-educated working mothers. It does so through a series of in-depth interviews with four women who are married, suburban mothers balancing family and career. Apart from some amount of weekly exercise, the only leisure activity that all four of these women regularly engage in is reading. A few of the women read upwards of ten hours each week and a few others manage only four hours or so of reading each week, but each makes a point of finding a way to include reading in her schedule, and even the woman who spends the fewest hours per week reading of the four belongs to two different book clubs. It seems evident that reading is an important component of these women’s lives. As Case 4 noted, “books provide some enjoyment and down time in an otherwise busy and stressful life.” (personal communication, November 20, 2014). In trying to determine why reading plays such a vital role, it seems that it is the fact of how complicated and full the daily and weekly schedules are for these women that makes reading so important to them. As Case 1 said, “when life is too complicated, or too overwhelming, reading provides an escape. When I feel angry or lonely or confused or frustrated, I can snuggle into bed with a good book, and all those negative feelings go away.” (personal communication, November 12, 2014). Case 2 made a similar observation: “It helps put my own life in perspective and also lets me try on life experiences without having to live them myself.”

(personal communication, November 17, 2014). Reading is restorative; reading provides a respite that these women need in order to have the mental energy to resume the rest of their activities. The lack of reading time has a palpable negative impact. “When I am very busy and have very limited time to read, I find that it has an impact on my mental health and happiness.” (Case 3, personal communication, November 19, 2014).

As noted above, Radway’s research reached a similar conclusion about the role that reading romance novels has in the lives of busy women. This study is too small to provide any meaningful conclusions, but there is sufficient overlap in the statements these women make about reading and its role in their lives to suggest some conclusions that warrant further research. Additional interviews with women who generally fit within the demographic profile of the four women interviewed for this paper could delve more deeply into the pace of these women’s lives, their daily and weekly schedules and how reading fits into those schedules. It may be that women are not aware that reading provides such solace for them, and that understanding the importance of reading for their mental health and in providing balance to the rest of their lives will provide further appreciation for books and a deeper commitment to reading for pleasure.

In her 1999 paper, Ross quoted readers who articulate with fervor their feelings about reading. “‘It’s a passion. I can’t deny it’; ‘It’s a physical need with me to have to read’; ‘If I were stuck on a desert island without books, I would go crazy’; My freedom to read is absolutely sacred’.” (Ross 1999, 787) Too often these days it appears that people are predicting the demise of the book and of reading. But the comments about reading that these busy women made during their interviews suggests otherwise. This study, and others like it, demonstrate the continued importance of reading for pleasure. As Case 3 stated so poignantly, “the real reason I read is because it is part of who I am.” (personal communication, November 19, 2014).

Case 1 Questionnaire

November 12, 2014

Reading History

1. Age when began to read for pleasure. – I was read to from birth. I think that I really started reading for pleasure alone at about age 9.
2. Favorite books (child). -- Dr. Seuss, for sure. I loved him and still do. I also always liked the Golden Books (multiple authors).
3. Favorite books (teenager). – Anything by Judy Blume. I also loved biographies of teenagers. I was always curious about what kids my age were like in terms of the lives they led and how those lives were different from my own.
4. Age when first began reading romance. -- around 13, I think.
5. Reason for first reading romance. – I found a book called *Fifteen* by Beverly Cleary at a book sale, read it, and fell in love with everything about it. It's just a perfect plain vanilla teen romance. I actually reread it in connection with this questionnaire. The opening line is "Today, I'm going to meet a boy" and it sets the scene for the whole story. It's written in 1956 and is the tale of a girl who meets a boy unexpectedly. They go on dates to the movies and the local soda fountain. The girl has angst over not being asked to the school dance. My cousin and I always quote the line "He looks pale under his tan" because we think it's just hilarious. I love the imagery in the book – it's so perfect for the period in the way it describes the clothing, the dining, the way people got around, the high school. I just identified with it all the time. I think it's every teen girl's dream to be the only girl a boy sees even when she thinks she's nothing special.
6. Do you recall the title, author, or story of your first romance. -- *Fifteen* by Beverly Cleary.
7. Number of books read per month. -- Probably around 3 or so. It varies depending on what else is going on. I read more now that one of my kids is in college, but my son is a senior in high school so I've been spending a lot of my free time helping him with college applications.
8. Number of romance books read per month. -- At least 1 book per month is romance. That never varies. I need the romance fix at least that often.
9. Kinds of books read other than romance books. – I like historical fiction and crime/detective novels, but I will read more or less anything that sounds interesting and engaging.
10. Read every day? -- I try to, yes.
11. Hours per week devoted to reading in any genre? -- On a guess, around 15.
12. When do you do the most reading -- Before bed and the middle of the night on the nights I can't sleep. I use a bed light then so I don't wake my husband. I read during the day on my days off also.
13. Are there certain times a week devoted to more reading? -- Wednesday, which is one of my days off.
14. Where do you do the most reading? -- In bed. My bed is just my favorite place. I joke that I'm like *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, or the grandparents in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. When I lived in a tiny apartment in law school I did all my work in

- my bed with papers spread all around me. I prefer to watch TV in bed too. If I have something to drink, then I read sitting up, and if I don't I read lying back on the pillows.
15. Do you discuss reading with others? -- Almost never.
 - a. With whom? Really no one. It's just not something that's a topic of conversation. Many of my closest friends do not live near me, and we don't speak that often, so when we do speak, we talk about our kids or our families or our jobs or our husbands and things like that. We almost never speak about books we've read. If I had closer friends who lived nearby and who I saw often, I might have conversations about books. I do see people at Starbucks or at the store, but I don't think they read a lot, and we've never talked about books.
 - b. Kinds of things talked about? N/A
 16. Frequency of obtaining books from:
 - a. Bookstore -- 1%
 - b. Library -- 10%
 - c. From a friend -- 0%
 - d. From a relative -- 0%
 - e. Online -- 89% (Amazon) -- I mostly buy from Amazon because it's easy. They have 24-hour availability and 2 day delivery because we have Amazon Prime. I usually buy new books because I like the feel and smell of crisp new books. I don't use the library more because it's hard for me to get there during opening hours. But our local library's technology is improving, which means I can search for books online and reserve them online too, so I can go into the library quickly to pick them up. My New Year's resolution in 2014 was to use the library more, and I have actually succeeded.
 17. Frequency of purchasing hardback and paperback:
 - a. Hardback -- 20%
 - b. Paperback -- 80% -- I usually buy books in paperback because they're cheaper but in reality I like hardbacks better.

Knowledge and Evaluation of Books in Romance

1. Definition of romance material: I actually didn't know how I would define a romance novel, so I looked at a bunch of definitions that I found online, and I liked the one from Wikipedia the best: Romance novels place their primary focus on the relationship and romantic love between two people and has an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending. That about sums it up for me.
2. Identify different kinds of books as belonging in the romance genre: historical romance, contemporary romance, paranormal romance, romantic suspense, inspirational romance.
 - a. Description of a typical plot -- The hero and heroine may or may not know each other before the story begins but over the course of the story their circumstances, be it physical location, problem to solve or tragedy, bring them together and make them fall in love.
3. Read certain types of materials in romance fiction more than others? -- Yes
 - a. Most often read: -- contemporary romance
 - b. Never read: I think I've read all the sub-genres within romance there are, including paranormal (which is how I think of the *Twilight* series). I have even read two novels in the Harlequin Love Inspired series (*Falling for the Fireman* and *The Fireman's Homecoming* by Allie Pleiter, who is also a knitting blogger, which is how I found her

- books). These are Christian oriented books, which is not my thing, so I didn't like them very much, but I tried them, for knitting solidarity.
4. Method of finding new romance novels -- I find new book by studying the shelves of my local library or the romance shelves of the independent bookstore in town. I also like looking at the Amazon "people who liked X also liked Y recommendations." All those methods are a good source.
 5. Method of deciding which romance novels to read -- I read the fly leaf or the first few pages. I will almost always read Nora Roberts. I think she really is the best. Even though her books are formulaic, her attention to detail in character development and placement in time and history is amazing. So if she has a new book out, which happens a lot, then I will read her, without question. But otherwise I read the book description, and if that sounds good, I read the opening paragraphs and see if the writing grabs me.
 - a. Favorite authors. Nora Roberts is my favorite, by far.
 - b. Ranking of favorite authors. Nora Roberts, Nicholas Sparks, Barbara Delinsky, Danielle Steele, Adrianna Trigiani
 - c. Features they have in common. I'm not sure that they have anything specific in common that isn't common for all contemporary romances -- there is a boy meets girl, with chemistry and an obstacle to overcome, and a happy ending.
 - d. Reasons for liking some better than others. Not sure, apart from that I think Nora's writing is sharper, funnier and more engaging than anyone else's. I don't really love her paranormal stuff (the series that she just finished had that element, and it didn't do much for me). But it's about the dialogue and the chemistry of the two main characters.
 6. Kinds of characters which appear again and again. -- There is quite often a damsel in distress and a knight on a white horse. Sometimes there is a strong-willed female who fights back against her suitor. They appear no matter what time period the book is set in. Sometimes the female lead is starting over. Sometimes the male is. But the overall format is generally the same.
 - a. Nature of their similarity from book to book. I think I just answered that one!
 - b. Ways in which these characters differ. They differ in terms of setting and time period. Sometimes there is a jealous ex or a rival (or pseudo rival). Sometimes particularly bad things happen, and other times it's just the day to day stuff.
 7. Events which appear again and again. -- Ireland is a recurring setting for Nora Roberts. There are legends that need to be conquered in the background.
 - a. Events which never appear. I cannot think of a time in a Nora Roberts book where the hero or heroine died.
 8. Are people in romance novels real people? Sometimes yes, sometimes no.
 - a. How? They can be real people if you mean shop owners, business owners, law enforcement personnel.
 - b. Principal differences. They may be fantastical however (paranormal aspects in Roberts' books). I guess it depends on the author. Some of them write more realistic characters than others. Maybe the contemporary romances feel a little more realistic to me in terms of characters than the historical ones.
 9. Are events like those in real life? Sometimes yes, sometimes no.
 - a. Which ones are similar? There are real life events like people running their businesses, moving to new locales for a fresh start, traveling to uncover family roots, things like that.
 - b. Which ones are different? There are other things that seem very far-fetched. In the

- Gallaghers of Ardmores series (another Nora Roberts trilogy), there was a sleepy, nowhere and then one of the main characters got a recording contract. That is not real life.
10. Do characters change in the story? I think the characters are the story. So I don't really know how to answer this question.
 - a. Which ones?
 - b. How? I guess sometimes the main characters become more self aware. Or you have either the heroine or the hero who starts off completely uninterested in being in a relationship, and then winds up falling in love. Often the hero falls in love for the first time.
 11. If we met at a party and began discussing reading romance, how would you describe your reading of romance to me? If we met at a party, I'd tell you that I love to read Nora Roberts because she just transports me from my every day, which is divine. I can travel to Ireland with her, or I can solve mysteries in her stand-alone suspense novels. I can be part of a group of amazing friends doing what they love to plan and do weddings, or another group of amazing friends living in a small town and hanging out together with their husbands all the time. I would love to be in their lives.
 12. What makes reading romance novels different from other types of reading? You know that the boy always gets the girl in a romance novel, no matter what else happens. So you are guaranteed a happy ending. Since life is never like that, it's very nice to know that there's a place you can go which is like that.
 13. Can you explain to me why you recently failed to complete a particular romance book? I have been reading Nora Roberts' Cousins O'Dwyer trilogy reluctantly because I don't really care for the paranormal aspect. I found the first book, *Dark Witch*, the hardest to read but now that I have plowed through it I feel compelled to see the series to its end. The last book in the trilogy was just released and I bought it on the day it came out and read it right away. I was disappointed with it, really because I just don't find paranormal stories that interesting. But I finished it. I can't remember not finishing one, just to get to the happy ending, I guess.
 14. What do you do with the romance books after you have finished reading them? I keep the ones I like best if I have purchased them. Library books go back. If I don't want to keep a book I've purchased I either sell it on Amazon or put it up on paperbackswap.com (which includes hardcovers too). I don't have trouble getting rid of books I don't like a lot, but I would never throw a book out.

Personal Information

1. Sex -- Female
2. Age -- 49
3. Marital status -- married
4. Children? Yes. How many? Two
5. Ages of children. 18 (daughter) and 16 (son)
6. How do you spend your day? I work five days each week in a knitting store that I opened and own in my town. The store is less than a 15-minute walk from my home. I have Mondays and Wednesdays off, and on the weekends I only work in the afternoons. When I am not working, I handle household chores -- laundry, groceries, bill paying, child management. I sneak in TV and books when I can. Knitting is my other favorite

hobby, besides reading, and it was sort of dream to open a knitting store in my town, which didn't have one. I love my store, but sometimes the customers can be really challenging. It's actually been moderately successful, and that feels good. My husband has been very supportive, although he hasn't really considered that maybe I don't have as much time for the household stuff as I used to. He thinks, for example, that because I work in walking distance from our home while he commutes into the city every day that I can just run home to deal with problems in the house when they arise. Typical man!

7. What is your occupation? -- I own a small business (a knitting store), in my town.
 - a. How long have you been employed outside the home? This time, since 2010, when I opened the knitting store. I was a lawyer from 1992-1997 at a big law firm.
 - b. Have there been periods when you did not work outside the home? Yes.
 - c. When? From 1997, when I was about to give birth to my first child (she was born in January of 1998) until the late summer of 2010, when I opened the knitting store.
8. What is your spouse's occupation? He is a lawyer.
9. How many years of formal education do you have? 7 years post high school (4 of college and 3 of law school). I went to Brown University, where I majored in English, and I got my law degree from Northwestern Law School.

Leisure patterns

1. Hours devoted to
 - a. Television viewing – Anywhere from 2 to 5 hours daily – I like watching The Today Show and General Hospital. There are certain TV shows I never miss, like The Good Wife and Downton Abbey, when it's on.
 - b. Reading – Anywhere from 2 to 5 hours daily
 - c. Radio listening -- negligible (in the car only)
 - d. Physical recreation -- I have an hour of physical therapy five times per week. That's for my wrists and my neck and shoulders. That's pretty much all the physical activity I do, except that I walk a lot.
 - e. Internet – I spend almost no time online. I use my iPhone to look things up, and I text a lot.
2. Other regular forms of leisure occupation? Besides knitting, I really like to travel, and that's pretty much my only other form of leisure occupation, besides playing with my dog. I travel domestically as much as three times a month but more regularly once quarterly. I travel internationally annually.
3. Number of times attend per week: Combined total of 1-2 times per month for all of movies, concerts, theater, sports events.
 - a. Movies
 - b. Concerts
 - c. Theatre
 - d. Sports events – I like ice hockey particularly.
 - e. Synagogue activities – I sometimes go to services when it is the anniversary of a relative's death. Rarely otherwise
4. Number of magazines read per week: I only read one magazine.
 - a. Names -- People Magazine.
 - b. Favorite? Yes, and as above, it's the only one I read.

- c. Why? It is viewed in my family as the source of all knowledge. Enough said. Obviously we don't really think that, but we think reading People Magazine is fun!
5. Are there certain television shows you never miss? Yes.
- a. Names: The Good Wife, Chicago Fire, Chicago PD and Downton Abbey. I think the writing on The Good Wife is unparalleled. I like the two Chicago shows because they take place here and I am a law enforcement junkie. I recently watched the Showtime original series Outlander which combines history with romance and thought it was brilliant.
- b. What is your favorite television show? The Good Wife
- c. Why? I love the story lines and several of the characters. I think, as I said before, that the writing is amazing, so I love the dialogue and the way they speak to each other.

Cindy's Additional Questions:

Do you use social media sites to find books to read, both generally and in the romance genre? I'm thinking here about Goodreads and other similar book websites, but also Facebook or anything else like that. Do you subscribe to any book blogs or newsletters from bookstores, libraries or other book-related sites? Are you a member of any online reading communities?

I never use social media to find books to read and generally am not interested in being part of those communities. I really am not a big user of the internet, and I don't like "chatting" with people I don't know, apart from the professional chatting I have to do at the store. It's too much work. Virtual knowing of people is not my thing.

Do you listen to audio books?

I only listen to audio books on long car trips.

Do you have a kindle or a nook or an iPad that you use for reading?

Nope. I do not read on a screen, and I have no interest in reading that way. I like the heft of a book, I like turning pages, I like the way a book smells and feels. We have a nice independent bookstore in our town called The Book Table, and I like going in there and just browsing.

Do you have any thoughts or impressions on how the Internet and the web has impacted your reading life?

Amazon has made getting books possible at any hour of the day and has broadened my exposure to a wider range of books. I don't think I would know about as many books or be exposed to as many books without Amazon. That's really how the Internet has impacted my reading because I don't use it for anything else book related. I guess I can go to my library's website to see if they have a book or to request a book, but I like going in and browsing more.

This is more of a big picture question, but how do you make meaning around your reading activity? What does reading mean to you?

I read because I like to, as part of my leisure activities. I choose books because they sound interesting to me either because of their subject matter or their potential for entertainment. I know it sounds trite but I just like to read. It takes me out of my day-to-day existence and brings me wherever the story goes, and I get to choose which story, so in that sense, I get to choose where I go. When life is too complicated, or too overwhelming, reading provides an escape. When I feel angry or lonely or confused or frustrated, I can snuggle into bed with a good book, and all those negative feelings go away. Reading makes me happy.

Case 2 Questionnaire

November 17, 2014

Reading History

1. Age when began to read for pleasure? I don't remember ever not reading for pleasure, so while the true answer is probably 4 or so, I'll bump it to 8 because that's when I certainly picked books with plots, characters, etc.
2. Favorite books (child). I read a lot as a child and was always excited to read one of the "old" books recommended by my mother: *Little Women*, books by Sally Tait, and Sara Crewe come to mind too. I was a Nancy Drew fanatic. I loved *Charlotte 's Web*. Also definitely into Judy Blume: *Are You There God, It's Me Margaret* and *Forever*.
3. Favorite books (teenager). Most of the books I read as a teenager were related to school. Classics, etc. But often I'd read more by an author studied or related to a book read for school.
4. Age when first began reading romance novels. 12 or 13.
5. Reason for reading first romance novel. My cousin shared a wonderful book she had bought at a book fair.
6. Do you recall the title, author, or story of your first romance book? *Fifteen* by Beverly Cleary -- I can still quote from it! I think it spoke to the way my cousin and I were raised--importance of respect, manners, integrity--but gave us a peek into the exciting new world of boys and girls liking each other. We definitely wanted to find a boy who showed up for a date "pale beneath his tan" because he wasn't suffering from appendicitis but wouldn't break the date! (Fingers crossed my cousin gave you the same quote!)
7. Number of books read per month. I guess about 3-4.
8. Number of romance books read per month. 1-2, on average. Wow, I just realized that that's half the books I read each month. I don't think I had appreciated that before.
9. Kinds of books read other than romance books. Literary fiction, popular fiction/bestsellers, young adult (I like to read what my kids are reading).
10. Do you read every day? Yes.
11. Hours per week devoted to reading in any genre? 5-7.
12. When do you do the most reading? In bed, right before sleep. This has become a habit. If I read the newspaper in the morning and books at night, I have time in my schedule for both. I have a whole set up. I snuggle in with my reading light. Sometimes I go upstairs early because I want to read more. If I am up really late, I only read a few pages, but I read every single night. At this point, I cannot go to sleep without reading.
13. Certain times a week devoted to more reading? Sometimes more on weekends, but only if I'm trying to finish a book.
14. Where do you do the most reading? In bed. As I was just saying, it's my reading place.
15. Do you discuss reading with others? Yes.
 - a. With whom? Family, friends, book clubs. I actually belong to 2 book clubs. The first one has been meeting for about four years. We're all friends from having our kids in preschool together, so it's an extremely homogeneous group of Jewish women in

their 40s to low 50s. It is actually my first book club experience, and I've learned a lot from being in it, especially about the difference between a good book and a good book club book. There have to be strong plot points or character development worth talking about to be a good book club book. Without those elements, everyone ends up saying stuff like "it was good, I liked it" and then we move on to talking about our kids.

Recently, there started to be rumblings of interest in my neighborhood about having a book club, so I actually took it upon myself to start up a neighborhood book club.

We've only met a handful of times so far. The thing I love about this one is the cross section of people in it. Unlike my first club, this one has all ages covered, and even though we are all women, we represent a lot of different backgrounds. So far what I've noticed is that, not surprisingly, different life experiences bring interesting perspectives to our discussions.

b. Kinds of things talked about? Believability of characters and plot, quality of writing/language.

16. Frequency of obtaining books from:

a. Bookstore? Only when a book is not available at the library and I have to have it quickly because it sounds so good or it's the new book that everyone is talking about or something like that. But that doesn't happen too often.

b. Library? Most often.

c. From a friend? Sometimes but not often.

d. From a relative? Same, sometimes but not often.

e. Online? Almost never.

17. Frequency of purchasing hardback and paperback:

a. Hardback? Almost never.

b. Paperback? A handful per year, because I take almost all the books I read out of the library.

Knowledge and Evaluation of romance books:

1. Definition of romance material: A romance novel revolves around a couple falling in love. There may be other elements, but that is the core of the story and its reason for being. The purpose of the novel is to tell the story of how two people come to love one another and choose to spend their lives together.
2. Identify different kinds of books as belonging to the romance category. Everything from trashy Harlequin Romance type books to Jane Austen qualifies as romance to me. I bristle these days at formulaic writing, and my impression is that Harlequins are purely formulaic. I know that Nora Roberts is formulaic too, but there is something about her writing that is addictive. I guess that literature types would not like my saying that Jane Austen novels are romance novels, because they are great works of literature, and most English majors would say that great works of literature don't fall into categories like "romance" but I think that's too narrow and snobby.
 - a. Description of a typical heroine: In my experience, a typical romance heroine is fiercely independent, doesn't need anyone to complete her, sees the folly in everyone else's relationship ups and downs, and ultimately falls madly in love with the person she hardly noticed or could barely tolerate at the beginning.

3. Do you read certain types of romance materials more than others?
 - a. Most often read: Literary romance – I guess what I mean by that is that I like books with good writing that have romance as the main plot element. I really like good, engaging fiction that has romantic elements, and I find those more interesting and engaging than fiction stories without romantic elements.
 - b. Never read: Harlequin. I do like romance stories, but I can't get past the feeling that it would be too much of a waste of my time to read the ones that Harlequin puts out. I can't imagine that the writing is very good or that the stories are gripping. I just feel like they would be too simplistic, boring and predictable. Maybe that isn't fair of me because I've never read one, but I have a really strong anti-Harlequin bias.
4. Method of finding new romance materials? My cousin usually shares the ones she really liked with me. I also look at the bestseller lists from newspapers and magazines.
5. Method of deciding what romance novel to read next? Recommendations from friends or people I know in my community who read romance novels. Also recommendations from my cousin.
 - a. Favorite authors? Long ago, I read a lot of Danielle Steele. More recently, I've been reading a lot of Nora Roberts.
 - b. Ranking of favorite authors: Nora Roberts first, then Danielle Steele.
 - c. Features they have in common? Great storytelling...not literary or changing the world, but great when you just want to read a story with a happy ending.
 - d. Reasons for liking better than others? I don't think so, honestly. I like the ones I've read most recently, which makes me want to read more. They don't really stay with me in terms of specific themes or story lines or characters – they are sort of more a type, so it's that I read one when I want that type of story, instead of looking for something specific that is like one of the romance books I've read in particular.
6. Kinds of characters which appear again and again? Smart, beautiful, independent woman. Handsome, mysterious man. Loyal friends.
 - a. Nature of their similarity from book to book? The woman has usually decided she doesn't need a man or has given up on love...we don't usually know as much about the man, except that he's perfect for her.
 - b. Ways in which these characters differ? The trappings differ: job, hair color, setting. The less material stuff varies, but the core remains.
7. Events which appear again and again? The couple always has a misunderstanding that seems to doom any chance of future happiness. It always works out.
 - a. Events which never appear? Violence, existential or other deeply philosophical debates between characters.
8. Are people in romance novels real people? They're stereotypes but you can see real people in there.
 - a. How? Part of the attraction is that there's enough of a real person there to relate to.
 - b. Principal differences? Life is not nearly as neat as it's presented in these books. They make people pretty black and white, and emotions completely predictable.
9. Are events like those in real life? Yes.
 - a. Which ones are similar? People are living actual lives, with actual jobs, surrounded by actual people.

- b. Which ones are different? Each book, taken on its own, could actually happen, but as a genre, romance books have far happier endings than real life does, which is sort of a sad commentary on real life, but I think part of the appeal of romances.
10. Do characters change in the story? Often.
- a. Which ones? The main characters often have a change of heart that opens them up to love. The supporting characters do not change.
- b. How? They learn to trust another person, become vulnerable, etc. They seem always to start out determined not to fall in love or get into a serious relationship, and then of course they always do.
11. If we met at a party and began discussing romance reading, how would you describe your romance reading to me? I guess it actually feels like a guilty pleasure. As much as I admire and enjoy more complex writing as a general rule, sometimes I just want to escape into a story that I know will have a happy ending. I think about the wedding quartet series of books by Nora Roberts that my cousin sent me. I read them all at once, without being able to put them down, and they made me smile. They won't change the world or teach me much about people or life experiences. They are pure pleasure. These four women have a tremendous friendship and are really there for each other, and they also have this incredible business that they love and are good at, and they live in an amazing house together with two guest houses, and it's sort of this fabulous life they lead, and by the end of the series they are all going to be married to four buddies so that you know that the eight of them will grow old together and raise kids together and it's just I guess a perfect fantasy kind of life so I wanted to be a part of it for as long as I could. But I do feel a little guilty about reading them.
12. What makes romance reading different from other types of reading? I'm drawn to the books I usually read by amazing writing, unusual plots, and unique points of view. Cookie cutter romance novels are pretty much the opposite! Also, you more or less know at the beginning how the story is going to turn out, which is not usually the case with other kinds of reading. What is interesting is how it happens, and whether there is snappy dialogue or really good chemistry between the two main characters. But there is no element of uncertainty or suspense. They are very reliable.
13. Can you explain to me why you recently failed to complete a particular romance book? I don't think I've ever failed to complete one but if I did it would be for sheer predictability.
14. What do you do with your romance books after you have finished reading them? I donate them to charity. I never keep them (and of course, if they are library books, I just return them).

Personal Information

1. Sex – Female
2. Age – 49
3. Marital status – Married.
4. Children? Yes/ How many? 2 children.
5. Ages of children. 13 and 11, a boy and a girl.
6. How do you spend your day? At home, working internally and externally.
7. What is your occupation? I am a freelance writer/consultant. Right now I write almost exclusively for one client which is a local consulting company that offers services in

about ten different markets. I am writing support for the marketing team that supports all ten markets. I have written a series of articles about drones and done web content for their survey research team. I've also done a case study about responsive web design. Usually, I will meet with a subject matter expert, then write my piece, which an editor reviews and then sends to a graphic design group for final formatting and printing. My name actually never goes on these articles. Each week I am working on something new, or that's how it seems!

- a. How long have you been employed outside the home? Since 1987.
- b. Have there been periods when you did not work outside the home? Yes, for three years when my children were babies.
- c. When? 2002-2005.
8. What is your spouse's occupation? He is a senior systems engineer.
9. How many years of formal education do you have? I went to school through college and have a BA in marketing and management information systems from the University of Virginia.

Leisure Patterns

1. Hours devoted to
 - a. Television viewing - 2/day
 - b. Reading - 1/day
 - c. Radio listening - 1/month
 - d. Physical recreation - 5/week
 - e. Internet - 1/day
2. Other regular forms of leisure occupation? None that I can think of, actually.
3. Number of times attend per week:
 - a. Movies - 1 per week, but not always going out, more just on the couch!
 - b. Concerts - never
 - c. Theatre - 4 per year
 - d. Sports events - kids events, roughly 1 per week. Not professional sports.
 - e. Synagogue activities – never
4. Number of magazines read per week: varies
 - a. Names - Washingtonian, Travel & Leisure, Cooking Light, Real Simple
 - b. Favorite? Real Simple
 - c. Why? I always trying to learn about and improve the house and the way we live.
5. Are there certain television shows you never miss? Yes
 - a. Names - Homeland, How to Get Away With Murder, Survivor
 - b. What is your favorite television show? Favorite of all time was Breaking Bad
 - c. Why? Unbelievable writing and acting

Cindy's Additional Questions

Do you use social media sites to find books to read, both generally and in the romance genre? I'm thinking here about Goodreads and other similar book websites, but also Facebook or anything else like that. Do you subscribe to any book blogs or newsletters from bookstores, libraries or other book-related sites? Are you a member of any online reading communities?

I like Goodreads very much and often refer to it when looking for books to read. I don't use any of the more mainstream social media for that. I'm a member of a wonderful site called Book Movement, which helps book clubs track activity, offers lists of best books for book clubs, shares comments, questions, etc. That's really useful.

For two years, I ran a blog called inReads for our local PBS affiliate. We published articles, reviews, etc. about books - it was conceived as an online reading community, but we quickly found out that people were using Facebook and GoodReads and we didn't begin to have the resources to compete. But it was an interesting experience for me in being part of that culture for awhile. But I don't tend to want to connect with people virtually. I like more actual interaction. I guess that makes me old!

Do you listen to audio books?

When I had a long commute in the 90s I listened to audio books myself. Now, my family listens to them on long car trips. John Grisham turns out to be an author who can appeal to everyone from an 11-year-old girl to her 78-year-old grandfather!

Do you have a kindle or a nook or an iPad that you use for reading?

I have a kindle that I no longer use. I really prefer paper, although I do miss the ability to look up words while reading. I thought I might use it again to download ebooks from the library, but I only did that once or twice. Convenience wasn't enough to overcome the things I don't like about an e-reader (the biggest is not knowing where I am in a book).

Do you have any thoughts or impressions on how the Internet and the web has impacted your reading life?

I think the Internet has very much affected everything about my reading life, actually, from the availability of recommendations, reading guides, author backgrounds and other books to the ease of buying new books and putting books on hold at the library. It just has broadened my exposure to books and made more of them more available to me in all senses of that word.

This is more of a big picture question, but how do you make meaning around your reading activity. What does reading mean to you?

I think I read to learn, but about people and relationships, not about places or history or things like that (although I don't mind if that's an added bonus). It helps put my own life in perspective and also lets me try on life experiences without having to live them myself. I want to be transported by a book and so invested that it's a shock to my system when the book is over. I think I also read because I really appreciate the art of writing. The best books are the ones that have me stopping along the way to re-read a sentence, phrase, or passage and that leave me thinking, "I could never write a novel." It's actually disappointing to finish a book and think, "I could totally do this." So, I choose books that come with recommendations of excellent writing or a unique structure, and hope to relate to or learn from the characters in the book.

Case 3 Questionnaire

November 19, 2014

Reading History

1. Age when began to read for pleasure? As soon as I could read, so 4 or 5.
2. Favorite books (child). *A Little Princess*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, The Bobbsey Twins books, all kinds of myths and fairy tale stories. I loved *The Witch of Blackbird Point*, *Anne of Green Gables* and the *Little House on the Prairie* books too.
3. Favorite books (teenager). I continued to read and love fantasy books like the ones I just mentioned, plus I think I read a lot of YA fiction, especially the teenage romance novels.
4. Age when first began reading detective/mystery novels? I honestly don't remember, but it must have been when I was a teenager, probably around 14 or 15, on a guess. Not sure if it was in middle school or high school.
5. Reason for reading first detective/mystery novel? I am going to guess that my sister suggested it (she is two years older than me and we were very close growing up and still are, and she's a great reader too).
6. Do you recall the title, author, or story of your first detective/mystery novel? It was definitely an Agatha Christie mystery – I honestly can't remember which one. I wound up reading so many of them that I can't remember which one I started with!
7. Number of books read per month. It varies from month to month based on my work schedule but about 5-6 per month so a little over 1 book per week, on average.
8. Number of detective/mystery books read per month? At least one. I like them enough to make sure that I get one in on a regular basis.
9. Kinds of books read other than detective/mystery books? Pretty much everything. I have a broad range of reading tastes.
10. Do you read every day? I try to, but some days I just don't have the time.
11. Hours per week devoted to reading in any genre? On a guess, in the range of 10-15.
12. When do you do the most reading? When I am commuting to and from work in the city, or waiting in the car to pick my kids up from school.
13. Certain times a week devoted to more reading? Not really. My life does not have sufficient organization to make set times for reading on a weekly basis. I just read when I can. If I am really into a book, I will squeeze an extra 15 minutes here and there to keep reading. In fact, sometimes the best way I can tell how I'm actually feeling about a book is by how much I want to find time to keep reading.
14. Where do you do the most reading? On the train to/from work, while waiting in the car, occasionally evenings or weekends. I just don't have time to read in bed at night, as much as I wish I could. If I'm awake late at night, I'm working. I leave work in the late afternoon to collect the kids from school and then go back to work (from home) after the kids are settled, so I don't have down time for reading. The kids are not old enough to get home from school on their own, and we have no outside help. So I had to make a deal with work to be able to pick the kids up from school, which means that I have to do more work outside of the office than other people. My husband travels too much to do school pick up, and we haven't found a way to do car pooling reliably.

15. Do you discuss reading with others? Yes.
- a. With whom? Friends, book club members
 - b. Kinds of things talked about? With friends we usually discuss books we liked but may not get into a detailed discussion unless we've both already read the book. In my book club we spend several hours discussing insights or things that the book made us think about, as well as whether or not we liked it. My book club has an international membership so we frequently have very different opinions on what we read. There is a big divide in my book group between feminists and non-feminists, which makes for some very polarizing conversations. The club is a sub-group of an international women's club, so the women in it all live in England but most are not planning to live there for more than a few years. I have a good friend who reads a lot more than I do, and every year I sent her books for her birthday, and she sends me books for my birthday. It has become a fun challenge to find books that she hasn't read that I think she would like to read, so we start talking about the books we are reading several months in advance of the birthdays and keep a running dialogue going about it. We don't get into deep discussions, we just start listing books that we loved and each of us writes down the other's favorites.
16. Frequency of obtaining books from:
- a. Bookstore? Less than once per month. Once I buy a book, I have a very hard time getting rid of it, and we are really out of room in terms of where to put books in our house, so I try really hard to avoid buying physical books.
 - b. Library? A few times a year, on a guess.
 - c. From a friend? Every few months or so. We share books that we've really loved.
 - d. From a relative? Same as above.
 - e. Online? If Kindle counts as an online purchase, than at least five books per month. This is where I get most of my books. If Kindle doesn't count, and you mean just ordering online, then about one per month.
17. Frequency of purchasing hardback and paperback:
- a. Hardback? Rarely.
 - a. Paperback: Less than one per month.

Knowledge and Evaluation of Detective/Mystery Novels:

1. How would you define a detective or mystery novel? The protagonist is either a detective or a person impacted by a mystery or crime. There may be an element of romance, although that is secondary to the mystery and often that part of the ending is less optimistic. It's not like a romance where you are guaranteed a happy ending.
2. Can you identify different kinds of books as belonging in this genre? One type is a series following a policeman or detective. The reader becomes familiar with the protagonist and his or her weaknesses, style, personal issues, etc. Another involves the innocent, bewildered victim who is caught up in the mystery but does not understand how or why.
 - a. Can you describe a typical plot? A mystery/detective novel begins with a criminal event, often violent, that must be solved in order to prevent further violent or criminal actions. The protagonist can be either a detective or member of the police force, or

someone impacted by the event in some way, e.g. a person whose relative or friend is killed or he/she is accused of the crime. He or she then solves the mystery. There is typically an increasing sense of danger, either for the protagonist or for other who he/she is trying to protect. Although the climax often involves a situation where the protagonist is in danger of being killed, there is always the sense that it won't quite happen. There are often red herrings along the way that lead the reader to believe that a certain character is guilty, only to find out that it was someone else.

3. Do you read certain types of detective or mystery books more than others? No – there is no pattern at all. If the idea just strikes me, or if a good friend recommends it, or a blurb about it sounds really good, I just read it. I don't specifically look for a type or a specific author.
 - a. Most often read:
 - b. Never read:
4. Method of finding new detective or mystery materials? I read book reviews in the newspaper and also online. I also talk to friends who enjoy reading. In my book club, we typically have a group discussion, so we ask everyone in the group to bring suggestions to the meeting.
5. Method of deciding which detective/mystery book to read next? I decide based on reviews or recommendations, or if the description catches my interest.
 - a. Favourite authors. CJ Sansom, Henning Mankell, Stieg Larsson, Elizabeth Haynes, Tana French, although I don't tend to just follow particular authors.
 - b. Ranking of favourite authors. I can't rank them as I enjoy them all for different reasons.
 - c. Features they have in common. I'm not sure they have much in common other than the genre. The things I look for are: plot, characters that are interesting or likeable, and quality of writing.
 - d. Reasons for liking better than others. The more of the items I mentioned above that a book has, the more I'm going to like it.
6. Kinds of characters which appear again and again. Detective, victim, criminal (often a killer), helpful secondary characters that add elements or bring clues or help the detective and deepen the story.
 - a. Nature of their similarity from book to book. The detective always seems to have issues in his or her personal life, especially with partners. The non-detective protagonist is more often a woman, I guess, although that may be changing.
 - b. Ways in which these characters differ. Sometimes the protagonist seems infallible and always on top of things, while in other cases it seems as though he or she stumbles along and solves the mystery almost by accident.
7. Events which appear again and again. There are always clues to lead the reader off the track and which seem to point towards a conclusion which is not correct, like a red herring. Then there is almost always a final denouement where the principal character or someone he cares about or is trying to protect is in danger.
 - a. Events which never appear. Well, the detective never dies, and pretty much always the crime is solved.
8. Are people in these novels real people? No.
 - a. How? They are the authors' creations. I know that's a very literal interpretation of your question, but that's how I think about characters in books. I never think of them

- as real people. I never judge a book in terms of whether the characters are realistic. Maybe I like reading these books because they don't have any connection to the reality of my life.
- b. Principal differences? They never seem as though they act as a real person would, but that may also be driven by the fact that we know more about their thoughts and motivations than we do about people in real life. We never have the level of understanding of real people that we do of characters in a novel. I always wish I could get inside someone's head to understand what he or she is really thinking (I feel this way about my kids all the time). In a book, we can do that, but in real life we can't.
9. Are events like those in real life? Sometimes – I think it depends on the book.
- a. Which ones are similar? I'd like to say that the crimes are not similar, but often they are. You read about murders happening, and often what you read in the paper is similar to a murder happening in a book.
- b. Which ones are different? Many mysteries in real life remain unsolved while they do not in detective novels.
10. Do characters change in the story? Sometimes
- a. Which ones? If the main character in a detective story, or one of them, is an innocent victim type, then usually that one changes a lot over the course of the novel.
- b. How? He or she becomes more cynical and better at putting together the clues to reach the conclusion.
11. If we met at a party and began discussing reading detective or mystery novels, how would you describe your reading of them to me? I read detective novels when I have read an interesting review, someone has recommended it, or I come across one that catches my interest while browsing books. They are fun and engrossing to read, and it's also fun to try to figure out the mystery or who the murderer is before the author reveals it. They usually describe a world that is so different from my own, basic, suburban experience that it's great to go into that world for awhile and see how the mystery develops.
12. What makes reading detective or mystery novels different from other types of reading? I guess there is always an element of suspense and the expectation that the mystery will be solved at the end. I expect a less ambiguous ending than I might get in other genres. These stories are almost always resolved with little left hanging. I guess sometimes the author is planning a series (JK Rowling's new series comes to mind here), in which case some stuff is left hanging, but rarely the actual mystery itself.
13. Can you explain to me why you recently failed to complete a particular detective or mystery book? I never fail to complete a book, even if I hate it. I can't help it. I have to know how it ends. Once I start, I have to finish. One thing is very important is that I have to like the character or at least have some sympathy for him or her. I felt this keenly, for example, in *Gone Girl*, which I hated because I couldn't find one redeeming or appealing feature about any of the characters.
14. What do you do with a detective or mystery novel after you have finished reading it? Generally keep them either in my Kindle archive or on my very overloaded bookshelves. I cannot give books away that I've read. I just never know when I am going to want to read them again.

1. Sex – Female
2. Age – 49
3. Marital status – Married.
4. Children? Yes. How many? 2 children.
5. Ages of children. 16 and 12, a girl and a boy.
6. How do you spend your day? I work.
7. What is your occupation? I am a consultant. I work for MasterCard Advisors, which is the consulting arm of MasterCard. We do not issue any cards ourselves, but we license the MasterCard name (and technology) to banks that then issue MasterCards. My group provides consulting services to our issuing banks to help with any card or banking related issues or problems. Sample projects include: benchmarking performance against competitors and recommending improvements; helping to design and launch a new card program; sizing the opportunity and prioritizing leads for commercial product sales.
 - a. How long have you been employed outside the home? Since I graduated from college in 1987.
 - b. Have there been periods when you did not work outside the home? Apart from my two maternity leaves there was one year when I didn't work.
 - c. When? When we moved from the US to the UK in July of 2007. I went back to work when we decided to stay in the UK long-term rather than returning to the US.
8. What is your spouse's occupation? He is a lawyer.
9. How many years of formal education do you have? I went to school through college and have a BA in applied math and economics from Yale University.

Leisure Patterns (per week)

1. Hours devoted to
 - a. Television viewing – I never watch television.
 - b. Reading – 10-15, on a guess. Sometimes more, never less.
 - c. Radio listening – On a guess, 4 hours per week, in the car.
 - d. Physical recreation – 5-10 hours per week. We are a pretty athletic family.
 - e. Internet – At least 10 hours per week.
2. Other regular forms of leisure occupation? Not really, there isn't time.
3. Number of times attend per week:
 - a. Movies – We almost never go to the movies.
 - b. Concerts – A few times a year, I would say.
 - c. Theatre – We usually go into the city for a show about once a month.
 - d. Sports events – A few times a year, probably.
 - e. Church activities – never
4. Number of magazines read per week? I do not read any magazines at all.
 - a. Why not? No interest really, and that's not how I want to spend my free time.
5. Are there certain television shows you never miss? No, I do not watch television.
 - a. Why not? I just don't watch television. We don't own one.

Cindy's Additional Questions:

Do you use social media sites to find books to read, both generally and in the romance genre? I'm thinking here about Goodreads and other similar book websites, but also Facebook or anything else like that. Do you subscribe to any book blogs or newsletters from bookstores, libraries or other book-related sites? Are you a member of any online reading communities?

I do not use social media to find books to read but I do rely on bookstores, Amazon, book reviews, or recommendations. I don't subscribe to any book blogs or newsletters, and am not a member of any online reading communities. Social media has changed how I find or share book-related information. But I don't want to be part of any virtual communities. I have enough trouble keeping up with my real communities!

Do you listen to audio books? No

Do you have a kindle or a nook or an iPad that you use for reading? Yes. I use my Kindle for reading almost exclusively now. I travel (although not as much as I used to) and as I've said, I do a lot of reading while I am commuting. I just think the Kindle is the most convenient way to read. I also have the storage and space problem I talked about earlier. I just don't have room for more books and I hate to give books away once I've read them. I guess that's why I don't use the library more. I don't know how I'd feel about returning books I've read.

Do you have any thoughts or impressions on how the Internet and the web has impacted your reading life? It has had a huge impact in terms of accessibility of books, as well as the ability to read reviews and buy electronic books. I can search booksellers all over the world for a particular book, and expect that I can find what I want and have it delivered within a matter of days. I used to browse second hand bookstores, but rarely do that now as the internet is in a sense exactly that. I do still like to go to a bookstore and look through the bookshelves.

This is more of a big picture question, but how do you make meaning around your reading activity? What does reading mean to you?

I read for many reasons, and the type of book is related to the reason. For example, when I read romance or sheer escapism books, it is for escape purposes – to feel happy, to get away, when you need that sort of non-challenging and enjoyable experience. Right now I am really into CJ Sansom's books. They are well researched, because he is a historian first, so although they are fictional mystery novels, they have a lot of historical context so I feel as though I am learning at the same time. Other novels that fit into this category are: *An Instance of the Fingerpost*, by Iain Pears, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*. I also read books that make me think about an issue I've never considered, or make me re-think my opinion on the issue. Barbara Kingsolver novels often do this. You could argue that Jodi Picoult would fit here as well, but I found that after the first one of her books that I read, they became very formulaic. I stopped reading her books for that reason, but she does research her topics thoroughly. The real reason I read is because it is part of who I am. Even when I was in grade school, I would sit in class hiding a book under the desk. I really love reading and getting lost in some other world. When I am very busy and have very limited time to read, I find that it has an impact on my mental health and happiness. For me, it serves as a stress release.

Case 4 Questionnaire

November 20, 2014

Reading History

1. Age when began to read for pleasure. I started reading books for pleasure just as soon as I could read. On a guess, that was when I was five or so. My parents read to me before I could read.
2. Favorite books (child). Barbar books. I loved them and the stories and adventures that happened to Barbar.
3. Favorite books (teenager). I read all the Laura Ingalls Wilder books and the Marguerite Henry books.
4. Age when first began reading romance novels. I'm going to guess that I was in junior high school
5. Reason for first reading romance novels? I just enjoyed reading and read all genres. Reading was an escape, especially during those difficult teen years.
6. Do you recall the title, author, or story of your first romance book – It depends on how you define romance. I would say maybe *Forever* by Judy Blume, which was something of a scandal when it first came out because the heroine loses her virginity, and the scenes that describe that sounded, to me at that age, pretty realistic. Everyone wanted to read it, and a lot of people's parents would not let them, so you had to sneak it. That was probably part of the charm. I'm not sure it qualifies as a romance just because they don't wind up together at the end.
7. Number of books read per month? Depends on amount of free time I have that month and also how long the books I read are, but somewhere between two and four, I'd say.
8. Number of books romance books read per month? At least one book each month is a romance book, I think.
9. Kinds of books read other than books romance books? I read a fair amount of basic literary fiction. I also read some fantasy and mystery books, and I've gotten interested in science fiction lately because my son is starting to read it. I read teen books too, with my daughter, but she's mostly grown out of YA now.
10. Do you read every day? No. I wish I did, but the days don't have enough regularity to them for that.
11. Hours per week devoted to reading in any genre? I think around four. Maybe more. It really depends on how busy the week is.
12. When do you do the most reading? I commute to work so that's usually my best time for reading. I always want to read before I go to sleep, but reading at night depends on how tired I am -- some days I fall asleep after one page and other times the book is so good I don't stop until I've finished it.
13. Certain times a week devoted to more reading? No, not really. There's not enough regularity in my schedule for that.
14. Where do most reading? On the train or in bed, right before I fall asleep
15. Discuss reading with others? Yes
 - a. With whom? Mother, sister, book club, friends. I am in two different book clubs. One is more intellectual than the other. We read a lot of literary fiction. The women

- in that group are a mix of stay at home moms and working moms. There are about six of us who meet once a month to discuss a book. The last one we read was *Wolf Hall*. I've been in that book club for ten years now. The other book club is much more relaxed. We read pretty easy books, like *What Alice Forgot* and *Me Before You*. Like the other book club, this one has a mix of stay at home and working moms, and we talk more about social stuff than literary issues. I've only been in this one for about three years. A good friend of mine from the neighborhood asked me to join, and I liked being in the first club so much that I decided to join another one.
- b. Kinds of things talked about? Whether I enjoyed the book, issues that come up in the book, which characters I identify with, that kind of stuff.
16. Frequency of obtaining books from:
- Bookstore – often
 - Library – not very often
 - From a friend – sometimes
 - From a relative – sometimes
 - Online – sometimes, if I hear of something and I want to have it immediately, I use the Kindle, which is what I think of when you say online. Also, if I know I'm going on a trip, I put what I want to read on the Kindle so I have it there.
17. Frequency of purchasing hardback and paperback:
- Hardcover – rarely, honestly
 - Paperback – most often

Knowledge and Evaluation of romance books

- Definition of romance materials – A romance novel has a story that focuses on a romantic relationship and the struggles that the characters encounter. I guess for a true romance story, the book should have an emotionally satisfying optimistic ending.
- Identify different kinds of books as belonging within the romance genre. Historical romance, fantasy, paranormal romance novels.
 - Description of a typical plot? The typical romance novel involves main characters who are “beautiful”, usually good people who may encounter “evil” during the story. The female may be more subservient, but that depends on the novel. The plot usually involves the hero and heroine falling in love, and then encountering a number of challenges. They have to work hard to overcome the challenges and continue the relationship. In the end the love overcomes. Setting and props vary depending on the type of romance novel.
- Do you read certain types of romance novels more than others? Not really. There isn't one type of romance novel that I read most often, but I don't really read the paranormal stuff.
- Method of finding new romance materials? I look at reviews in the New York Times or hear about a book on NPR. Friends and family members mention books to me too.
- Method of deciding what romance books to read? Usually I just rely on recommendations from friends or read about a new novel in a book review or hear it on NPR and if it sounds good, I get it. I don't really have a favorite author. I don't rank authors either. I just look for a plot that sounds interesting. I know that romance novels have the same basic plot, but there are ways of setting the story, in terms of where

(historically and geographically) that makes it more interesting to me. I like the historical setting aspect of those books. I like them if they take place somewhere that is very different from where I live.

6. Kinds of characters which appear again and again. In romance novels characters seem to misunderstand the person they have fallen in love with and are not sure if their love is returned. So there is always a kind of insecurity about the love, and some miscommunication.

a. Nature of their similarity from book to book? The love isn't a for sure thing until the end. You have to wait for the end to be 100% sure it's going to work out, although of course you always know it will.

b. Ways in which these characters differ? Well, they have different jobs. Sometimes the men are more tough guy, sometimes more intellectual. The women are sometimes very strong-willed and independent, and sometimes they are sort of insecure.

7. Events which appear again and again. Someone falling in love "at first sight". I don't think this is a true "love". Often there is a misunderstanding – one of the pair is not sure if love is returned and may make a choice which makes the chances that a relationship will work out go down. Then somehow there is an event which draws the main characters back together and the "misunderstanding" is cleared up.

a. Events which never appear? There is really never adultery in romance novels.

8. Are people in romance novels real people? Some are but most are not.

a. How? Sometimes the characters are complex and realistic, like real people.

b. Principal differences? Usually things are just way too simplistic.

9. Are events like those in real life? Some are but often things just work out too well to be realistic. I think one of the main defining characteristics of a romance novel is that the story has to end happily. There may be a lot of twists and turns along the way, and often there are people who try to get in the way of the couple in a very manipulative way, but you know when you start a romance novel that it is going to end with the couple together. I think I'd be really annoyed if it didn't end that way! So that's not like real life at all.

a. Which ones are similar? Life is full of struggles, some of the struggles portrayed in the novels can mirror true struggles in life, I guess. Some of the novels spend time talking about how hard careers are or how challenging it can be to raise kids, stuff like that. Those feel more true to life.

b. Which ones are different? As I said, the basic fairy tale quality of romance novels is that you know when you start them that the heroine and hero are going to wind up together at the end. That is not like real life. Imagine if we had that kind of certainty!

10. Do characters change in the story? Some of them do.

a. Which ones? The main characters sometimes change to let the romance happen.

b. How? There is sometimes a life-changing kind of event that makes the main characters rethink some of their assumptions and aspects of their lives. Often, that is the catalyst for getting the couple together, but it involves changing certain things about the characters – what they say they want out of life for example. I think it's pretty common for at least one of the main characters not to be interested in being in a relationship when the book opens.

11. If we met at a party and began discussing romance reading, how would you describe your reading of romances to me? I would describe my reading in genre of choice as a

diversion, entertaining. Books tend to take my mind off of any issues while reading it and if I get very into a story or a plot, then the experience is really a lot of fun. Romance novels really are a good example of this. They are very reliable, which life isn't, they end happily, which life doesn't always, and they are usually pretty fun without plot elements that are heavy and depressing. So when life gets a little tough or overwhelming, romance novels are a great source to ease the stress and provide an escape.

12. What makes reading romances different from other types of reading? Most are totally enjoyable. You don't have to worry about a sad ending or a very complicated writing style that requires a lot of concentration or a weird plot (I guess there are paranormal romances that get weird, but I don't read those). It's almost like the equivalent of a massage for your brain. You know you can settle in and relax and just let your mind go with the book. It's not hard work.

13. Can you explain to me why you recently failed to complete a particular romance book? Honestly, I almost always complete a book once I start. I don't think that I have not left one uncompleted in years. I always think that a book will get better, even if I don't like it, especially if someone I like recommended it. Then I think that if I just keep going I will like it better, especially if the recommendation came from someone who reads a lot and who I trust and who knows me well. Also, I also always want to know how it ended, even if the book itself doesn't do much for me. I can't help it.

14. What do you do with the romance materials after you have finished reading them? Often, I loan a book to a friend or family member if I really liked the book or think that the friend or family member will like it. Otherwise, I keep a finished book on my bookshelf in case I want to read it again. I hate giving books away.

Personal Information

1. Sex – female
2. Age -- 51
3. Marital status – Married
4. Children? Yes. How many? 2.
5. Ages of children. 17, (daughter) 15 (son)
6. How do you spend your day? I work full time.
7. What is your occupation? I am a pediatrician. I work Monday through Wednesday in my office. Mondays I am there late and regularly not home before 10 pm. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays I get home at around 7 pm. I work one Saturday per month and am on call once a month, although I almost always answer questions by phone instead of having to go to the hospital when I am on call. I also helped start a refugee clinic for pediatric refugee patients a few years ago, and I spend a lot of time there on my days and evenings off. I am involved in a few research projects right now as well.
 - a. How long have you been employed outside the home? 20 years
 - b. Have there been periods when you did not work outside the home? Only when I was on maternity leave
 - c. When? 12 weeks in 1997 and 12 weeks in 1999
8. What is your spouse's occupation? Business owner

9. How many years of formal education do you have? I went to medical school after college, so four years past college. I went to Dartmouth University, where I majored in Spanish, and Columbia Medical School.

Leisure Patterns (per week)

1. Hours devoted to
 - a. Television viewing – None
 - b. Reading – Only about four, unless it's an unusually calm week.
 - c. Radio listening – Depends on how much I'm in the car. 4-5 hours, I think.
 - d. Physical recreation – Roughly 5-6 hours per week. I like to exercise.
 - e. Internet – Very little, unless I am using the computer for work research.
2. Other regular forms of leisure occupation? We really don't have time for other things.
3. Number of times attend per week:
 - a. Movies – Almost never
 - b. Concerts – Almost never
 - c. Theatre – Very occasionally
 - d. Sports events – Our kids play sports so we go to their events all the time.
 - e. Church activities – never
4. Number of magazines read per week? Just one, for work.
 - a. Name? Pediatrics in Review – probably not very interesting sounding to you!
5. Are there certain television shows you never miss? No, I don't watch tv at all.
 - a. Why not? I have very little free time and there are other things I'd rather do.

Cindy's Additional Questions

Do you use social media sites to find books to read, both generally and in the romance genre? I'm thinking here about Goodreads and other similar book websites, but also Facebook or anything else like that.

No. I really don't use social media at all. I guess I'm really old-fashioned, but none of that appeals to me.

Do you subscribe to any book blogs or newsletters from bookstores, libraries or other book-related sites?

No. See above. It's just not how I think about things. I hear about good books from family members and friends, and I put them on my Kindle or otherwise remember the book when I happen to be in a bookstore and I buy it.

Are you a member of any online reading communities?

No. I really don't have time, and I don't use the internet very much.

Do you listen to audio books?

Occasionally, if we are taking a really long car ride.

Do you have a kindle or a nook or an iPad that you use for reading?

Kindle. It's easiest for reading on the train.

Do you have any thoughts or impressions on how the Internet and the web has impacted your reading life?

Well, the Internet does make it much easier to get books without going to library or the bookstore. It also lets me read about a book or find questions about a book to stimulate discussion in my book club.

This is more of a big picture question, but how do you make meaning around your reading activity? What does reading mean to you?

There are so many different reasons why I read. Sometimes it is just for relaxation and a little escape. Books provide some enjoyment and down time in an otherwise busy and stressful life. But I do read to learn also. I do a fair amount of reading that is indirectly related to work, like *How Doctors Think*, and *Where Does It Hurt*. Those books are more about the big picture of medicine in the US. Or sometimes I read to find out about a specific issue that I feel I don't know enough about and would like to be able to converse better and understand the underlying issues. For example, I read *From Beirut to Jerusalem* to have a better understanding of what is going on in the Middle East, although I'm not sure anyone can really understand that. So reading provides all of that for me. And I like reading all different kinds of things for all those reasons. But in terms of why I read romance, and what reading romance novels does for me, that's all about the escape and the relaxation.

Appendix 1

Text of original email seeking interest and willingness in participating in a reading interview:

Hello! My name is Cindy Haiken, and I am a friend of X. X told me that you might be willing to take part in a study I am doing for one of my courses in the Rutgers Masters in Library and Information Sciences program that I am enrolled in. The course is called Reading Interests of Adults. We spent the first 5 weeks of the semester learning about the role of fiction in the history of reading, and then the rise of genre categories within fiction. Since week 6, we have studied a genre in depth each week. These genres include detective and mystery novels, science fiction, fantasy, romance, westerns, horror, Christian fiction, new age, and graphic novels.

The study I am conducting is for a term paper for this course, due the Monday after Thanksgiving. It is a study of readers, done through interviews with up to five people who are interested in books and reading. X tells me that you are a great reader. I'm hoping that you might enjoy answering the questions that form the basis of the interview -- they will certainly make you think about your reading in a way that you might not otherwise have done. I understand from X that you are busy. If you like, I can send you the questions and then we can talk on the phone to discuss your answers. I should mention that one section of the questionnaire is about reading in one of a specific genre that we are studying, and that I have listed above, so you would need to think about whether you've read enough books in any of those genres to answer those questions. You don't obviously have to read books only in that genre, but you do need to have read a core selection from one of those genres to fill out the 2nd part of the questionnaire.

Please let me know if you are interested in being part of this study. If you are, I will send you the questionnaire and then you can let me know when you would like to schedule the interview. I will work around your schedule. If at all possible, I would like to conduct the interviews by the middle of November, to leave time for follow-up and reflection before I write the paper. Thank you so much for considering this. I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix 2

Text of follow-up email asking for specific thoughts on the role that reading plays in the interviewee's lives:

Hello again! Thanks very much for taking so much time with me on the phone. I really enjoyed our conversation and you said some wonderful things about reading and books! I have one more question to ask of you, which is a somewhat big picture question, but how do you make meaning around your reading activity. What I mean by that is what is the significance of your reading (generally, not in a specific genre) in the larger context of your life. For example, the starting point could be "I read because I want to learn" (which is banal, I know) or "I read to keep up with my peers who are all talking about these books" (which I suspect is not true for you based on the things you've told me but may well be true for some) or something as big as "I read because that makes me who I am" (which is something I might answer myself, with further explanation). What is your thought about reading and how you choose books in terms of the context around which you operate as readers?

I hope that isn't too theoretical or touchy-feely for you, and if you'd like, we can get back on the phone to flesh out my meaning here. If you wouldn't mind, please give some thought to how you would answer this big question and let me know whether you want to talk again or if you want to send me a written response.

Thanks again for all your time and interest.

Table 1

From Radway (1984, 1991), p. 61

Question: Which of the Following Best Describes Why You Read Romances?

- a. To escape my daily problems
- b. To learn about faraway places and times
- c. For simple relaxation
- d. Because I wish I had a romance like the heroine's
- e. Because reading is just for me; it's my time
- f. Because I like to read about the strong, virile heroes
- g. Because reading is at least better than other forms of escape
- h. Because romantic stories are never sad or depressing

Both Case 1 and Case 2 answered "a," to escape my daily problems, although Case 2 noted that if she had been asked this question when she was younger, before she met her husband, she would have answered "d." Case 4 answered "c," for simple relaxation. She said that reading romances was a feel good thing.

Table 2

From Radway (1984, 1991), p. 67

Question: What are the Three Most Important Ingredients in a Romance?

- a. A happy ending
- b. Lots of scenes with explicit sexual description
- c. Lots of details about faraway places and times
- d. A long conflict between hero and heroine
- e. Punishment of the villain
- f. A slowly but consistently developing love between hero and heroine
- g. A setting in a particular historical period
- h. Lots of love scenes with some explicit sexual description
- i. Lots of love scenes without explicit sexual description
- j. Some detail about heroine and hero after they've gotten together
- k. A very particular kind of hero and heroine

The three women who discussed romances answered this question differently, although there was some overlap in the answers.

Case 1 said that her three most important romance ingredients were: first, c (lots of details about faraway places and times), then h (lots of love scenes with some explicit sexual description) and then j (some detail about heroine and hero after they've gotten together).

Case 2 said that her three most important romance ingredients were: first, a (a happy ending), then f (a slowly but consistently developing love between hero and heroine) and then j (some detail about heroine and hero after they've gotten together).

Case 4 said that her three most important romance ingredients were: first, f (a slowly but consistently developing love between hero and heroine), then a (a happy ending) and then h (lots of love scenes with some explicit sexual description).

Table 3

From Radway (1984, 1991), p. 74

Question: Which of the Following Do You Feel Should Never Be Included in a Romance?

- a. Rape
- b. Explicit sex
- c. Sad ending
- d. Physical torture
- e. An ordinary heroine
- f. Bed-hopping
- g. Premarital sex
- h. A cruel hero
- i. A weak hero
- j. A hero stronger than the heroine
- k. A heroine stronger than the hero

Case 1 answered that for her the most objectionable plot element would be c, a sad ending, followed by h, a cruel hero and then d, physical torture. For Case 2, c, a sad ending, would also be her most objectionable plot element, followed by a, rape and then by d, physical torture. For Case 4, her most objectionable romance plot element would be h, a cruel hero, followed by i, a weak hero and then f, bed-hopping.

Table 4

From Radway (1984, 1991), p. 82

Question: What Qualities Do You Like to See in a Hero?

- a. Intelligence
- b. Tenderness
- c. Protectiveness
- d. Strength
- e. Bravery
- f. Sense of Humor
- g. Independence
- h. Attractiveness
- i. A good body
- j. Other

Here again there was some overlap but no agreement. Case 1 most likes b, tenderness, in a hero, followed by e, bravery and then h, attractiveness. Case 2 most likes a, intelligence, followed by b, tenderness and then c, protectiveness. Case 4 most likes a, intelligence, followed by f, sense of humor and then h, attractiveness.

Table 5*Certain Similar and Disparate Characteristics of the Four Women Participants*

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Married	●	●	●	●
Children	●	●	●	●
Works outside the home	●	●	●	●
College graduate	●	●	●	●
Attended graduate school	●			●
Started reading at a young age	●	●	●	●
Reads every day	●	●	●	
Reads at least one book per week on average	●		●	
Reads at least ten hours per week	●		●	
Fails to finish a book				
Member of a book club		●	●	●
Speaks with others about books		●	●	●
Reads in bed	●	●		●
Reads while commuting			●	●
Uses a Kindle (or similar device)			●	●
Finds characters realistic	●	●		●
Finds plots realistic	●	●		
Reads for relaxation			●	●
Reads to escape	●	●	●	●
Reads to learn		●	●	●
Uses the library	●	●		
Purchases books from a bookstore	●			
Purchases books online	●		●	●
Keeps books after reading			●	●
Uses book-related social media		●		
Watches TV	●	●		
Reads magazines	●	●		
Exercises	●	●	●	●

References

Books

1. Radway, J. (184, 1991). *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London, England: The University of North Carolina Press.
2. Ross, C., McKechnie, L. and Rothbauer, P. (2006). *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community*. Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Libraries Unlimited.
3. Smith, D. (1996). One Reader Reading: A case study. In K.D. Shearer (Ed), *Guiding the Reader to the Next Book*, pp. 45-70. New York, New York: Neal Schulman.

Scholarly Articles

1. Chelton, M.K. and Smith, D. (2000). Talking with Readers. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 40 (2), 135.
2. Moyer, J.E. (2007). Learning from Leisure Reading: A Study of Adult Public Library Patrons. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 46(4), 66-79.
3. Ross, C.S. (2000). Making Choices: What Readers say about Choosing Books to Read for Pleasure. *The Acquisitions Librarian*, 13(25), 5-21.
4. _____ (1999). Finding without Seeking: The information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure. *Information Processing and Management*, 35, 783-799.

Newspaper Articles

1. Sittenfeld, C. (2014, Nov 21). 'All My Puny Sorrows,' by Miriam Toews. *New York Times, The* (New York, New York), p. Book Review 25.